

The impact of advertisements on adolescents' decision to consume beer: The case of selected high school students in Shashemene town, West Arsi zone

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Abstract

Introduction: Advertising of alcoholic beverages is a potential public health issue if it can be shown that advertising has a direct and material effect on alcohol consumption. A substantial proportion of alcohol advertising reaches an underage audience and is presented in a style that is attractive to youths.

Objective: To assess the impact of beer advertisements in influencing the decision of selected high school students to drink beer in Shashemene town, West Arsi zone, Ethiopia.

Methods: School based cross-sectional study design was used where the process of data collection was undertaken at a point of time. The study was used a structured questionnaire and distributed to 300 purposively selected boys and girls between 15 and 17 years old. A pilot study was undertaken before the actual data collection processes. Data cleaning, coding, organizing activities were undertaken after data collection. Then, data were entered into SPSS version 20 for further analysis after which both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were utilized for data analysis and presentation.

Results: Adolescents in the study area are highly (97.3%) exposed to beer advertisements. Beer advertisements have brought both psychological and practical consequences for study participants. This consequence ranges from predisposing respondents to develop favorable attitudes towards beer (18%), influencing them to drink beer (12.7%), increasing their motivation to drink beer for the sake of trying to win lotteries (12%).

Conclusion: The broadcasting of beer advertisements both on the electronic and social media have brought remarkable impact on adolescents' alcohol drinking behavior in the study area. Therefore, the danger associated with alcohol marketing practices in Ethiopia calls for effective enforcement of existing relevant legal codes.

Keywords: Advertisement, alcohol, adolescents, exposure, Shashemene

Introduction

Alcohol industries in many parts of the world, including Ethiopia, prefer competition through advertising than competing through price (Henry 2002). According to (Richard and Marry 2004), a substantial proportion of alcohol advertising reaches an underage audience and is presented in a style that is attractive to youths. Advertising of alcoholic beverages is a potential public health issue if it can be shown that advertising has a direct and material effect on alcohol consumption or that advertising has a direct and material effect on alcohol abuse outcomes, generally or for specific populations (Jon 2001). Alcohol advertising manipulates adolescents' vulnerability by shaping their attitudes, perceptions and particularly expectancies about alcohol use, which then influence youth decisions to drink (Peter 2007).

According to (DHS 2007), breweries in Ethiopia are said to have produced 1.56 million hectoliters of beer during 2006 and this represented 37% of all beverages produced by commercial producers in the country. These beer factories have made substantial publicity to step up consumption, mainly through supporting sports and other events. Drinking is generally presented as a positive, glamorous or sexy activity

promoting feelings of togetherness, relaxation, and fun. The cumulative effect of these repeated positive associations with drinking fosters positive beliefs and expectations and encourages early drinking (Alcohol Health Watch 2003).

There has now emerged a new style of advertising commercial alcohols where people are encouraged to drink more alcohol in exchange for expecting attractive and "life-changing" prizes. These companies usually warn that the alcohols are not for sale for adolescents under the age of 18. The paradox is that while these alcohols are advertised on media widely accessible to the adolescents telling them that drinking the beverage brings reward, at the same time, they warn that drinking is exclusive just for a certain population segment. Therefore, there is a reasonable premise to doubt that the scenario may influence adolescents' decision to consume alcohol provided that they are frequently exposed to the advertisements. The prevalence of alcohol consumption among young people and its association with sexual practices and exposure to HIV/AIDS is well researched in various parts of Ethiopia (. (Dawit and Teferi 2013); (Shewaye and Hassen 2015); (Ayelu, et al. 2012)). These studies

took age, sex, peer pressure, educational achievement and the like variables as determinants of alcohol consumption among the survey respondents. Moreover, (Henok and Yemane 2012) assessed alcohol advertising practices in Ethiopia from a legal perspective and found that alcohol advertising practices in Ethiopia contravene with fundamental principles of marketing for alcoholic beverages. The target populations of most researches undertaken elsewhere in Ethiopia have been University, high school, and college students. It implies that the participants of these researches would be above 18 years old and hence findings of high prevalence of alcohol consumption in this academic status may not be surprising. Nevertheless, even a single study that examined the impacts of recently emerging alcohol advertisements on arousing beer consumption interests of underage adolescents in Ethiopia is hardly found. The present research was, therefore, meant to assess the impact of beer advertisements in predisposing adolescents to consume beer in selected high schools of Shashemene town, West Arsi zone- Oromia, Ethiopia.

