

The Representation and Reception of Meaning in Alcohol Advertising and Young People's Drinking

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Aims and Objectives

This report presents an investigation of alcohol advertising and young people's drinking habits. It combines a review of international research literature, an analysis of the nature of alcohol advertising from print media and television, an analysis of point-of-sale displays in retail outlets that sell alcoholic drinks, and a survey of young people that obtained data about their alcohol drinking habits and exposure to alcohol advertising. It also conducted a review of alcohol advertising codes of practice within the United Kingdom. The principal objectives of this research were:

1. To establish the status of research evidence concerning the effects of alcohol advertising on young people's consumption of alcohol.
2. To examine general patterns and trends of alcohol consumption among young people, with special reference to the situation in the United Kingdom.
3. To determine whether the nature of alcohol advertising changed in the UK following the publication of revised codes of practice for this type of advertising at the beginning of 2005.
4. To provide insights into the nature of alcohol point-of-sale displays and the extent to which they contained features likely to appeal to young people, and especially to under-age drinkers.
5. To produce new data on links between exposure to alcohol advertising and young people's alcohol consumption in the presence of controls for other potential social-psychological predictors of alcohol consumption.
6. To investigate whether alcohol advertising in the post-2005 code of practice change era, still contain features that might exhibit special appeals to young people.

This report is a summary of the accompanying full report that contains a more detailed account of the research that was carried out, a full bibliography of relevant literature referred to in that text, and copies of the key research instruments used to collect primary data.

1. Alcohol Consumption and Youth: Key Issues

There has been growing concern about alcohol consumption among young people in the United Kingdom and other countries. This concern has been reinforced by large-scale surveys of national youth samples that have indicated that many teenagers experiment with alcohol and significant minorities drink on a regular basis. While some signs have emerged that more young people are starting to drink later, by the time they reach their mid teens around one in two consume alcohol at least occasionally. Furthermore, growing numbers of teenage drinkers periodically drink to excess to the point of drunkenness. A number of factors have been identified as underpinning the onset of alcohol consumption among children and adolescents. The advertising of alcoholic products and the marketing of products deliberately targeted at young adult legal drinkers are among the factors believed to play a part in creating a climate in which alcohol consumption is regarded as normal and that serves to trigger an interest in alcohol among those legally too young to purchase alcoholic products.

The availability of so-called ‘designer drinks’ has been pinpointed as a particularly significant development that has encouraged young people to drink. These drinks not only have appeal because they are promoted with marketing messages that play on themes known to capture the attention of young consumers, but also provide alcohol-based products with varied flavours that attract inexperienced drinkers.

The provision of drinks that do not taste like normal alcoholic drinks – that for most people are an acquired taste - introduce under-age to alcohol consumption that is driven by the intrinsic taste appeal of the product as well as responding to social and cultural pressures. Despite the traditional association of heavy drinking with males, recent trends have indicated that female drinkers are consuming as much as their male counterparts.

In the context of the present enquiry, the key question being investigated centres on the role played by advertising in priming young people to drink. Much of this report will focus on that question. Before doing this, however, it is important to consider what is known about the nature of young people’s alcohol consumption habits. A number of large-scale national and international surveys have been carried out in the past 25 years that have attempted to map the prevalence of alcohol consumption and the frequency and nature of that consumption among young drinkers. It is important to understand the scale

of this behaviour and of any problematic manifestations of it. It is also relevant to examine that quality of the research data on these behaviours.

2. Alcohol Consumption: Patterns and Trends

A number of major surveys have examined key findings about youth alcohol consumption. These include surveys run by ESPAD, HBSC and NatCen. ESPAD obtained data in 1995, 1999 and 2003 from between 25 and 35 countries. The HBSC survey collected data from 11 to 15 year olds in 2001/2002, covering 35 countries. NatCen focused on England only and surveyed youngsters aged 11 to 15 years in 2004. All these surveys achieved 70%+ response rates though they differed in their respective sampling methodologies. The NatCen survey sampled individuals, whereas ESPAD and HBSC surveys sampled by classroom.

ESPAD revealed that prevalence of youth consumption of alcohol in the UK remained fairly stable between 1995 and 2003. Beer drinking increased to 1999 and then decreased. Wine drinking was much less prevalent and remained stable between 1995 and 2003. In contrast spirits drinking increased in prevalence between 1995 and 2003 for boys and girls. The amount of beer drinking increased to 1999 and then decreased in 2003 for boys and girls, while wine drinking was stable for girls and declined for boys. Spirits drinking rose and then fell for boys and girls in the UK across these three surveys. Self-reported binge between 1995 and 2003 increased and then decreased for boys and showed a steady and unrelenting increase for girls in the UK.

The HBSC survey in 2001 found increased prevalence in weekly consumption of alcohol among boys and girls in England between the ages of 11 and 15 years. Drinking prevalence among boys increased dramatically across this age range from 14 per cent among 11 year olds to 34 per cent for 13 year olds and 52 per cent for 15 year olds. Among girls, weekly consumption of alcohol increased in prevalence from eight per cent of 11 year olds, to 25 per cent of 13 year olds to 56 per cent of 15 year olds. Spirits drinking was far more popular than beer or wine drinking by age 15 especially among girls. By the age of 15 years, over half of young people surveyed in 2001 in England (55%) said they had got drunk at least once or twice.

The NatCen survey among 11 to 15 year olds in England in 2004 confirmed the dramatic increase in prevalence of drinking alcohol over this age range observed earlier in the HBSC survey. Three years on, however, alcohol consumption prevalence had reached around one in four boys (27%) and girls (23%) aged 11 years. The prevalence of

alcohol consumption rose to significantly higher proportions of boys and girls at 13 years (61% and 60% respectively) and 15 year olds (86% and 89% respectively).

Collectively, these data confirm that alcohol consumption is widespread among adolescents in the UK (and other countries) and has been so since the mid-1990s. Early experimentation with alcohol begins during pre-teenage years, but once in their teens consumption is trialed by most young people. By mid-teens drinking to excess has reportedly been experienced by over half of all young people.

3. Advertising and Alcohol Consumption: Macro-Level Evidence

Macro-level analyses attempt to find relationships between overall quantities of advertising and consumption of specific products. Econometric analyses using aggregated data to examine relationships over time between the volume of advertising and quantity of alcohol consumption in specific markets. Another version of this type of study is one that investigates the effects on macro-level alcohol consumption of partial or complete advertising bans in specific markets or communities.

In the case of alcohol, there is mixed evidence as to whether the overall volume of advertising affects overall volumes of consumption. While some analyses produced evidence of statistical links between the amount of expenditure on advertising and subsequent consumption levels, other analyses failed to replicate these findings. When attempting to track relationships between advertising expenditure and volumes of product consumption over time, it has often been difficult to unravel which factor is the causal agent.

Research in the United Kingdom has also indicated that while positive links between advertising expenditure and aggregate consumption of alcohol can be found, such links exist only for specific categories of alcohol (e.g., beer and spirits but not wine). Furthermore, any increase in consumption of one type of alcohol can sometimes have an impact on levels of consumption of another type.

