The cognitive and behavioural impact of pro-alcohol and anti-alcohol advertisements

Kyle G. Brown, Kaidy Stautz, Gareth J. Hollands, Eleanor M. Winpenny, Theresa M. Marteau
Alcohol advertisements

Alcohol brand images appear in 20% of prime time TV ad breaks (Lyons et al., 2013)

91% of adolescents aged 12-20 report exposure to televised alcohol advertising (CAMY, 2010)

- **Industry position:** Marketing encourages brand-switching, not increased consumption

- Two systematic reviews of longitudinal studies indicate a dose-response effect on alcohol initiation and consumption in young people (Anderson et al., 2009; Smith & Foxcroft, 2009)

- Equivocal evidence of immediate effects
Alcohol warning advertisements

- Highlight short- or long-term negative consequences of alcohol use
- Produced by governments, public health bodies, charities
- Absence of evidence regarding efficacy
Research questions

1. Do pro- and anti-alcohol advertisements:
   a) influence alcohol-related attitudes?
   b) encourage/discourage alcohol seeking behaviour?

2. Are effects modified by socioeconomic status (education) or typical drinking?
Sample and design

- 373 participants recruited via research agency
- Aged 18-40 (M = 28.0, SD = 5.6)
- 60% female; 85% white British

Participants randomised to one of three groups and exposed to either:

- 4 alcohol promoting advertisements
- 4 alcohol warning advertisements
- 4 bank advertisements (control group)
Measures

- Unipolar Implicit Association Tests
  - Positive and negative implicit attitudes

- Explicit attitudes towards drinking alcohol
  e.g. I consider drinking alcohol to be: very pleasant - very unpleasant

- Voucher selection
  - Choice of £5 voucher for either pub or cafe
Results

Implicit attitudes

- No main effects of condition
- In heavier drinkers, viewing alcohol promoting advertisements increased positive implicit attitudes ($\beta = .15, p = .04$) and decreased negative implicit attitudes ($\beta = -.17, p = .02$).
A  POSITIVE IMPLICIT ATTITUDES  

B  NEGATIVE IMPLICIT ATTITUDES
Results

**Implicit attitudes**
- In heavier drinkers, viewing alcohol warning advertisements decreased negative implicit attitudes ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = .01$).

**Explicit attitudes**
- Significantly more positive after exposure to alcohol promoting advertisements than after alcohol warnings ($p = .003$)
  - Experimental groups did not significantly differ from control group
Results

Voucher choice

- No group differences
- Majority (69%) selected non-alcohol reward
Research questions

1. Do pro- and anti-alcohol advertisements:
   a) influence alcohol-related attitudes? Yes
   b) encourage/discourage alcohol seeking behaviour? No

2. Are effects modified by socioeconomic status (education) or typical drinking?
   Yes – Effects limited to heavier drinkers
Next steps

Replication with

- alcohol consumption as a behavioural endpoint
- Focus on heavier drinkers
Thank you

e: ks704@medschl.cam.ac.uk
w: bhru.iph.cam.ac.uk
t: @BHRUCambridge