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ALCOHOL ADVERTISING: IS IT ACCEPTABLE?

Have you ever counted how many times you have seen drinking depicted as cool, exciting, and a rite of passage in movies, social media, and on television?

The alcohol industry pours millions of advertising dollars into media trying to influence people's choices and win their loyalty. They use digital and social media effectively and blur the lines between advertising and content. Alcohol brands also sponsor events, organizations, and causes to get their names in front of the public, including youth.

There are two different perceptions of such ads. Some people believe that alcohol is a toxic substance and the commercials are promoting something which is really bad for us. Many advertisements use rock music, animation or appealing images which increase their popularity among younger viewers and alcohol adverts are shown to be the most remembered and a favorite with teenagers. TV commercials never show people drinking and having a really bad time. All the images are of people socializing, laughing, enjoying themselves. The images portrayed by alcohol advertisement clearly do not show the reality.

Countries such as France, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Kenya have even banned all alcohol advertising on television and billboards.

Some other countries did not ban ads completely. They introduced different types of bans. Bans covering specific locations and specific times are the most common, whereas bans covering specific advertisers are the least common. Bans covering specific times are largely regulated through statutory as opposed to non-statutory regulation. The time bans are usually a watershed for specific beverages and media, and usually restrict alcohol marketing for the whole day or the afternoon until somewhere between 18.00 and 22:30 hours.

However, a lot of sources claim that there is no main effect of condition on alcohol consumption. Instead of increasing total consumption, the goal of advertisers is to encourage consumers to switch to their brand. Thus, effective advertisers gain market share. Restricting alcohol promoting advertising could therefore remove a potential influence on positive alcohol-related cognitions and emotions among heavy drinking young adults. Findings also support the development of alcohol warning advertising that induces negative emotion as a strategy for reducing alcohol consumption.

A *USA Today* survey found that teens say ads have a greater influence on their desire to drink in general than on their desire to buy a particular brand of alcohol. Eighty percent of general public respondents in a poll by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms believed “that alcohol advertising influences youth to drink alcoholic beverages.”

Another poll, done for an alcohol-industry-funded organization called the Century Council, found that 73% of the public believes that “alcohol advertising is a major contributor to underage drinking.”

But what is situation in Belarus? In order to answer this question we have conducted our own survey among teens themselves (students) and adults. We have asked 67 students and 29 adults. The questions were as following:

1. How often do you see alcohol ads?
2. Have you noticed reduction in the amount of ads?
3. Do these ads influence your preferences?
4. Do you drink alcohol? (If yes, then why (for the company, saw the ad and want to have a beer, relax at the party, to escape the reality))
5. Do you think these ads should be forbidden?

Around 70% of students think that ads have nothing to do with teens' consumption of alcohol. But adults believe that it has direct influence.

All things considered, we want to express our point of view. Ads should not form your view though we are not going to lie, alcoholic advertisement can be pretty useful and be able to help you make a better choice. Obviously, it is only up to you to decide how you are going to perceive alcohol advertisement, but do not forget, that you see only the better side of the coin because producers just want to sell you their products whatever way they can. Do not let yourself be fooled and keep your head on straight!

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