Another perspective in the analysis of links between alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption at a macro-level has been to explore the impact on consumption of advertising bans. In some regional and national markets alcohol advertising bans have been implemented. These have tended to take the form of partial bans that extend to particular media, such as television. Other bans are even more tightly targeted and apply to particular kinds of output in specific media, such as bans on alcohol advertising on television in programmes aimed at children. Research evidence into the effectiveness of advertising bans has generally found that such restrictions only work when they are either complete or at least comprehensive. This has been found to be true, for example, in research into the effectiveness of tobacco advertising bans. Partial bans tend to be ineffective because advertisers react to restrictions upon advertising in one medium by increasing investment in advertising in other media. In the context of alcohol advertising,

bans have so far been found to have limited impact upon per capita consumption of alcoholic drinks.

The missing link with aggregated, macro-level data is that they do not indicate what happens at the level of the individual. We know little or nothing, from macro-level econometric analyses, about levels of exposure to advertising on the part of individuals who are drinkers or non-drinkers. It is important therefore to dig down at the micro-level to uncover the factors that are related to and may even predict the onset of drinking and the amount that people drink. Large data sets at the macro-level also do not provide consistent patterns of relationships between alcohol advertising volumes and alcohol consumption volumes.

In the United Kingdom, research published in 2007 by the Office of Communications indicated a 21 per cent drop in expenditure on alcohol advertising on television between 2005 and 2006 that occurred after changes of alcohol advertising codes of practice that restricted the nature of appeals alcohol advertisers were permitted to use. Over the same period, however, there was a seven percent increase in the volume of televised advertising spots for alcoholic products. The overall changes in amount of alcohol advertising disguised differing movements in the volumes of televised advertising for different types of alcoholic drink. The amounts of spot advertising for beer, lager, stout, whisky, rum, and alcopops all fell between 2005 and 2006, while the amounts of spot advertising for cider, vodka and wine increased. Upon tracking alcohol advertising impacts upon young adults (aged 16-24 years) and children (10-15 years), a decline in impacts occurred for both age groups (6% and 15.5% respectively) from 2005 to 2006. Hence, there is no guarantee that changes in expenditure on alcohol advertising is directly correlated with amount of alcohol advertising shown or that either of these two measures is, in turn, correlated with exposure to alcohol advertising among young consumers.

The overall volume of alcohol advertising can therefore change quite dramatically over relatively short periods of time, but not always in the same direction in different media. This is an important observation, but when examined at a more micro-level, with data obtained from individuals, measures of reported exposure to media that carry advertising do not consistently predict whether alcohol consumption will be increased or decreased or remain unaffected by the experience. Even within the same medium, such as

magazines for example, reported exposure to different genres of magazine can exhibit varying relationships with reported volumes of alcohol consumption. Furthermore, within the same medium such as television, whether there is a relationship between reported advertising exposure and reported alcohol consumption can vary between categories of alcoholic product. Exposure to alcohol advertisement-containing programmes can influence uplifts in drinking of beers, wines and spirits to differing degrees.

Hence to understand the role played by advertising in relation to youth alcohol consumption, micro-level analyses are needed in which data are obtained from individuals about their drinking habits, social backgrounds and exposure to alcohol advertising in different media or physical settings. The next chapter will review evidence from micro-level measurement studies.

4. Advertising and Youth Drinking Behaviour

The current investigation is primarily concerned with the nature of alcohol advertising and the role it plays in shaping the alcohol consumption of young people. Alcohol-related behaviour, however, can potentially be influenced by a variety of factors, of which advertising might be one. Any effects that do emanate from advertising must be considered within the broader context of the social background and other experiences of individuals.

Social Factors

A range of social factors has been linked to the onset of alcohol consumption among young people. There has been replicable support for the significance of parental and peer group influences in this context. Children are more likely to drink alcohol if their parents also imbibe. In their teens, peers become especially important sources of influence. It is not simply the drinking behaviour of others that is influential here, but also their attitudes towards drinking. Having friends who approve of drinking may render children and teenagers more likely to drink themselves.

Social influences can pull young people in different directions over drinking alcohol. Parents may encourage their children not to drink, while peer groups pull them in the opposite direction. The outcome will depend upon which source of social influence is most important to young people at the time. In their teens, conforming to peer group norms may be a more compelling objective than following parental rules.

Role of Media

In addition to these social influences, there has been interest shown in the role played by the mass media in shaping drinking behaviour as a result of young people's exposure to mediated examples of alcohol consumption. Although most interest here has focused on the influence of advertising messages about alcohol, it is possible that some influence might flow from entertainment content. Evidence emerged from the United States that teenagers who were heavier consumers of television and music videos began to drink more over time. In a follow-up in Norway, however, exposure to American programming

was found to correlate with alcohol consumption initially, but then this link disappeared with peer group influences were introduced.

Other American evidence found associations between television viewing and the expectation among teenagers that they would drink alcohol in future and between viewing films at the cinema and uptake of drinking.

Role of Advertising

Although the World Health Organisation has identified alcohol advertising as a significant factor that can influence the onset of drinking among children and teenagers, the empirical evidence has provided more mixed results. Exposure to alcohol advertising can raise familiarity with brands among young people, but whether it has a direct link to the onset of drinking is a more debatable point. Any effects that do occur as a result of exposure to advertising might be indirect rather than direct. One hypothesis is that exposure to alcohol advertising can cause young people to think about drinking. Alcohol-related thoughts might eventually contribute towards a decision to start drinking.

Children have been found to identify alcohol advertisements as ones they like the most out of advertising to which they have been exposed. Liking of alcohol advertisements has, in turn, been linked to alcohol consumption among young people.

Demonstrating cause-effect relationships between exposure to alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption can be challenging. Researchers have used a number of different methodologies to study links between individuals' exposure to alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption. Survey studies simply question respondents about their drinking habits and recalled exposure to advertising. Such self-report evidence can be unreliable when respondents are invited to remember detailed episodic behavioural histories. Moreover, variables are simply inter-correlated in surveys and this does not conclusively prove causal connections. Some researchers have used laboratory or field experiments in which circumstance surrounding exposure to alcohol advertising are manipulated and controlled by investigators as well as, to varying degrees, conditions of alcohol consumption (or intended consumption). Although such studies are constructed to examine cause-effect relations between variables they do so under highly artificial

conditions that may not prevail in natural drinking environments. There remains a question-mark therefore over whether such evidence can be generalised to the real world.

Experimental studies have been limited in number because of the design complexities associated with setting them up. Mixed evidence has emerged from among studies with college students that exposure to alcohol advertising can produce a short-term triggering of alcohol consumption when the opportunity to drink is presented to individuals immediately after exposure to alcohol advertising.

Survey evidence emerged in the early 1980s from among college students in the United States that exposure to alcohol advertising was associated with drinking onset and with heavy bouts of drinking. Further research with young people in their early to mid-teens failed to confirm the earlier research with college students. One exception was the young people who used advertisements for social comparison purposes (i.e., to learn how to project themselves and how to behave in different social settings) did exhibit a positive association between self-reported drinking alcohol and exposure to alcohol advertisements. Survey research from New Zealand found some evidence for a link between exposure to alcohol advertising and consumption, but only in the case of beer.

A series of longitudinal surveys in the United States conducted from the mid-1990s reported that reported exposure to alcohol advertising was linked to drinking onset among pre-teens and teenage respondents. Liking for alcohol advertisements also predicted drinking onset over time.