Materials and Methods

School based cross-sectional study design was used where the process of data collection was undertaken at a point of time. Data were collected using survey research method. Anonymous and self-administered questionnaire was designed for this purpose, translated into both Amharic and Afan Oromo local languages, and distributed to systematically selected samples of high school (grade 9 and 10) students. Multistage cluster sampling technique was used to select the final respondents in the survey questionnaire. First, Shashemene town was chosen with the intention that young people living relatively in the urban areas of the country are more exposed to alcohol advertisements and more susceptible to be influenced by the scenario. Among the schools located in the town, three high schools were randomly selected. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select participants of grade 9 and 10 with in the age of 15 to 17 years old at the time of data collection. Accordingly, a total of 300 school boys and girls were chosen proportionally from the three high schools to participate in the study. Above all, all the necessary cares were considered to reduce potential bias during the processes of sample selection. Data cleaning, coding, and organizing activities were undertaken after data collection. Then, data were entered into SPSS version 20 for further analysis. Moreover, descriptive statistical tools, such as percentage, frequency tables, and charts were used to see the level of young people's exposure to various types of beer advertisements and the prevalence of beer consumption among the study population. Data

presentation and interpretation of statistical results were done in an attempt to find out answers to the specific research questions of the study.

Results

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of respondents in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics. As the study was undertaken on adolescent high school students that are not eligible for alcohol drinking, the majority (44.7%) of respondents were 16 years old. Females have constituted 57% of the survey participants. As far as the religious affiliation of respondents is concerned, 156 of the 300 participants were orthodox Christians, followed by 71 Muslims. Moreover, the residential background of respondents seems to have been dominated by those who claim to have grown up in an urban area (93.3%). Furthermore, most respondents (90.3%) replied that both of their parents are alive while 1.0% responded that both of their parents have already died.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency (%)
Age	15	68 (22.7%)
	16	134 (44.7%)
	17	98 (32.7%)
Sex	Male	129 (43.0%)
	Female	171 (57.0%)
Religion	Orthodox Christian	156 (52.0%)
	Muslim	71 (23.7%)
	Protestant	62 (20.7%)
	Catholic	4 (1.3%)
	Non-believer (Pagan)	1 (0.3%)
	Other	6 (2.0%)
Residential background	Urban	280 (93.3%)
	Rural	20 (6.7%)
Number of currently living parents (guardians)	Both parents still alive	271 (90.3%)
	Single parent	26 (8.7%)
	Both parents died	3 (1.0%)
	N	300(100.0%)

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of respondents in terms of experiences and level of exposure to advertisements of various beers through electronic media outlets, particularly television. As shown in the table, underage high school adolescents are highly exposed to alcohol advertisements. 97.3% of survey participants responded that they have ever watched beer advertisements while only 2.7% disclosed that they have never been familiar with such advertisements. Moreover, respondents were also asked about how many times on average they see/listen to beer advertisements. Accordingly, 36.1% of them replied that they watch or listen to the advertisements 10 times and above in a day, while 11% answered just 1 time a day. The exposure of school-going adolescents to beer advertisements is not limited to watching the scenes through television screen.

Rather, research participants have also reported to have ever seen such advertisements on social media. The present study can be a testimony about the ever-increasing involvement of young people in the use of social media. For instance, from the 300 survey respondents, 186(62%) of them replied that they

commonly use any of the social media and from these, 13.7% reported to use it for two hours per day when asked about the average number of hours they spend on using the social media. 23% answered to use it for less than an hour, while only 1.3% said that they use social media for twelve or more hours per day.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of respondents in terms of exposure to beer advertisements (N=300)

Variables	Categories	Frequency (%)
Experiences of watching/listening to beer advertisements	YES	292 (97.3%)
	NO	8 (2.7%)
	N	300 (100.0%)
	1 time a day	33 (11.0%)
Level of exposure of adolescents to the advertisements	2 times a day	24 (8.0%)
	3 times a day	44 (14.7%)
	4 times a day	30 (10.0%)
	5 times a day	31 (10.3%)
	6 times a day	8 (2.7%)
	7 times a day	9 (3.0%)
	8 times a day	5 (1.7%)
	9 times a day	7 (2.3%)
	10 times a day or more	108 (36.1%)
	N	299 (99.7%)

In figure 1, it is shown that social media have also provided an extensive playing field for beer producing companies to advertise their products. Significant

proportions of adolescents spending time on using the social media seem to have been easy prey for the advertisements.

