

The Perception of Young People Concerning Alcohol Advertising

Evaluating the European Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code



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Abstract

In the European Union, alcohol advertising directed at young people is controlled by means of guidelines mentioned in the European Council Recommendation. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Advertising Code controls alcohol advertising. The goal of this study was to find out to what extent it is effective to control alcohol advertisements by means of guidelines of the European Council Recommendation on alcohol advertising and the Dutch Advertising Code directed at young people. This study found that young people have a broad knowledge in alcoholic beverages and alcohol advertisements. The results also show that the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code were not heavily violated. The perception of young people therefore complies with the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. However, elements that were most appealing to the young people, such as ‘humor’, ‘fun/ good times’ and ‘dancing/ partying/ celebrating’ were not mentioned in the guidelines. Revision of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code is recommended.

Introduction

Alcohol is the drug of choice among youth. Many young people are experiencing the consequences of drinking too much, at too early an age. As a result, underage drinking is a causal factor in many serious problems. Each year, many young people die because of underage drinking; this includes deaths from motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicide, as well as other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings (NHTSA, 2003). The younger people start drinking, the more they are exposed to risky behavior (Austin & Knaus, 2000). The rates of criminal behavior among young people are higher after using alcohol and drinking has negative consequences for school success (Mullahy & Sindelar, 1989). Alcohol use is also associated with unprotected sex and may thus increase the risk that young people will contract sexually transmitted infections including HIV (Lowry et al., 1994). Alcohol use among young people has been linked to sexual victimization, early onset of sexual activity

(Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996; Cooper, 2002) and it may also interfere with adolescents' brain development, causing loss of memory and other skills (Tapert, et al., 2001).

Despite these risks, regular consumption of alcoholic beverages is common among young people and is a persistent public health problem. Alcohol use is ingrained in the youth culture and is very difficult to change. Young people choose to consume alcohol, not just because of personal characteristics, such as personality type or level of social skills, but also because it is a part of daily life in their communities and, for many youth, in their homes (Wagenaar & Perry 1994). Numerous social and environmental influences affect young people, including community practices, adults, friends and messages about alcohol they receive from advertisements (Wagenaar & Perry, 1994).

Komro and Toomey (2002) inventoried strategies to prevent underage drinking. Their research has shown that some approaches are school-based, involving curricula targeted at preventing alcohol use. Other strategies strive to involve the adolescents' families in the prevention programs. Policy strategies have also been implemented, such as increasing the minimum legal drinking age, reducing the commercial and social access of adolescents to alcohol, reducing the economic availability of alcohol and reducing the appeal of alcohol advertisements (Komro & Toomey, 2002). However, it appears that these strategies are not as effective as they need to be, for there are still too many underage drinkers.

Kunkel et al. (2004) found that there is a social agreement that young people require special treatment and protection from the unrestrained efforts of the economic marketplace. On 5 June 2001, the Health Ministers in the European Union adopted a Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people. With this Recommendation, national governments and the Industry were encouraged to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not designed or promoted to appeal to youngsters (Ugland, 2002; Council of the European Union, 2001).

According to Austin and Hust (2005), the question remains whether young people perceive alcohol advertisements in a way that is predicted by theorists. The present study investigates to what extent the perception of young people concerning alcohol advertising complies with the European Council Recommendation. There is a possibility that young people perceive alcohol advertising in general not to be complying with the guidelines provided by the Council Recommendation; however, it is also possible that the perception of young people complies with the guidelines, but they still find alcohol advertisements attractive. If the results of this study show the presence of one of these possibilities, this could be a sign that the guidelines of the Council Recommendation should be revised.

Persuasive Influences

Many factors contribute to the widespread prevalence of underage drinking, and shape consumption patterns (Martin, et al., 2002). According to the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997), children are likely to imitate what they perceive as rewarding and they will learn from what they see in general. Although parents, peers and other environmental influences are important in shaping beliefs and, ultimately, drinking behavior, alcohol advertising may be another source through which children and young people learn about alcohol (Martin, et al., 2002).