While mixed evidence has emerged for direct links between exposure to alcohol advertising and alcohol drinking onset or quantity of consumption, it has been known for many years that young people pay attention to alcohol advertising and that the best liked alcohol advertisements may be among children's and teenagers' overall favourite advertisements for any product. Research has also emerged that indicates that young people's attitudinal or perceptual responses to advertisements for alcohol might also mediate their impact on drinking-related beliefs and behaviour.

Teenagers who held positive attitudes towards alcohol advertisements were also found to be more likely to hold positive beliefs about drinking. In this case, it was feelings about the advertisements rather than extent of reported exposure to them that

mediated favourable views about alcohol and its consumption. Furthermore, these findings occurred among teenagers but were not repeated among people in their twenties.

Longitudinal research over three years with a panel of nine to 16 year-olds in California investigated whether exposure to alcohol advertisements could influence beliefs about drinking and drinking behaviour. Respondents were asked for their opinions about alcohol advertisements and about programmes that contained examples of drinking. On this occasion, opinions about alcohol advertisements were unrelated to reported alcohol consumption. However, the attractiveness of televised portrayals of drinking that triggered identification with on-screen characters and drinking occasions were related to positive views about drinking.

It is apparent therefore that we must look beyond simple statistical relationships between reported alcohol advertising exposure or other media exposure and reported alcohol consumption. Alcohol advertisements can trigger reactions in young consumers that may be positive or negative. They tend more often than not to be positive. Enjoyment of alcohol advertisements may cultivate a generally positive disposition towards alcohol consumption because advertisements that give pleasure may create a halo effect around not just the advertised brand but alcohol and its consumption more generally. In the next chapter, we turn to research evidence on whether alcohol advertising can produce a positive orientation towards alcohol.

5. Orientations towards Alcohol Advertisements

Young people can exhibit varied responses to alcohol advertising. Attitudes towards advertisements and perceptions of their messages can sometimes represent important variables that can mediate post-exposure impact of advertisements. Young people may notice and recognize alcohol advertisements and the brands they promote long before they start drinking alcoholic beverages themselves.

One concern here is that their attention to advertisements for alcohol could create favourable dispositions towards drinking and then play a part in triggering early onset of alcohol consumption. Much of the evidence that has focused on the appeal of alcohol advertisements to children and teenagers has not established whether liking of alcohol advertisements triggers early consumption. While greater advertisement and brand awareness among young people might differentiate them in terms of whether they are drinkers or not, this evidence on its own is not enough to prove any kind of causality. It is quite logical to expect young people who already drink alcohol to know more about available brands than non-drinkers. To what extent this awareness triggered onset of drinking alcohol or drives the frequency with which young drinkers consume alcohol or how much they consume remains contentious.

Evidence has emerged that exposure to alcohol advertising over time can result in the internalization of meanings about alcohol that might at some future point influence alcohol consumption. Repeated exposure to alcohol-related messages on television, including those found in advertising, can enhance young people's interest in alcohol and cultivate a range of positive expectations associated with its consumption.

What is clear though is that alcohol advertisers have often used techniques or themes that have special appeal to young consumers, whether or not the youth marketed is deliberately targeted. Research has shown that children in their pre-teens notice and enjoy watching advertisements for alcoholic drinks on television. But what is it about these advertisements that command their attention?

Humour has emerged as one factor that children and teenagers often enjoy about these advertisements. However, there are different kinds of humour and not all are equally effective. Simple forms of humour may hold the strongest appeal for pre-teenagers, whereas more subtle forms of humour may prove more effective with

teenagers. The use of animation can also attract the attention of pre-teenagers. Even amongst youngsters in their mid-teens, the use of animation can render alcoholic brands more memorable. Celebrity endorsements of alcoholic drinks have also been found to be effective among young people. The association of alcohol with attractive lifestyles and having a good time can strike significant chords with teenagers for who conformity to the latest fashions and experimentation with different social identities attain paramount importance. However, reported liking for an advertisement for an alcoholic drink does not necessarily mean that either that particular drink or indeed alcohol more generally is liked by young people. The presence of young people in alcohol advertising has been found to be effective in drawing in the attention of young actual or potential drinkers.

Even if liking for alcohol advertising is associated to a statistically significant extent with alcohol consumption, it is still necessary to determine the direction of causality if these variables are in fact causally connected. Once again, the research on this question is not consistent. Although claims have been made that 'liking' of alcohol advertisements could be a precursor of consumption, there is conflicting evidence that 'liking' in this case may be more prominent among youngsters who have already started to drink than among those who have not.

Alcohol advertisements could influence propensity to consume alcohol indirectly by cultivating favourable attitudes and beliefs about drinking. Evidence has emerged that alcohol advertisements can encourage young people to believe that drinking is an acceptable pastime and that people who drink have a positive social image. When these types of construct become attached to specific alcohol products they can form the building blocks of 'brands'.

The codes of advertising or marketing practice adopted by media regulators, trade organizations and specific companies place mandated or voluntary restrictions on the types of promotional appeals that may be used in connection with alcohol products. Many of these restrictions recognize the potency of specific attributes of appeal revealed by research among young alcohol consumers, including under-age consumers. What we need to establish though is whether advertisements for alcohol in mainstream media continue to utilize attributes or themes that are likely to appeal strongly to young drinkers.

6. Representation of Alcohol in Advertising

To understand whether alcohol advertisements have the potential to influence young people, it is important to find out to extent to which they use appeals known to attract the interest of young people. In the current programme of enquiry, two analytical approaches were used to collect data on this question. The first approach was quantitative in nature and utilised content analysis to catalogue the presence of specific attributes in alcohol advertisements. The selection of attributes in this context was guided by previous content analysis research, audience research into young people's responses to alcohol advertising, and by advertising codes of practice. The second approach was qualitative in nature and used semiotic analysis to reveal deep-seated meanings about alcoholic drinks and their consumption that were being conveyed by advertisements.

A body of content analysis research has emerged since the 1970s that has analysed the representation of alcohol in television programmes. This research, emanating to a significant extent from North America and the United Kingdom, has indicated that portrayals of alcohol consumption occur with regularity on peak-time television when young people can be expected to be numerically present in the audience. Depictions of alcohol consumption have tended to present it in a positive light. Alcoholic intoxication was seen as fun and often displayed in a humorous context. Sometimes, drinking alcohol was also displayed as a coping mechanism that could be used by someone when under pressure or stressed. Alcohol consumption on television has tended to be shown as an activity that is free of adverse consequences.

Alcohol advertising has traditionally been observed to present alcohol consumption in glamorous or exotic settings where alcohol products are associated with themes such as social or sexual success. Televised advertisements are often targeted at men and present a distinctive view of masculinity whereby men who drink are depicted as more adventurous and leading more exciting lives.

Analysis of Alcohol Advertising in the UK

The quantitative and qualitative analyses examined the content and meanings contained in the television and print advertisements of the leading alcoholic brands in UK during the time period from 2003 to 2004 and 2005 to 2006, prior to and after the revision of the

alcohol advertising rules by Ofcom and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The primary objective was to identify key marketing techniques used and messages communicated by the leading campaigns. This is in an effort to evaluate the degree of potential appeal the examined campaigns may have particularly for young people and teenage children.