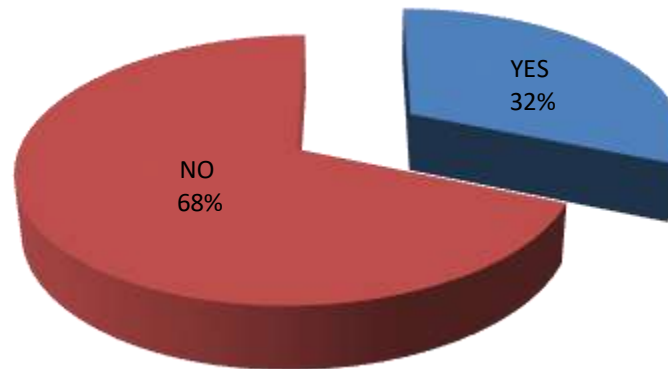


Figure 1: Experiences of watching beer adverts on social media

The increased exposure of adolescents to various types of beer advertisements seems to have been exacerbated by how the advertisements are presented. In this study, 46.3% of respondents revealed that they feel entertained when watching these advertisements. Of this percentage of survey participants, 17%

answered that they enjoy most the scene of the advertisement in which people are viewed when receiving material rewards after drinking beer, as shown in chart 2. Moreover, 16.3% enjoy watching people celebrating holydays together drinking beer.

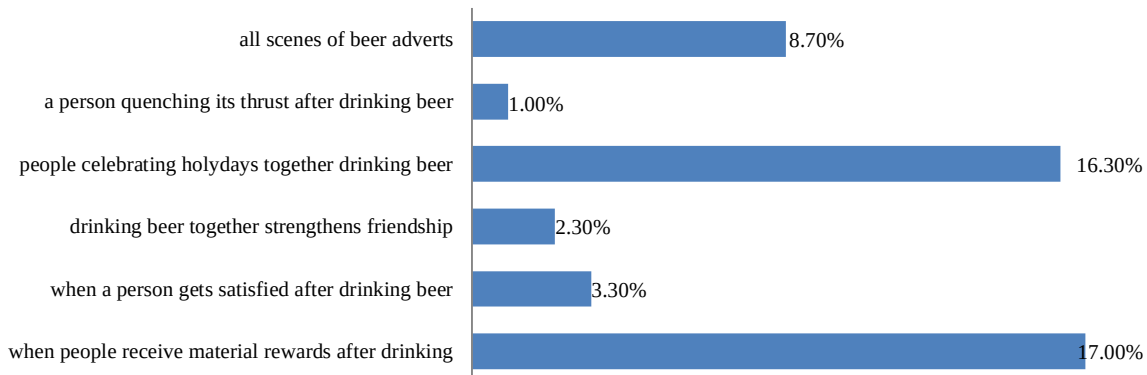


Figure2: scenes of beer advert dramas having entertaining effects

The Effect of Advertisements on Young People's Decision to Drink Alcohol: Data in table 3 reveal that beer advertisements not only made adolescents to develop favorable attitude towards beer (18%), but also have influenced their decision to consume beer of one kind or another (12.7%). This influence might have been due to the content of the advertisements produced to have the effect of motivating anyone at

any age to attempt winning the attractive material rewards that can be accrued from drinking beer. A significant proportion of survey participants (92.7%), being aware that consuming beer is not just inhaling alcohol but it is also trying a lottery, said to have drank beer (12%) with the expectation that they may win the game.