Alcoholic beverage marketers have intensified their targeting of underage drinkers in recent years, introducing an array of inexpensive new products, such as designer drinks, alcoholic “energy” drinks and pre-mixed cocktails, with recipes and packaging designed to appeal to young people (Hughes et al., 1997). Jones and Donovan (2001) claimed that advertising influences in particular the young, especially as to which brands and product categories are “in” or “cool”. Young people seem to be attracted to the advertising of these products. In accordance with this claim, Hughes et al. (1997) found that the brand imagery of designer drinks - in contrast to that of more mainstream drinks - matched many 14 and 15 year olds’ perceptions and expectations of drinking. Beverage preferences among young drinkers appear to be influenced by heavily marketed and inexpensive products such as beer and cider, as well as the relatively new and “cool” products mentioned above (Jernigan, 2001).

Alcohol Advertising

Both Gentile et al. (2001) and Martin et al. (2002) suggest that media and advertisements are significant predictors of underage drinking behavior. They may be the most significant predictors of adolescents’ knowledge about alcohol brands, preference for alcohol brands, current drinking behavior, alcohol brand loyalty, and intentions to drink.

Martin et al. (2002) have shown that the more alcohol advertisements were played in the media, the more young people reported exposure to alcohol advertisements. In turn, the highly repetitive character of alcohol advertisements played in the media may have an illusory “truth effect”, causing people to believe in information that has been repeated for several times without questioning its origin or sincerity (Hawkins & Hoch, 1992; Roggeveen & Johar, 2002). Two explanations for this phenomenon have been proposed. First, according to the familiarity thesis, repeated information feels more familiar and is therefore easier to believe compared to information that is taken in for the first time. Second, the source variability thesis states that repeated

information is attached to different sources, so that it becomes more credible in comparison to information that is attributed to only one source (Roggeveen & Johar, 2002).

However, mere exposure to and the corresponding familiarity with the advertising content, cannot alone explain the persuasive influences of alcohol advertising. Grube (1993) stated that the appeal of the advertisements is as important as the amount of exposure to the advertisement. Liking of, or affect toward alcohol advertisements may therefore be a key factor that increases attention and may mediate the effects of exposure to these advertisements. Liking, in turn, is predicted from specific advertisements elements, including humor, attractive characters and an engaging story line (Martin et al., 2002).

The Appeal of Alcohol Advertisements

Previous studies have shown that alcohol advertisements appeal to, and seem to target, underage drinkers (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2002; Waiters, Treno & Grube, 2001; Grube, 1993; Jones & Donovan, 2001). Waiters et al. (2001), for example, found that young people like the lifestyle and image-oriented elements of alcohol television commercials that are delivered with humor and youth-oriented music and/or characters. Conversely, they dislike product-oriented elements of alcohol commercials. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2002) also identified appeals that characterize television commercials aimed at young people. Their findings demonstrated that the use of appeals showed strong age differences and was highly gender-role stereotyped, particularly in television commercials aimed at young people.

Television has long been the predominant medium that advertisers have chosen for marketing products to young people. A substantial body of research evidence, documents age-related differences in how young people understand and are affected by television advertising (Kunkel, 1990; Kunkel & Roberts, 1991; Young, 1990). This evidence has formed the basis for a wide range of policies designed to protect young people from advertising that would take unfair advantage of their limited comprehension of the nature and purpose of commercial appeals. These policies form the foundation of a broad societal consensus that young people require special treatment and protection from the unbridled efforts of the economic marketplace (Kunkel et al., 2004).

Controlling Advertising

The overall strategy for alcohol policy must be to create an environment that helps people to make healthy choices and renders unhealthy choices more difficult or expensive (Rehn, N., Room, R., Edwards, G., 2001).