The selected advertisements represent the leading brands in terms of volume of advertising they received in the 12 months from 2003 to 2004 and from 2005 to 2006. The data for the analysis were drawn from three electronic advertising archives, namely 'Visit 4 Info' (www.visit4info.com), 'Creative Club' (www.creativeclub.co.uk) and 'Advertising Archives' (www.advertisingarchives.co.uk). All three websites cover the advertising domain in the United Kingdom and they provide a relatively analytical and inclusive description of advertisements published in different types of media.

Quantitative Analysis of Alcohol Advertising

The content analysis sample comprised 292 televised advertisements and 140 print advertisements. Among the televised advertisements, 143 were taken from the 2003-2004 period prior to alcohol advertising code of practice changes implemented in January 2005 and 149 were sampled after the code changes over the 2005-2006. Among the print advertisements, 71 were sampled prior to the code changes in 2003-2004 and 69 after code changes in 2005-2006.

For the most part, the same coding frame variables were applied to the televised and print advertisements, but there were some differences in the nature of coding by medium. For the televised advertisements alone, the running-time duration of each advertisement and of brand on-screen visibility in the advertisement were coded. As the print sample was drawn from an online archive, it was not possible to produce parallel space dimension measures for the original published versions of these advertisements.

For both media, general codes were applied to classify the nature of the beverage and brand name. Nature of beverage was coded into beer/lager/stout; cider; distilled spirit (brandy, gin, rum, vodka, whisky, etc); wine; and alcopops/blended or mixer drinks. Two separate lists of brand names were compiled for the television and print samples.

Seventeen different brands were identified for televised advertisements and 21 distinct brands for print advertisements.

General attributes were coded next. These variables analysed the presence of any information about the alcoholic strength of the brand being advertised (whether shown in captions or presented by voice-over); different aspects of the product being promoted (such as taste, freshness/coolness, low levels of alcohol, quality and tradition of brand); the general experience of feeling associated with consumption of the brand (feeling good, feeling confident/attractive, relaxation, energy, and freshness); the presence of any voice-over (and the gender of voice-over); and narrative genre of the advertisement (none, action-adventure, comedy, romance, mystery, drama, unrealistic settings, alcohol production processes shown, and product image shown).

The coding frame also analysed depictions of alcohol consumption. The codes used here assessed the number of people featured drinking; the demography of drinkers (gender, apparent age group, ethnic group, social status); the relationships between the people depicted drinking (none, friends, family, husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, colleagues); the environment in which alcohol consumption was shown (none, outdoor location, pub/bar/club, restaurant/café, private home/garden, stadium, other); and the social context in which alcohol was advertised or alcohol consumption was depicted (none, social occasion such as dancing or clubbing, working environment, everyday activity/setting, risky/wild activity, other).

One of the important aspects of alcohol advertising is the degree to which it contains techniques designed to make the brand seem more appealing and the sales pitch more persuasive. A number of techniques were distinguished by the coding frame used here: sexual appeal used by character depicted consuming alcohol; use of celebrity figures; use of specific promotional techniques (information about product, physiological appeal such as thirst quenching, social appeal such as friendship enhancement, and esteem appeal such as enhanced status, recognition and attention); use of humour (slapstick, disparagement, parody, personification, exaggeration, extraordinary behaviour, sarcasm, silliness, surprise and dark humour); use of music (popular, classic, rock and country, contemporary); use of slogans; use of cartoon or animated characters; use of special effects; and use of colour. In relation to print advertisements only, several other

coding categories were used: use of captions with additional product-related information; camera angles (close-up, long shot, centred shot); spatiality (whether brand image is crowded with objects/characters or not); and balance (concerning the way visual elements are arranged around the advertisement).

Finally, the coding frame addressed matters relating to the Office of Communications (Ofcom) and Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) advertising codes of practice. The principal aim of this part of the analysis was to identify code violations, especially following changes to the codes of practice that were implemented from the start of 2005. The attributes analysed here were: alcohol contributing to an individual's popularity; alcohol shown as enhancing an individual's personal qualities; success of social occasion dependent on alcohol; consumption linked with daring, toughness, aggression or antisocial behaviour; alcohol linked to sexual activity or success; depiction of solitary alcohol drinking; depiction of alcohol drinking to overcome problems; alcohol consumption shown as having therapeutic qualities; alcohol consumption to boost confidence or mood; emphasis of alcoholic strength of drink as positive quality; depiction of immoderate drinking; depiction of alcohol consumption and use of dangerous machinery; depiction of alcohol consumption in any working environment; depiction of alcohol consumption prior to and with risky behaviour such as swimming, sailing, etc; depiction of alcohol consumption prior to or when driving; reckless or irresponsible use of alcohol; depiction of people in advertisement for alcohol who are clearly younger than 25 years; depiction of children in advertisements for alcohol.

From the content analysis research a general picture that emerged from television was that of alcohol being promoted as a product aimed mostly for middle class, male consumers of age 26-40 and of European descent. In the examined sample, alcohol was portrayed to complement relaxing or more fun times spent mostly among friends. Friendship and admiration/approval were particularly emphasised as outcomes of or in connection with the advertised beverage and humour was found to be the most prevalent technique. With regards to the degree of appeal to young people, what raises concerns is the promotion of emotional themes centred on friendship and having fun, as well as the portrayal of young, 'cool' characters hanging out in popular places like bars/pubs. These are themes that generate a degree of familiarity and resonance with the life of the young

viewers and are likely to appeal to them quite strongly. The use of humour based on unexpected incidents is also liked by teenagers. However, the employment of other appealing features such as celebrities, colour, popular music or even sexual themes was rather limited.

With print advertising of alcohol, much earlier concern focused on the degree to which alcohol advertisers allegedly targeted publications that were aimed at the youth market. Once again, attractive lifestyle themes have frequently been associated with alcohol. In magazines, alcohol has also regularly been associated with relaxing and having fun.

Print advertisements lack the dynamism of televised advertising and used a narrower range of persuasive techniques. Nonetheless, the current research showed that, as with television, print advertisements for alcohol featured references to quality, purity and tradition. Print advertisements placed more focused emphasis on the product image and appearance, though rarely showed consumption of alcohol. Humour featured prominently as in televised alcohol advertising. Perhaps the most distinctive difference between print and televised advertisements was the propensity of print messages to display information about the alcoholic strength of the product.

7. Alcohol Symbolism and Branding

A principal aim of this study was to determine (a) whether alcohol brand advertising utilises techniques that may have special appeal to under-age drinkers and (b) whether the latest Advertising Standards Authority/Ofcom/Committee of Advertising Practice codes are being breached. The content analysis study provided some insights into this question, but further analysis was deemed necessary to probe advertisements more deeply for subtle messages about alcohol and its consumption that surface-level analysis would not uncover. A semiotic analysis was therefore used to explore the cultural values and lifestyles aspects of advertising appeals.

It has been argued that alcohol advertisements attempt to create a market for their products by drawing upon relevant cultural symbols that are then re-interpreted by the advertisers in the context of drinking. Images of hyper-masculinity, for example, have been observed to prevail in a lot of beer advertising. Themes of masculinity have been highly prevalent in beer advertising around the world. Depending upon the particular national market being targeted, other nationalistic cultural themes also tend to be used. In the United States, for instance, values such as individualism and exploration of new frontiers have been detected.

