

Alcohol marketing strategies in environments valued by French youths: observations and perceptions

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CONTEXT

In France, to protect minors, **direct or indirect alcohol advertising is restricted to neutral contents** (olfactory, gustative characteristics...) and a **limited list of media** ("Évin" law, 1991), incl. the Internet. Indirect advertising is the use of any distinctive sign reminiscent of an alcoholic drink.

Sponsoring is banned when having direct or indirect alcohol advertising purpose.

Since 2015, the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT) has been developing the French Alcohol Marketing Exposure Scale (FAMES).

Alcohol marketing in retail stores, music festivals, sport venues and on the Internet

Key results: Advertising is just the tip of the iceberg



In general, French 14-25 year-olds are aware that many techniques are deployed in familiar environments to promote alcohol brands.

They talk about "ways of highlighting alcohol" rather than "marketing" or "advertising".

Packaging, price promotions, density of alcohol points of sale (nearby festival and sport venues) emerge as the more incentive factors.

Well, for beers they put forward a perfume or colors. And there's also the advertising on the packaging itself. There are limited editions, yeah. (...) I remember when I started smoking in high school that packages were important, the colors and so on.

(Fabien, male, 22 y.o., problematic drinker)

French youths are most critical of **intrusive advertising** and product placement on the Internet, especially via content sharing platforms.



Some social networks particularly involved

During sport events, **++ sale force** in public space (beer stalls)

Plethoric alcohol advertising in and around sport venues... And even beyond (bill boarding, stores...)

International sport events are **routes of infringement** via sponsoring, gamification and broadcast



Heineken's « Enjoy Responsibly » campaign on the rugby pitch, 2018 European Rugby Cup (France)

Developed branding* often thanks to "alibi brands"

Alibi brands often use a visual identity or a slogan similar to their mother trademarks. They allow to circumvent legal restrictions on alcohol advertising and to do branding.



In music festivals, the wide areas allow big displays and entertainments for branding.



"Mr Peppermint" free-fall simulator above a Get 27 bar, 2017 Lollapalooza-Paris Festival



In retail stores, many **price promotion, merchandising**** and packaging strategies.

Alcohols displayed with food products prized by youths, in high transit ("hot") zones, e.g. ends of aisles, checkouts...

[***branding** builds on brand image to create emotional links with (future) clients]

[****merchandising** aims at the best psychological and physical conditions to stimulate purchase]

METHOD

- Reasoned direct observations carried out:
 - on the Internet and the social networks
 - in 14 mass distribution stores, 9 music festivals, 5 sport venues during 6 national or international matches (football, rugby, handball or tennis).
- 21 individual semi-direct interviews (17-25 year-olds, aged 18 in average, incl. 11 girls, different levels of alcohol use)
- 12 focus groups (4 with youths aged 17 in average and 8 with teenagers aged 14 in average, so 77 surveyed students)

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNT

Surveys
Policies

- When questioning youths on Alcohol Marketing Exposure, simple phrasing like "ways of highlighting alcohol" or "putting alcohol forward" should be preferred to the "marketing" or "advertising" terms.
- Sport and music venues should be surveyed separately as they may be subject of specific marketing strategies, even though using the same leverage of alibi brands.
- Better regulation of the Internet as a vehicle of alcohol promotion appears to be a challenge facing public health authorities.
- Legal restrictions on indirect advertising should be better enforced and strengthened to curb the influence of alibi brands.

Affiliations

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