Taxation of alcohol is an effective environmental mechanism for reducing alcohol problems. Population alcohol

consumption is generally responsive to price, with increases in price leading to decreases in consumption and decreases in price leading to increases in consumption (Edwards, et al., 1994; Holder & Edwards, 1995). Environmental measures that influence people's physical access to alcohol can also make a significant contribution to the prevention of alcohol problems. Such measures include: enactment of a minimum legal drinking age; restrictions on hours or days of sale; and policies on number, type or location of sales outlets (Edwards, et al., 1994). A third strategy is that school-based and public education tends to influence the individual's knowledge, attitudes and behavior. School-based and public educations are interventions that (by their nature) are likely to be interactive with many other environmental influences, and if they have an impact, it is likely to be in the longer term (Komro & Toomey, 2002).

There is some evidence that restrictions on advertisements lead to reduced alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm (Edwards, et al., 1994). Within stable and saturated markets, the main role of advertisements is to ensure that old consumers are replaced by new ones and that educational messages do not diminish alcohol consumption. Contemporary advertisements communicate more about the meaning and desirability of the products and about the social contexts in which the products are used than about the products themselves. Alcohol advertising presents alcohol consumption as a safe and problem-free practice, de-emphasizing the potential health risks and negative consequences. Through its messages, alcohol advertising maintains the social desirability of drinking, overshadows the risk of alcohol use to individual and public health, and contradicts prevention objectives. These indirect effects alone are sufficient to justify the need to control the volume and content of alcohol advertising.

On 5 June 2001, the Health Ministers in the European Union adopted a Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people, in particular children and adolescents (Council of the European Union, 2001; Appendix 1). In this recommendation, the European member states were invited to take common action to address the problem of underage drinking through education and information, and to strengthen the enforcement of rules on alcohol sales. Furthermore, the recommendation called on alcohol producers and retailers to communicate in a responsible way and to enforce self-regulatory rules on advertising. Towards this aim, national governments and the alcohol industry were encouraged to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not designed or promoted to appeal to youngsters (Ugland, 2002; Council of the European Union, 2001).

The Council Recommendation stipulates, among other things, that it is not allowed to aim alcohol advertisements specifically at minors, link alcohol consumption to driving, or create the impression that alcohol enhances physical performance or contributes to social or sexual success. Furthermore, advertising should not

encourage excessive consumption or disparage abstinence or moderation, nor should it suggest that high alcohol content is a positive quality of a brand (Ugland, 2002; Karlsson & Österberg, 2002; Council of the European Union, 2001). The Council Recommendation enables the Community institutions to express a particular view to the various member states, but they are not binding instruments. This implies that the member states, to which the Recommendation is addressed, are placed under no legal obligation to behave in a particular way. The significance of this Recommendation is therefore not legal, but it may carry political and moral weights (Ugland, 2002).

The European member states can approach the Council Recommendation based on the legal, regulatory, or self-regulatory environments in the individual countries (Council of the European Union, 2001). France, for example, introduced with the *Loi Évin* the most restrictive measures on alcohol advertising in the European Union at the time. It bans, among other things, the advertising of all alcoholic beverages over 1.2 percent alcohol by volume on television and in cinemas, and prohibits sponsorship of sport or cultural events by alcohol companies (Ugland, 2002; Karlsson & Österberg, 2002). Countries which have bans on spirits advertising have about 16% lower alcohol consumption than countries with no bans, while countries with bans on beer and wine advertising have about 11% lower alcohol consumption than countries with bans only on spirits advertising (Rehn, Room & Edwards, 2001). Motor vehicle fatalities are about 10% lower when spirits advertising is banned and about 23% lower in countries with bans on beer and wine advertising, as well as that for spirits. For young people, a five-minute increase in exposure to alcohol advertising can be associated with an increase in alcohol consumption of five glasses a day (Rehn, Room & Edwards, 2001).

A second approach is the self-regulatory code governing content in Denmark. This code states that advertising directed at children and young people is not allowed and advertisements are not permitted to suggest that alcohol is good for health or improves mental or physical capacities. The code also prevents the association of alcohol with sport, prohibiting alcohol sponsorship of sport and sports grounds and advertising in sports magazines (Ugland, 2002; Karlsson & Österberg, 2002).