Comparisons of alcohol advertising in different countries have indicated that national differences exist that are often bound up with distinct cultural value systems and the role that alcohol plays in everyday social life. This has been found, for example, in relation to beer advertising in the United Kingdom and United States where features of the indigenous cultures of these two countries were apparent.

Qualitative audience research with 11- to 17-year-olds in the UK revealed that young people recognise that while alcohol advertising is not aimed at their age group, it nonetheless often appeals to them. The young people interviewed in this research could recognise many of the popularly advertised alcohol brands. They were also readily able to articulate what they liked about the advertising. Attributes such as the type of music used in these advertisements together with their use of styles of humour that resonated with young people drew in the attention of viewers under the age of 18 years.

Further research was published by Ofcom in 2007 more than two years after the changes made to the broadcast advertising codes of practice for alcohol advertising had

been implemented. Qualitative research with 14 to 21 year olds and survey research with 11 to 21 year olds both explored different aspects of the appeal of alcohol advertising. Pre-2005 alcohol advertisements on television had been found to focus on [1] images of adults having a good time when drinking and the association of alcohol with attractive people and situations to which young people might aspire; [2] narrative set in familiar environments that might resonate in terms of their relevance to young people; and [3] so-called 'kidult' marketing techniques whereby mature adults are shown indulging in risky or irresponsible pastimes and activities associated more with youth. By 2007, Ofcom observed that kidult marketing had declined in use, while aspirational and familiarity/relevance themes were still being used. Furthermore, young people in their teens and early 20s responded positively to these themes when shown alcohol advertisements.

Qualitative Analysis of Alcohol Advertisements

After quantitatively coding the selected advertisements, the research moved on to conduct a more in depth analysis of certain aspects of the alcohol advertisements. This additional analysis was conducted in order to obtain a more inclusive picture of the key themes and meanings promoted in alcohol advertising; as well as to identify possible connotative meanings and messages. These elements represent more subtle features of advertisements than those described by the content analysis and yet may also be significant in relation to brand image formation.

The original advertisement sample comprised 292 televised advertisements and 140 print advertisements for various alcohol products covering beers, ciders, wines, spirits and 'alcopops'. These advertisements were sampled from a period covering 2003-2004, before changes were introduced to Ofcom's alcohol advertising code of practice and from a later period covering 2005-2006 after code changes had been published.

The qualitative analysis focused on selected variables from the coding frame that required further analysis. These variables were: slogan; caption; aspect of product that is being promoted; experience/feeling being promoted; use of persuasion/promotion technique; narrative story genre; use of humour in advertisement; and music

The analysis has demonstrated that TV alcohol advertising has employed a wide range of techniques that could render the advertisements particularly attractive to young people. Aspirational images, including attractive people and settings, and humour, in various forms, were found to be the most widely used techniques and represented the emotional advertising, to which young people are most attracted. This observation confirms the findings of audience research by Ofcom in 2007.

The use of animals and animated characters, which is also very appealing to children and young people, was another greatly used ingredient in the sample. These techniques were in most cases combined with bright attractive colours and figurative language that have proved to render the qualities of products even more memorable.

Interestingly, it emerged that the most appealing advertising ingredients were employed in the campaigns of the most appealing types of beverages. Alcopop and light beer are perhaps the most preferred types of alcoholic drink among teenagers and brands including *Bacardi Breezer*, *WKD* and *Budweiser* are among the ones most easily recalled. Unsurprisingly, the respective campaigns were largely built on those techniques that young people are more likely to notice and like, especially humour, bright colours and straightforward messages.

Humour was found still to be present in televised alcohol advertising. One aspect of the appearance of humour included the use of 'kidult' marketing approaches showing adults having fun and behaving irresponsibly and, in this respect, essentially behaving like children. There had been concern about this marketing approach in that it could be conceived not only to condone irresponsible behaviour on the part of adults (and therefore implicitly encouraging such behaviour among children and teenagers), but also aligned such irresponsibility with alcohol consumption. Ofcom (2007) reported that such themes, when present in television advertising, still held some appeal for young people.

In contrast, a less explicit and more sophisticated approach was found in the print campaigns. The analysis of the selected print advertisements showed a wide use of abstract messages and concepts that are unlikely to draw the attention of younger people. The clever and sophisticated use of language, the employment of unconventional techniques and the promotion of disconnected images and messages led to the creation of more subtle and less appealing campaigns.

The evidently dissimilar type of advertising techniques found in the two types of media can be attributed to the generally greater appeal of television, to audiences and young people in particular, which could only reinforce the anticipated impact of alcohol advertising on young audiences.

8. Alcohol at Point of Sale

Product displays and product promotions at the point-of-sale have been acknowledged to have potentially powerful effects on consumers. With some product categories, such as tobacco, the spread of increasingly comprehensive restrictions on advertising have meant that promotions at the point of sale are the only options left. The availability of alcohol in the local environment of young people has been identified as one important factor related to under-age drinking. Reducing this availability and creating an environment in which alcohol is perceived by young people as difficult to obtain, especially if they are under the legal drinking age, may represent one of the most significant steps that can be taken to tackle the problems of youth alcohol consumption). Yet, in the United States, for example, most young people believe that alcohol can be readily obtained, whether the purchaser is under-age or not. This belief is not surprising in the light of other research showing that illegal alcohol sales to minors were widespread in the US. Furthermore such purchases were easier to achieve in retail stores than in bars or clubs.

Advertisers will often coordinate the use of point-of-sale advertising devices with advertising campaigns in other media. Manufacturers may offer incentives to retailers to display point-of-sale promotions such as providing discounts, direct monetary incentives, and promises to buy back unsold merchandise. They may also pay for the cost of creating on-site advertising displays in retail outlets. The point of sale environment represent the one occasion when product promotions, products and consumers all come together in the same place at the same time. Point-of-sale advertising therefore enjoys closer proximity to the product being advertised than is true of any other form of advertising. The importance of point-of-sale advertising as a purchase triggering device is underlined by commercial market research findings that significant proportions of purchases in shops are unplanned.

Point-of-sale advertising for alcohol has been found to play a part in influencing purchase behaviour and there has been some concern more especially about its role in relation to the shaping of teenage drinking. Most research into point-of-purchase and alcohol marketing, however, has focused on the extent to which it occurs and the nature of its visibility within retail store environments. Other research has examined the impact of specific point-of-sale features such as product pricing, and a small amount of research

has investigated the effects of exposure to alcohol promotions in retail environments on young people's use of alcohol.

Separating out the distinctive effects of point-of-sale advertising upon alcohol consumption among young people from other factors known to be linked to drinking behaviour is a major research challenge. More generally, however, there is evidence that point-of-sale conditions can influence the extent to which young people consume alcohol. In the United Kingdom, no retailer or licensed premises may sell alcoholic beverages to individuals who are aged under-18 years. Yet research has indicated that under-age purchases of alcohol are not uncommon and may go unchallenged by retailers. Young people themselves know they can get away with making alcohol purchases even though under-age, and retailers could display greater vigilance over whom they sell to and a greater diligence in challenging youngsters who try to make illegal alcohol purchases. Challenging alcohol purchase attempts by under-age consumers at the point-of-sale can deter such behaviour. Unfortunately, there are many occasions when retailers fail to enforce age-related restrictions of the purchase of alcohol.