Table 3: The effects of beer advertisements on young people's decision to drink (N=300)

Variables	Categories	Frequency (%)
Beer adverts made to develop favorable attitude towards beer	YES	54 (18.0%)
	NO	246 (82.0%)
Ever drank beer being initiated by the adverts	YES	38 (12.7%)
	NO	262 (87.3%)
Awareness about the possible rewards gained from drinking beer	YES	278 (92.7%)
	NO	22 (7.3%)
Experience of drinking beer to try chances of winning rewards	YES	36 (12.0%)
	NO	264 (88.0%)
	N	300 (100.0%)

Data in table 3 reveal that beer advertisements not only made adolescents to develop favorable attitude towards beer (18%), but also have influenced their decision to consume beer of one kind or another (12.7%). This influence might have been due to the content of the advertisements produced to have the effect of motivating anyone at any age to attempt winning the attractive material rewards that can be accrued from drinking beer. A significant proportion of survey participants (92.7%), being aware that consuming beer is not just inhaling alcohol but it is also trying a lottery, said to have drank beer (12%) with the expectation that they may win the game.

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to examine the impact of beer advertisements on high school students' decision to drink beer among selected school going boys and girls that were under the legitimate age of drinking during the time of study in Shashemene town, West Arsi zone, Ethiopia. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 300 purposively selected samples.

This study showed that high school students are highly exposed to advertisements of different alcoholic beverages, especially beer. The exposure varies not only in frequency of exposure, but also in the channels through which these advertisements are transmitted. Furthermore, the potential impacts of beer advertisements in predisposing underage high school students to drink beer just to try to win attractive lottery rewards could have been expected even to increase in the future, hadn't Ethiopian government took the initiative to put restrictions on broadcasting alcohol advertisements that is expected to be effective soon. Part of the findings of the present study is consistent with the one found by (Peter 2007). According to his research, the volume of advertisements and media exposure increases the likelihood of young people starting to drink and the amount they drink on any one occasion. The author further asserted that high school boys that are frequent television viewers drink more than lighter viewers; each one hour increase in television viewing at baseline was associated with a 9% increased risk for

initiating drinking. Moreover, the conclusion of the present study about the relationship between beer advertisements and youth drinking behavior is similar to the conclusion of research undertaken by (Andersen et al. 2009). They stated that exposure to media and commercial communications on alcohol is associated with the likelihood that adolescents will start to drink alcohol, and with increased drinking amongst baseline drinkers. On the other hand, the finding of the present research contradicts with the findings of Barrie et al. (2009). The authors found no significant relationships between exposure to any type of alcohol advertising and general alcohol consumption.

Besides, the findings of the present study are also consistent with a study undertaken in other African countries. For instance, a research about alcohol marketing practices and the effects of exposure to alcohol marketing in Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, and Zambia concluded that alcohol marketing exposure increased the likelihood of the onset of drinking alcohol and to increase the likelihood of heavy episodic drinking among the target population (Avalon 2014). Moreover, Mawethu (2014) concluded that alcohol advertisements have a significant impact on influencing the drinking behavior of young populations in South Africa. High school students' use of substances can be more or less problematic depending on social influences and the extent to which she/he is rewarded for the behavior. The high school student may learn positive as well as negative consequences associated with the behavior from social influences (Kodjo and Klein 2002).

Conclusion and recommendation

High school students are highly exposed to beer advertisements in the study area. Moreover, such exposure of high school students to beer advertisements is not only changing their perception towards beer, but also predisposing them to drink beer. Furthermore, these beer advertisements accompanied by lotteries containing very attractive material rewards also had the power of influencing high school students to drink beer for the sake of winning lotteries. An increasing access to the internet through smartphones which enhanced the use of social media among school young boys and girls has also created a conducive atmosphere for beer companies to easily reach their targets, in addition to the electronic broadcasts in the country. The dramatic elements that are intentionally designed in ways that manipulate the social, psychological and cultural contexts of the target audiences have also increased the chance of adolescents to be easily exposed and influenced by the advertisements. Most alcohol advertisement practices

in Ethiopia contradict relevant proclamations given leniency in law enforcement activities. Therefore, effective enforcement of the law may bring deterrence effects thereby reducing the impact of alcohol advertisements. The new relevant proclamation recently promulgated by the Ethiopian parliament seems to solve most of the problems discussed in this paper and hence, all the concerned bodies should work hard in materializing it.

Conflict of interest: Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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