Alcohol Advertising in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, control of marketing and advertising of alcoholic beverages is by self-regulation by the alcohol branch. This is remarkable because in many European countries, alcohol advertising is not only restricted by self-regulation, but also by legislation. There is, however, an Advertising Code Committee (also called “*Reclame Code Commissie*”) in the Netherlands, which has established of a self-regulatory Advertising

Code for alcoholic Beverages (Stichting Reclame Code, 2006; Appendix 2). This Dutch Advertising Code states, among other things, that advertising may not be aimed at minors or show persons who appear to be underage. Advertisements are also not allowed if a quarter or more of the audience is younger than 18 years of age. Thus, alcoholic beverage advertisements are prohibited during and immediately before or after television or radio programmes or movies aimed at young people. Moderation or educational slogans such as “Enjoy a drink, but only in moderation” (a translation of the Dutch “Geniet, maar drink met mate”) must also appear in advertisements of alcoholic beverages. All audio-visual advertisements must contain such an educational slogan (Karlsson & Österberg, 2002; Bongers, van de Goor & Garretsen, 1998).

Anyone who feels that advertising violates the Dutch Advertising Code may submit a complaint to the Advertising Code Committee. The Advertising Code Committee can also evaluate advertising without a complaint having first been submitted. Broadcasters based in the Netherlands who carry advertising are obliged by law to be members of the Advertising Code Foundation (also called “Stichting Reclame Code”) and they are committed to ensuring that all advertising that is broadcasted complies with the Dutch Advertising Code. Advertisements, which have received copy advice and even have been pre-cleared, have no guarantees of not receiving complaints, and the complaints being upheld (Stichting Reclame Code, 2006).

It can be concluded that alcohol advertising codes concerning young people and drinking vary by country, medium and alcohol product and that the Council Recommendation leaves room for interpretation and a broad variety of regulations. Nevertheless, there is a general agreement that young people are vulnerable to risks from alcohol misuse and need protection from messages that suggest that drinking is desirable, powerful or exciting.

Research Question

In theory, the perception of young people and the Council Recommendation both influence the effects of alcohol advertising. The current study addresses the question whether there is a difference between “the letter and the mind”. Do young people in the Netherlands perceive messages in alcohol advertisements in a way that is predicted by theory? Do young people perceive violations of the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code? It is possible that in “the letter” young people perceived no violation and that alcohol advertisements comply with both the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. However, another possibility is that even when the alcohol advertisements are perceived to be complying with the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code, young people still find the alcohol advertisement appealing.

The goal of this study was to evaluate the Council Recommendation on alcohol advertising and the Dutch Advertising Code directed at young people. When young people perceive alcohol advertising in general not to be complying with the guidelines provided by the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code, revision of implementation of both is necessary. If young people perceive alcohol advertisements to be complying with the guidelines but still find alcohol advertisements attractive, the Council recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code themselves should be taken into consideration.

The following research question was addressed:

To what extent is it effective to control alcohol advertisements by means of guidelines of the European Council Recommendation on alcohol advertising and Dutch Advertising Code directed at young people?

To investigate the research question, the following sub-questions were explored:

SQ1: To what extent do alcohol advertisements comply with the guidelines of the European Council Recommendation and Dutch Advertising Code?

SQ2: How attractive are alcohol advertisements to young people?

SQ3: Which elements contribute to the appreciation of alcohol advertisements by young people?

SQ4: What elements in alcohol advertisements in general do young people find attractive?

Research design

The present study consists of three parts. The first part aimed to investigate what kind of, and which, alcohol advertisements young people in the Netherlands like. After collecting these data, a content analysis was conducted in the second part of the study, in order to explore which alcohol advertisements could be used for a rating panel procedure in the next part of the study. In part three, a rating panel of young people was formed to evaluate five chosen alcohol advertisements.