Limited evidence has emerged from research in the United States that exposure to point-of-sale promotions is related to alcohol consumption among young people. One study by Ellickson and colleagues examined the potential effects of several different types of alcohol advertising among 12 to 14 year-olds by surveying them repeatedly at ages 12, 13 and 14. It emerged here that those who were non-drinkers at age 12 were more likely to exhibit onset of drinking at age 14 if at age 13 they had been found to have reported exposure to in-store beer displays. Among youngsters who already drank at age 12, amount of exposure to magazines containing alcohol advertisements and attendance at concession stands selling alcohol at sports or music events predicted how often they drank at age 14. Those teenagers who had experienced potential print alcohol advertisements exposure or who had alcohol stands at events drank more at 14, if they had already started drinking at age 12.

A second survey examined adolescents' reported exposure to alcohol advertising in stores and to alcohol-branded promotional items and their association with self-reported drinking again amongst a sample of 12 to 14 year olds. The key dependent variables were whether respondents ever or never drank and whether or not they currently drank. Two-

thirds of respondents reported visits to stores that sold alcohol at least once a week. Such potential exposure to in-store alcohol promotions and displays predicted a greater likelihood of ever having drunk alcohol, but did not predict whether respondents currently drank.

One of the primary factors believed to contribute to the onset of under-age drinking is the sheer prevalence and visibility of alcohol. This does not simply refer to the extent to which young people are exposed to alcohol in the home, but also to its availability in the wider environment outside the home. Alcoholic drinks are on sale in numerous retail outlets, including popular major food and drinks retailers that are frequented by young people while shopping with parents or friends. The presence and positioning of alcoholic products and promotions for them at points of sale provide constant reminders of alcohol consumption. They also represent the sites at which purchases of alcohol by young people under the legal drinking age are most likely to take place.

Point-of-sale promotions have been identified by other researchers as having potentially significant effects upon product awareness and consumption among young people in respect of tobacco consumption in the United States and also in the United Kingdom. Promotions in retail outlets have also been found to play a similar role in relation to alcohol consumption.

New Research into Alcohol at Point of Sale

The current research included an analysis of point of sale displays and promotions of alcohol products. This research examined the presence of alcohol in retail outlets in Leicester and focused on those outlets located within relatively short distance (less than 800 metres) of a school, further education college or university.

Across 14 secondary schools and sixth-form colleges in the Leicester city area, there were on average around one and a half retail outlets per institution situated within 800 metres. There are eight further education colleges in Leicester of which just three had alcohol-selling retail outlets within 800 metres. In these cases, though, there were nine such retail outlets fairly close by. There are two universities in Leicester and between them they were found to have eight alcohol-selling retail outlets within 800 metres of their campuses. Hence, the density of proximal alcohol-selling outlets per educational

institution increased with education level. At the higher education level, where the density of such retail outlets was greatest, students are generally all over the legal alcohol drinking age.

An audit of product displays and in-store promotions revealed that alcohol was sold in three types of retail outlet: off-licences, supermarkets and newsagent/convenience stores. While off-licences would not generally be frequented by under-age drinkers, the other retail outlets are extensively used by children and teenagers before they reach the age of 18. This is significant when observing that supermarkets were found to contain extensive and diverse forms of alcohol product displays and advertising. Promotions for alcohol were also more spread around the store in the case of supermarkets. In newsagents/convenience stores, promotions tended to be mainly located with the product display in one part of the shop. Supermarkets were also more likely than other alcohol-selling retailers to position alcohol advertising at child's eye level. Floor level product displays for alcoholic beverages were more widely used by supermarkets than other store types.

Exterior promotions for alcohol were most often associated with specialist alcohol selling retailers - the off-licences. Even so, nearly one in five supermarkets audited here also used window displays to promote alcoholic drinks. Thus, in these cases, potential exposure to alcohol could occur not only for consumers entering the store but also for those walking along outside it.

Retail outlets that sell alcohol were also found to use promotions such as price offers, merchandising offers to consumers that were linked to brands, as well as other devices designed to make brand names more visible within the store environment. These devices were used across all store types, but it was significant to note the prevalence of special offers and product add-ons in supermarkets. Thus, in many ways, the most dynamic and diverse in-store promotional campaigning for alcohol occurred in supermarkets, also a retail environment in which those aged under-18 were highly likely to frequent. This importance of this finding is reinforced by other research about the potential consumer impact of these promotional devices.

9. Advertising, Alcohol Consumption and Young People

It is well established that young people's alcohol consumption can be influenced by a variety of factors. Whether children and teenagers start to drink themselves is linked to parental and peer group drinking patterns and to the attitudes towards drinking of others who represent important role models or sources of social norms and values. Media-related experiences have also been found to play a possible role in drinking onset and in shaping ongoing patterns of alcohol consumption. The current research included a new investigation of young people's alcohol consumption and its relationship to a range of other social and psychological factors, including their exposure to alcohol advertising.

A self-completion questionnaire survey was conducted with young people aged 17 to 21 years. Respondents were recruited from among a university and further education college populations in Leicester. Respondents were volunteers accessed via class tutors. Most questionnaires were completed at the end of class sessions, while some were returned by respondents in their own time to an address provided. A researcher explained to respondents the purpose of the survey and gave clear assurances that all questionnaires would be completed anonymously. Data could not therefore be traced back to specific respondents. In consequence, respondents were invited to be as honest as possible in giving their answers.

The survey was conducted using a sample of 298 respondents, which comprised 169 university students and 129 secondary school students. The majority of the participants were female students comprising 60% of the sample. In terms of age, the majority of the participants were between 18 and 19 years old (63%) with one in four (27%) aged 20+ years and 9% aged 17 years. The distribution of the various age groups across the two genders was relatively balanced.

Consumption was measured here in terms of self-reported frequencies of drinking alcohol, getting drunk, drinking more than five units of alcohol in a single session (binge drinking) and consumption of different types of alcoholic beverage (beer, cider, wine, spirits and alcopop). Exposure to alcohol advertising was based on self-reported data again that explored frequencies with which respondents could recall exposure to commercial messages in different media for different alcoholic brands, differentiated according to type of alcoholic drink (e.g., beers, cider, spirits, wine and alcopop). Among

the major objectives here was to find out whether exposure to alcohol advertising emerged as a significant predictor of alcohol consumption.

Turning first of all to the overall amount of reported drinking of alcohol, there was no evidence here that exposure to alcohol advertising was an important predictor variable. Instead, parental and peer group influences emerged as more significant. Parental drinking (especially by the male parent or guardian) and having friends who drink and spending time drinking with friends were the most important factors that underpinned how often the young people in this sample reported consumption of alcohol. This pattern was true regardless of whether they were asked about how often they drank during their lifetime, over the previous 12 months or over the previous 30 days.

Second, analyses were computed to explore predictors of how often respondents said they had got drunk. Once again, three time frames were used: in own lifetime, over the past 12 months and over the past 30 days. There was evidence again that peer group influences were important and, in particular having friends who got drunk on a regular basis. Witnessing of parents or guardians getting drunk was also a predictor of how often respondents had got drunk themselves in the previous 12 months. Not surprisingly other measures of quantity of alcohol consumption predicted frequency of getting drunk. What was particularly interesting here though was the emergence of alcohol advertising exposure variables as predictors. However, the direction of the relationship between alcohol advertising exposure and excessive drinking was not always the same.

