

<p>Institution: University of Leicester</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 36: Communication, cultural and media studies, library and information management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Media, alcohol advertising/promotion and the drinking habits of young people</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This study demonstrates the impact of the Unit’s research into the relationship between alcohol advertising/promotion, media representations of drinking, and the drinking habits of young people. Our research addressed the concerns of policy makers and health education bodies about the relationship between alcohol advertising/promotion and alcohol consumption habits of teenagers and young adults. Our findings mapped the extent of media alcohol/drinking representations and showed a change in advertising content and overall code-compliance following the introduction of a new code of practice in 2005. The research found no evidence of a relationship between the general reported exposure to alcohol advertising and levels of alcohol consumption among young people. The findings have informed on-going policy recommendations and initiatives regarding the regulation of alcohol advertising, promotion and consumption. Additionally they have informed the policies of government and other agencies, both nationally and internationally (UK, EU, Australia).</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research comprises research by Anders Hansen (2003a, 2003b) into the extent and nature of alcohol representations (including advertising, entertainment and news/factual programme images of alcohol and drinking) on television, and research by Barrie Gunter, Anders Hansen and Maria Touri (2008) into young people’s alcohol consumption and the role played by advertising and alcohol marketing. For the latter study, the two principal investigators, Professor Barrie Gunter and Anders Hansen, both of whom have contributed for more than 25 years to research on alcohol and the media, responded to a call from the Alcohol Education and Research Council (AERC – now: Alcohol Research UK). A proposal was submitted to the sponsor for a study that would combine a number of methods that would examine the nature of mainstream media advertising of alcohol, alcohol placement in retail environments, and relationships between alcohol advertising experiences among young people and their self-reported alcohol drinking habits. The researchers were awarded a contract for 12 months to conduct their investigation. The research was carried out from July 2006 to October 2007 by Professor Barry Gunter (UoL from 2005), Senior Lecturer Anders Hansen (UoL from 1983), and Lecturer Dr Maria Touri (UoL from 2006) of the Department of Media and Communication.</p> <p>The objectives of the research were:</p> <p><u>Objective one:</u> To provide an analysis of alcohol advertising before and after new codes of practice were introduced for alcohol advertising on television.</p> <p><u>Objective two:</u> To assess the potential contribution of alcohol advertising exposure to the reported alcohol consumption habits of teenagers and young adults.</p> <p>A systematic search and review was undertaken of research literature in advertising and marketing fields to identify variables that are known to mediate consumers’ reactions to advertising.</p> <p>Content analysis methodology was used to systematically describe the nature of the content and format attributes of any qualifying advertisements. The research located alcohol advertisements across television and print media in 2003-2004 and in 2005-2006, before and after implementation of television alcohol advertising code of practice changes. In total, there were 292 televised advertisements and 140 print advertisements. Each advertisement was coded on a range of content dimensions, including those specifically relevant to the code of practice governing advertising.</p> <p>An analysis was carried out in 40 retail outlets in Leicester. Each of these outlets was visited and</p>

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an in-store audit conducted of the presence and scale of different forms of alcohol promotions and displays in each store.

A self-completion questionnaire survey was conducted using a sample of 298 respondents, which comprised 169 university students and 129 secondary school students in the Leicester city area. Respondents, aged 17 to 22 years, answered questions about their alcohol consumption habits, their exposure to alcohol advertising, their familiarity with alcohol brands and their personal characteristics.

The research was undertaken shortly after the code of practice governing television advertising of alcohol had been changed with effect from January 2005. This provided the opportunity to find out whether televised alcohol advertisements after the code changes were code compliant. There had been a great deal of concern about the role of advertising in encouraging young people to drink to excess in the hope of recreating the often fun and successful lifestyles of drinkers depicted in advertisements.

The research found that televised advertisements changed in terms of the themes and settings that characterised them after the code of practice changes were introduced. In particular, after code changes, virtually no alcohol advertising depicted drinking as being associated with social or sexual success. Nor did any themes feature drinking excessively. Alcohol advertising on television was therefore largely code compliant.

The survey indicated that there was no relationship between general reported exposure to alcohol advertising and the amount of alcohol consumption among young people. There was some indication of a relationship between drinking specific types of alcoholic drink and exposure to advertising for that type of drink.

3. References to the researchGrant

Gunter, B. and Hansen, A., University of Leicester, The Representation and Reception of Meaning in Alcohol Advertising and Young People's Drinking. Research grant, Alcohol Education and Research Council (now: Alcohol Research UK): £46,745.