Appealing alcohol advertisements

The objective of the first part of the study was to collect an extensive and heterogeneous sample of alcohol advertisements that young people in the Netherlands like. In order to achieve this goal, 261 young people (129 girls and 132 boys) between the ages of 12 and 17 were asked for descriptions of alcohol advertisements they found appealing. These marketing practices included for example radio commercials, television commercials or event marketing. This research was conducted at different high schools in the Netherlands. First, it was

explained to the participants what kind of alcohol advertising exists, which was supported with some examples. After this explanation, the participants were asked to fill out a form in which they could give examples of alcoholic drinks they liked, alcohol advertisements they liked and describe where they had seen these practices.

Content Analysis

In the second part of this study, a content analysis was conducted in order to explore which alcohol commercials contained the most elements that are appealing to young people according to previous research and thus were better candidates for the rating panel procedure. For the content analysis, six master's students of Behavioral Sciences were used as coders. The six coders were trained in the use of the coding protocol a week before the actual coding. Directly before the coding, they were instructed about the procedure. A test form was established to which the commercials were tested. Using this test form, the commercials were coded by means of the coding protocol by the six coders for the presence or absence of variables. Each coder analyzed all commercials of the sample.

The typology of appeals was based on earlier content analysis studies on advertising appeals as well as on literature about children's and teenagers' tastes and preferences concerning media content (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2002; Waiters & Grube, 2002; Pinsky & Silva, 1999). Although this combination of content-analytic and survey studies yielded a more comprehensive list of appeals than earlier studies, the list of appeals used in the present study is not necessarily exhaustive. The final codebook consisted of 37 substantive (content) features¹ and 22 thematic appeals.² In addition, by means of a shown photograph and by 17 characteristics,³ a maximum of three main characters was analysed. Each appeal was accompanied by an operational definition. Since many commercials in the sample contained more than one feature, theme or appeal, each variable was coded as being absent (0) or present (1) in the commercial. The variables, therefore, were not mutually exclusive.

Rating Panel Procedure

In the third part of this study, a rating panel of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 from three different high schools in the Netherlands was formed. This panel analysed the five selected alcohol commercials on their compliance with the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. The panel also analysed which of the appealing elements present in the five alcohol commercials was found most appealing. A total of 240 students between the ages of 12 and 17 years old were randomly selected to participate in the rating panel in

groups of 20-25 persons at a time. The participants were instructed first by giving them information about the procedure, but not about the goal of the study or the research questions. They then watched the first commercial that was chosen from the content analysis twice on a projection screen.

After observing the commercial, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire. This questionnaire contained questions concerning the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: (1) questions about attractiveness of the alcohol advertisement; (2) statements about the alcohol advertisement concerning guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code; (3) age related questions and (4) questions about, after seeing the alcohol advertisement, how young people thought they would feel when they would (hypothetically) drink the alcoholic beverage. The procedure was repeated for each of the five commercials to be rated. After rating the five advertisements, a different questionnaire was handed out with questions about appealing elements in alcohol advertisements in general. The appealing elements used in this questionnaire were the substantive (content) features¹ and thematic appeals² from the content analysis. All questionnaires contained one section where general information (gender, age, grade and remarks) was asked. The questions were answered by means of five-point Likert scales (1= very unappealing, 5= very appealing, and 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) and several multiple-choice questions. The sequence of showing the commercials was reversed for different exposure groups to control for order effects. The data for each commercial was weighted by frequency.

Results

Appealing alcohol advertisements

The results of the data collection showed that the participants mentioned 578 alcoholic beverages. Of these alcoholic beverages, “Bacardi Breezer” (22%) was the most popular drink among young people in the Netherlands. Also mentioned were, among others, the alcoholic drinks “Flügel” (13%), “Bacardi” (10%) and “Passõa” (8%). Overall, designer drinks were mentioned 470 times. The participants mentioned that they particularly like the “taste” (34%) and “colour” (30%) of the drinks. They also mentioned “nice bottle” (20%), “attractive” (8%), “nice commercial on television” (7%), “not expensive” (1%) and “friends drink it” (1%).

“Funny” (70%) is the most mentioned reason why young people liked alcohol advertisements. Also mentioned were “nice atmosphere” (12%), “nice music” (7%), “attractive” (5%), “cool” (3%), “nice pictures” (2%), “real” (1%) and “you will really party when you drink it” (1%).