In relation to frequency of getting drunk in the respondent's own lifetime, exposure to alcohol advertising in the cinema was a negative predictor. In other words, those respondents who reported lower levels of exposure to cinema advertising for alcoholic drinks were more likely to report getting drunk in their lifetime. One possible explanation for this result is that cinema-goers are people who less likely to get drunk and yet they experience higher levels of exposure to cinema-based alcohol advertising.

In relation to reported frequency of getting drunk in the previous 12 months or previous 30 days, exposure to alcohol advertising on television was a positive predictor. This means that respondents who reported higher levels of exposure to television alcohol advertising were also more likely to report getting drunk.

Finally, a series of analyses examined predictors of reported consumption of different types of alcohol, consisting of the most advertised brands during 2004-2006.. These included beer, cider, wine, spirits and alcopop. At the outset all these types of alcoholic beverage were aggregated to produce an overall measure of alcohol consumption. The extent to which specific types of alcoholic beverage – especially beer, cider and spirits – had been recently consumed was, not surprisingly, the major predictors of this measure of general alcohol consumption. None of the advertising measures predicted overall alcohol consumption, but there was a point-of-sale factor. Respondents who said that they regularly purchased alcohol when visiting a shop were more regular consumers of the most advertised alcohol brands.

Consumption of only two types of alcoholic beverage – cider and alcopop – was predicted by exposure to any form of alcohol advertising. There were no significant advertising predictors of reported consumption of the most advertised brands of beer, wine or spirits. In the case of cider and alcopop drinks, exposure to televised advertising of these drinks predicted frequency of consumption of their most advertised brands. In addition, reported frequencies of consumption of the most advertised brands of cider and alcopop and also of spirits were also predicted by a point-of-sale influence (regularity of make alcohol purchases when visiting a shop).

This research has indicated therefore that a range of factors in the young person's environment may affect their consumption of alcohol. Alcohol advertising on television (though not in any other media) and point-of-sale attention to alcohol are among the key predictors. What this research has also shown, however, is that in identifying possible influences of alcohol advertising, it is important to differentiate between different types of alcohol consumption. It is not alcohol consumption per se that is affected by advertising, but specific types of alcohol consumption. What is also significant is that alcopop drinks, that are well-established in terms of their popularity with young and under-age drinkers, are among the types of alcohol where consumption is predicted by exposure to relevant product advertising.

10. Control over Alcohol Advertising

The final part of this enquiry examined controls, codes of practice and regulations for alcohol advertising in UK and how they have been reviewed taking into account research with youth and advertising. Codes of practice have been devised by government-appointed regulators, industry-appointed regulators, trade associations and alcohol companies themselves. Some codes are medium-specific, while others provide umbrella frameworks of guidance for the marketing of alcoholic drinks across a range of media and promotional platforms.

Advertising in the UK is regulated by a combination of statutory and voluntary codes of practice that cover different media and forms of marketing or alcoholic products. The Office of Communications (Ofcom) regulates broadcast advertising (on television and radio) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is responsible for all forms of non-broadcast advertising. Ofcom was launched at the end of 2003 and replaced the Independent Television Commission and Radio Authority and adopted the advertising codes of each of those bodies.

Hence, both of these organisations maintain codes of practice on advertising within which all advertisers are required to operate. Each general advertising code of practice contains codes that are concerned specifically with alcohol advertising. Each organisation also handles advertising complaints from consumers and under recently established arrangements, although from 1 November 2004 Ofcom has sub-contracted broadcast advertising complaints handling to the ASA. The ASA operates its role in the regulation of broadcast advertising through the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP). The Broadcast Advertising Copy Clearance (BACC) is another body responsible for ensuring advance compliance on the part of advertisers with broadcast advertising codes of practice, while the ASA performs the same function in respect of non-broadcast advertising copy clearance.

In respect of non-broadcast advertising the ASA implements the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (also known as The CAP Code). CAP is a self-regulatory body that is responsible for drafting, revising and enforcing the Code. The CAP comprises members from the advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and media sectors. Hence, the

relevant industries have voluntarily signed up to this code of practice and abide by ASA judgements in relation to code breaches as identified either by the ASA itself or by consumers or organisations who complain to the ASA by advertisements.

In addition to the CAP Code, the ASA also abides by the guidelines laid down in the Radio Code and TV Code, both of which have been drawn up by Ofcom to regulate the content and scheduling of broadcast advertising.

Section 56 of the CAP Code presents a set of guidelines specifically concerned with non-broadcast advertising of alcoholic drinks advertising. This code contains 15 clauses that are presented in full in Table 10.1. Many of the rules laid down about non-broadcast advertising are reflected in the broadcast advertising codes and are concerned with ensuring that advertising for alcoholic products does not make claims that relate consumption to personal enhancement, social or sexual success or encourage excessive consumption or consumption before driving or using dangerous machinery. There are also restrictions imposed on the use of young people in alcohol advertising who might be perceived as under-age or who might present particularly attract role models to under-age drinkers.

In addition, in respect of alcohol marketing, the industry established a voluntary code of practice operated via The Portman Group from 1996. This code covers the naming, packaging and promotion of alcoholic drinks, but does not cover advertising. Complaints about packaging of alcoholic products that go through The Portman Group are assessed by an Independent Complaints Panel, but this Panel has no power to enforce any decisions it takes. Further regulation of alcoholic drinks operates through the Food Safety Act 1990 and Trading Standards Officers have powers to ensure that alcoholic drinks declare their alcoholic strength. A number of leading alcohol manufacturers (e.g., Diageo, InBev, Scottish and Newcastle) also operate their own alcohol marketing codes that embrace requirements linked to media-based advertising and promotions at points of sale. These codes in many of their details closely reflect the code of The Portman Group.

Are Regulations Tight Enough?

Lobby groups and other critics have argued that advertisers and regulators could go even further than their current codes and practices to safeguard the interests of young people

who may be 'at risk' from the potential influences of alcohol advertising. There have been calls for tighter restrictions of advertising of alcohol during peak viewing hours and during broadcast sports events that attract a lot of younger viewers. There has also been concern voiced about the techniques advertisers use to enhance the attractiveness of alcohol brands that may have particularly strong appeal to youngsters. The defence that alcohol advertising is not aimed at young people and certainly not at under-age drinkers has been challenged on the grounds that advertisements for alcoholic products tend to feature among the most liked television commercials and that they clearly contain ingredients that children and teenagers enjoy.

Advertising Code Issues

The current research analysed samples of televised and print alcohol advertisements and examined the nature of the appeals they used. The advertisements were sampled from periods before and after alcohol advertising code of practice changes were introduced (at the start of 2005) by Ofcom and the ASA. This analysis allowed for comparisons to be made in the types of appeals used on either side of these code changes and to assess whether code breaches were apparent in the post-2005 period.

All televised alcohol advertisements must abide by the requirements of the advertising codes of practice published by the Office of Communications (Ofcom). At the beginning of 2005, revised codes of practice for alcohol advertising on television were issued that required advertisers to tighten up even further on the kinds of appeals they are permitted to use in promoting alcohol brands. The coding frame classified each televised alcohol advertisements in accordance with the requirements of the Ofcom code. The extent to which these advertisements depicted appeals that might be prohibited was assessed.