Publications (in reverse chronological order)

- Hansen, A., & Gunter, B. (2012). Alcohol, Advertising, Media and Consumption among Children, Teenagers and Young Adults. In C. T. Salmon (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 36* (pp. 276-315). New York: Taylor & Francis/Routledge.
- Gunter, B., Hansen, A., & Touri, M. (2010) *Alcohol Marketing, Media Representation and Young People's Drinking*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gunter, B., Hansen, A., & Touri, M. (2008). The Representation and Reception of Meaning in Alcohol Advertising and Young People's Drinking. London: Report for the Alcohol Education and Research Council, January 2008.
- Hansen, A., & Gunter, B. (2007). Constructing public and political discourse on alcohol issues: Towards a framework for analysis. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 42(2), 150-157.
- Hansen, A. (2003a). *The portrayal of alcohol and alcohol consumption in television news and drama programmes*. Leicester: University of Leicester.
- Hansen, A. (2003b). Alcohol and the mass media. In A. Macara, E. Appleby & A. Jenkins (Eds.), *100% Proof: Research for Action on Alcohol* (pp. 89-91). London: Alcohol Concern.

4. Details of the impact

Original research by Anders Hansen (2003a and 2003b) fed into leading alcohol campaign organisation Alcohol Concern's input into the Government's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2004, from which the new tighter code of practice governing alcohol advertising resulted with effect from 2005:

Eric Appleby, Chief Executive Officer, Alcohol Concern, noted that:

“Anders Hansen is an acknowledged expert in the field advertising and the media and his work on *Alcohol and the mass media* was an integral and important component of the report *100% Proof: Research for Action on Alcohol* published in 2003 by Alcohol Concern. This report played a significant role in the shaping of the first cross government alcohol strategy (*Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, 2004*) and the mass media chapter has been used consistently since then by Alcohol Concern and others to reinforce arguments for the tighter control of alcohol advertising.” (Appleby, email 22 January 2013).

The Gunter, Hansen and Touri (2008) research was undertaken shortly after the code of practice governing television advertising of alcohol had been revised and the findings showed a high level of compliance with the revised code; virtually no alcohol advertising depicted drinking as being associated with social or sexual success, nor did any advertisements feature excessive drinking.

The results of the studies continue to be of relevance to and have impact on on-going debate, research, policy initiatives and regulation regarding alcohol advertising/promotion and alcohol consumption/alcohol-related problems, as seen in the continuing prominence of concerns about alcohol advertising and promotion – and the degree of regulation thereof - in successive government papers, most particularly the Government’s 2007 paper *Safe. Sensible. Social. The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy* (building directly on the Government’s 2004 paper) and the current government’s 2012 paper setting out *The Government’s Alcohol Strategy*.

The research has likewise influenced and been drawn on in alcohol harm reduction strategy and policy in Australia, as evidenced in:

- a) The Australian Government’s National Preventative Health Strategy, launched on 1 September 2009, which calls for increased monitoring and controls in relation to alcohol advertising and promotion, and references the Leicester alcohol research in its associated Technical Paper No 3 in support of its action strategy regarding reduction of harm related to alcohol promotion and excessive consumption; and
- b) the Australian Medical Association’s call for a new policy agenda on *Alcohol Marketing and Young People* (AUA, 2012), referencing the Leicester research in support of calls for tighter regulation of alcohol marketing and promotion.

Concern about the topics addressed by the Leicester research – media representations and in particular the roles of advertising and related mediated alcohol promotion strategies – continues to feature prominently in alcohol strategy papers by leading organisations (e.g. The World Health Organisation, 2010; the British Medical Association, The Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum) and governments (e.g. HM Government, 2012, and the Australian government, 2009).

As well as providing important evidence to inform alcohol control policies and regulation, particularly in relation to the codes governing alcohol promotion, the Leicester research has informed the field of alcohol research and policy by identifying key approaches and directions for research, funding (Nicholls/ARUK response and statement, see below; AHRC funded research, which draws on Gunter, Hansen and Touri 2008; and on Hansen, 2003) and policy initiatives in this field.

Dr James Nicholls, Research Manager, Alcohol Research UK (previously AERC) indicated (email March 2013) that while Alcohol Research UK does not systematically monitor the impact of research funded by them, the report of this study – available from the ARUK website – would likely have been widely consulted by policy makers. He also testified to the impact of Hansen and Gunter’s work on his own research: “Hansen and Gunter’s research did have an impact on my own work before I joined ARUK (both the ARUK study, but also an article that appeared in *Alcohol and Alcoholism* in 2007). They informed a project I carried out (also ARUK-funded) into news and social media representations of alcohol, which led to a publication in *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*. That project, in turn, helped me secure a British Academy research fellowship on public discourse and alcohol.” (Nicholls, email 16 January 2013)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

References:

- Commonwealth of Australia. (2009). Australia: the healthiest country by 2020. Technical Report No 3 Preventing alcohol-related harm in Australia: a window of opportunity (Including addendum for October 2008 to June 2009). Canberra, ACT: Australian Government: Preventative Health Taskforce. Available at:
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[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/CCD7323311E358BECA2575FD000859E1/\\$File/nphs-roadmap.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/CCD7323311E358BECA2575FD000859E1/$File/nphs-roadmap.pdf)
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- AHRC funded research:
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Scoping-studies-and-reviews/Documents/Alcohol-and-performing-community.pdf>
- Factual statement from Executive Director, *Alcohol Concern*, email 22 January 2013.
Factual statement from Research Manager, *Alcohol Research UK*, email 16 January 2013.