The results show that of all alcohol advertising, only television commercials were mentioned by the participants. It can therefore be concluded that, of all types of alcohol marketing, the participants recall television commercials the most readily. After eliminating commercials mentioned by less than 10 participants, the final sample consisted of 11 commercials (Table 1).

Table 1. *Number of elements attractive to young people in alcohol commercials mentioned by the participants*

Chosen alcohol commercials	Number of participants that mentioned the alcohol commercial	Number of elements attractive to the participants
Amstel, My Lite	28	19
Bacardi, Missed the Train	14	16
Grolsch, Pianist	15	16
Bacardi, Quick Pour	13	16
Baileys, Zero Gravity	11	13
Bacardi, Strong Arm	63	13
Amstel, Three Friends	34	12
Heineken, Hello in Space	43	11
Amstel, Truck has Primacy	15	10
Heineken, Rudi	49	10
Martini, Cockatiel for Two	76	9

Content Analysis

The commercials mentioned by more than 10 participants were used for the content analysis (Table 1). After coding, the ratings were measured by using a frequency score. When more than 50% of the coders considered an element present, it was coded as being present (1), else, it was coded as being absent (0). When a commercial had a low total score (sum of elements being present), according to the coders, the commercial contained very few elements that are appealing to young people and therefore met the guidelines provided by the European Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. A high total score meant that, according to the coders, the commercial contained many elements that are appealing to young people, and was therefore inconsistent with the guidelines provided by the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code.

Table 1 indicates per television commercial the number of elements that were attractive to the participants. Five commercials with the highest total number of attractive elements were selected to be used in the rating panel procedure. As is shown in table 1, both “Baileys, Zero gravity” and “Bacardi, Strong arm” contained the same amount of elements (13). However, the coders estimated the main character in the Baileys commercial to be between the ages of 18 and 25 and the main characters in the Bacardi commercial to be above the age of 25.

Having a main character in a television commercial that appears to be under the age of 25 is a violation of the Dutch Advertising Code, hence “Baileys, Zero gravity” was used for the rating panel procedure. In conclusion, the commercials “Amstel, My Lite”, “Bacardi, Missed the Train”, “Grolsch, Pianist”, Bacardi, Quick Pour” and “Baileys, Zero Gravity” were chosen to be part of the rating panel procedure.

Table 1 shows that not all commercials that were mentioned by young people contained many attractive elements. For example, the commercial “Martini Cockatiel for two” was mentioned most by the young people, but contained the fewest attractive elements. It is therefore possible that not all elements have the same impact on the perception of young people concerning alcohol advertising.

Rating Panel Procedure

Compliance with the guidelines

The first sub-question analysed to what extent, in the perception of young people, guidelines of the European Council Recommendation and Dutch Advertising Code were violated. Both Appendix 1 “The Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by young people” and Appendix 2 “The Dutch Advertising Code for Alcoholic Beverages concerning young people” show articles that were analysed in the present study. Table 2 shows part of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code that was analysed by the participants.

Targeting at minors Article II-1.a of the Council Recommendation states that Member States should ensure that producers do not produce alcoholic beverages specifically targeted at children and adolescents. In the Netherlands, *article 10* of the Dutch Advertising Code states, among others, that advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not be aimed specifically at minors. The results of this study show that the largest part of the participants disagreed that the alcoholic beverages shown in the five commercials were produced to appeal to minors.

Appeal to minors Both article II-1.b of the Council Recommendation and article 10 of the Dutch Advertising Code state that Member States should ensure that alcoholic beverages are not designed or promoted to appeal to children and adolescents. A small part of the participants agreed that the packaging and look of the alcoholic beverages shown in the five commercials were designed to appeal to minors, a larger part disagreed. Of the participants, the largest part disagreed that the five shown alcohol commercials were specifically targeted at minors. The participants were also asked to what age group they thought the images, language and music shown in the five alcohol commercials was most appealing. The participants thought ‘the images’ were most

appealing to people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. The participants found ‘the language’ most appealing to people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. In accordance with images and language, the music was found most appealing to people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old.