Interestingly, in the current research, a non-significant difference was found in relation to the degree of violation of the advertising regulations, occurring in the two time periods. It was found that both television and print advertisements were found to be compliant with the advertising codes of practice in both periods under examination. Overall, the analysis detected 40 violations, 25 of which occurred in 2003-2004 and 15 in 2005-2006. The numbers of violations indicate the number of times a code was breached,

rather than the number of advertisements that were found in breach, since certain advertisements contained more than one violation.

It emerged that the most commonly violated rule regarded the explicit or subtle link of the advertised brand with the success of a social occasion such as a wedding, (11.8.1(a2)); and the explicit or subtle link of the advertised brand with behaviour that could be potentially dangerous after consuming alcohol. Such behaviour included swimming, diving and use of dangerous machinery. It needs to be clarified that it largely remained unclear whether alcohol had been consumed before a certain type of behaviour/activity took place; however, this could still constitute violation of rule 11.8.1(h), as any such ambiguity should be resolved.

Other violated rules included the connection of the advertised brand with daring and aggressive behaviour (11.8.1(b) – 11.8.2(b)); connection of the advertised brand with sexual activity, seduction and enhancement of an individual's attraction (11.8.1(c) – 11.8.2 (e)); and participation of people who appeared to be younger than 25 years old (11.8.2(a2)). It also emerged that the majority of violations were found in the Bacardi and Budweiser campaigns followed by Smirnoff and WKD.

Ofcom's research with young people in 2005 and 2007 revealed that three emotional themes were most prominent in driving the appeal of alcohol advertising: aspirational appeals, familiarity appeals and 'kidult' appeals. In the post-code-change era, young people in their teens and early 20s continued to endorse the importance of these appeals. The linking of an alcohol brand with social success or a socially happy occasion observed above resonates with the aspiration-related appeal theme and the importance of familiar and relevant settings in alcohol advertising to young consumers (Ofcom, 2007). The association of alcohol brands with risky and exciting behaviour that was observed by the analysis of advertisements in this research identified features that trigger 'kidult' style appeals of alcohol promotions among young consumers.

At the same time, though, it is important to note that such appeals were identified here in advertisements for brands of beer, vodka and alcopop. Ofcom's research showed that beer and alcopop received less television advertising expenditure, achieved fewer impacts on 16 to 24 year olds, and were also less likely to be recalled by young people in 2006 than in 2005. Vodka received slightly increased television advertising expenditure

in 2006 than in 2005, achieved an increased number of impacts through televised advertising among 16 to 244s, but recall of vodka advertisements still dropped over that time period (Ofcom, 2007).

When Ofcom's researchers showed young people a series of alcohol advertisements and asked in each case whether they thought each promotion 'makes the drink look appealing' or 'will encourage people to drink', advertisements with aspiration-related themes emerged as the ones perceived as being likely to have the strongest impact. Two advertisements (for brands were not identified) that were most widely endorsed in terms of enhancing the appeal of the drink and encouraging people to drink featured alcohol being drunk by young people in attractive social settings. The scenes were described as ones young consumers said they would like to be in. These advertisements also offered familiar settings or settings that young people said they could identify with (Ofcom, 2007).

Other changes in the nature of appeals utilised in televised alcohol advertisements were noted before and after code of practice revisions. Although the most prominent types of appeal – to taste or flavour and to quality and tradition – did not exhibit any shift in prominence, there was an increase after code of practice changes in the extent to which enjoyment, pleasure and relaxation appeals were used in alcohol advertising. There was a reduction from 2005 in the use of male voice-overs, but an increase was observed in visible depiction of male consumption of alcohol on screen.

The use of sexual appeals reduced after code changes to around one-fifth of their pre-code change level. At the same time, there was an increased use of friendship or belongingness appeals in association with alcohol brands. There was also an increase in the extent to which alcohol advertisements on television used cartoon animation and other special effects from 2005 compared with the earlier pre-code change period. These observed changes do not constitute code breaches in the strictest sense but they do, in some cases, and most notably perhaps in the use of animation special effects, represent attributes that do not always follow the 'spirit' of the codes. It is known that cartoon animation can attract the attention of children and that is one reason why codes of practice highlight the need to take care in the use of these production techniques.

It is recognised that alcohol advertisers must be given some degree of creative licence in the production of their product promotions and must be able to utilise appeals that can effectively establish distinctive brand images for what are, after all, legal products. Nonetheless, some forms of product appeal remain in common practice that may catch the attention of potential under-age drinkers. The survey evidence provided in this research indicated that even in the presence of controls for variables such as parental and peer group influences upon alcohol consumption, some measures of alcohol consumption among young legal-age drinkers displayed relationships with reported alcohol advertising exposure. The extent to which young drinkers said they had got drunk in their lifetime, in the past 12 months or in the last month was related to reported exposure to alcohol advertising at the cinema. The extent to which young drinkers claimed to have drunk five alcoholic drinks or more in a row in the past month was predicted by reported exposure to alcohol advertising on television. Finally, claimed consumption of alcopops and of cider was predicted in each case by the amount of exposure to televised advertising for those products. There is some evidence here therefore that exposure to alcohol advertising is selectively related to specific patterns of alcohol consumption among young drinkers.

The research in alcohol advertising and young people reported by Ofcom in 2007 provides further evidence relevant to the interpretation of these links between advertising exposure and alcohol consumption. Cider experienced significant growth in expenditure on televised advertising between 2005 and 2006. Cider advertising also achieved more impacts among 16 to 24 year olds and was more widely recalled by young people surveyed by Ofcom. These changes might offer further insight into why cider advertising exposure was found to be related positively to consumption of cider by the young people in the survey reported in this research.

With alcopops, however, these same variables moved in the opposite direction to that for cider. Ofcom's analysis in 2007 reported that advertising expenditure in 2006 was lower than in 2005 on television and in other media, impacts of televised advertising fell by 63 per cent, and recall of alcopops advertisements by 11 to 21 year olds also fell. These findings might therefore lead to an expectation that exposure to televised advertising for alcopops ought not to predict reported consumption. A closer look at the

data from Ofcom and the current study may provide an explanation for this apparent anomaly. Although Ofcom reported a decline in young peoples' reported consumption of alcopops between 2005 and 2007, which is consistent with the advertising expenditure, impacts and recall data, the fall in consumption did not apply to all brands of alcopops nor to all categories of consumer. Consumption of the *WKD* brand showed a slight increase between 2005 and 2007 for young male alcohol consumers. In the current research the link between exposure to television alcopops advertising and alcopops consumptions was statistically significant only among males and not among females.

The research evidence collected by the current investigation and that reviewed from other sources underlines the need to continue to monitor the styles of alcohol advertising that are used by product advertisers. Alcohol advertising on television has changed since the introduction of code of practice changes in 2005, but this advertising continues to contain attributes that appeal to young people. Furthermore, it is apparent that examination of relationships between overall alcohol consumption and advertising may disguise more subtle relationships that could exist between advertising exposure and consumption for specific categories of alcoholic drink. Although alcopops may be displaying signs of a waning market, cider consumption has grown dramatically. It may be no coincidence that the category of alcoholic drink that has shown the most significant growth in consumption also emerged here as the one for which the most significant link exists between advertising exposure and reported consumption.