Table 2. Analysis of the guidelines by young people.

Guidelines	Disagree (%)	Neither (%)	Agree (%)	Under	Between	Between	Between	Above
				age 18 (%)	18-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-50 (%)	age 50 (%)
<u>Targeting at minors</u>								
- Produced to appeal to minors.	37	31	32	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Appeal to minors</u>								
- The packaging and look were designed to appeal to minors.	45	33	22	-	-	-	-	-
- The <i>images</i> were most appealing to people:	-	-	-	17	59	20	3	1
- The <i>language</i> was most appealing to people:	-	-	-	18	56	21	4	1
- The <i>music</i> was most appealing to people:	-	-	-	21	47	22	7	3
<u>Featuring minors</u>								
- Age of the main characters.	-	-	-	2	35	48	13	3
- Featuring young looking people.	26	31	42	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Drugs or other harmful substances</u>								
- The consumption of drugs or other harmful substances was present.	84	11	5	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Violence or antisocial behavior</u>								
- Links with violence or antisocial behavior were present.	88	8	5	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Implications of success</u>								
- Social success was implicated.	30	27	42	-	-	-	-	-
- Sexual success was implicated.	61	23	17	-	-	-	-	-
- Sporting success was implicated.	67	22	11	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Encouraging drinking</u>								
- Encouraging minors to drink alcohol.	39	30	32	-	-	-	-	-

Featuring minors Article II-1.b-II of the Council Recommendation states that promotion campaigns of alcoholic beverages are not allowed to feature children, adolescents, or other young-looking models. In the Netherlands, Article 11 of the Dutch Advertising Code states that advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not show persons younger than twenty-five drinking alcoholic beverages or encouraging the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Of the participants, the largest part agreed that the five shown alcohol commercials featured young looking people and that the main characters of the shown alcohol commercials were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old.

Drugs or other harmful substances Article II-1.b-III of the Council Recommendation states that it is not allowed to use allusions to, or images associated with, the consumption of drugs and of other harmful substances, such as tobacco, in campaigns of alcoholic beverages. In conformity with this article, most of the participants disagreed that the consumption of drugs or other harmful substances was present in the five shown alcohol commercials.

Violence or antisocial behavior Article II-1.b-IV of the Council Recommendation states that it is not allowed to use links with violence or antisocial behavior in campaigns of alcoholic beverages. In conformity with this article, the largest part of the participants disagreed that links with violence or antisocial behavior were present in the five shown alcohol commercials.

Implications of success Article II-1.b-V of the Council Recommendation states that it is not allowed to use implications of social, sexual or sporting success in campaigns of alcoholic beverages. Regarding these implications, a large part of the participants agreed that social success was implicated in the shown commercials. The participants agreed that no sexual and sporting success was implicated.

Encouraging drinking Article II-1.b-VI states that it is not allowed to encourage children and adolescents to drink, including low-price selling to adolescents of alcoholic drinks. A moderate part of the participants agreed that the five shown alcohol commercials encouraged minors to drink the alcoholic beverage.

The results show that the guidelines were violated in two ways: the alcohol advertisements featured young looking people and social success was implicated. The remaining guidelines were not violated. It can be concluded that the guidelines were not heavily violated and that in general the perception of young people complies with the guidelines.

Attractiveness of alcohol advertisements

The second sub-question gives an insight into how attractive the shown alcohol advertisements are to young people. Table 3 shows the percentages of young people who found the alcohol commercials attractive and attractiveness grades that were given to the commercials. The participants could grade on a 1 to 10 scale (Dutch grading system), with 1 being very bad and 10 very good.

Of the five alcohol commercials “Amstel, My Lite” was found most attractive while “Grolsch, Pianist” was found least attractive. In total, 58.9% of the participants found the five commercials attractive. The commercials were also graded for their attractiveness (Table 3) and, in accordance with the previous results, “Amstel, My Lite” received the highest grade, while “Grolsch, Pianist” received the lowest grade. The five commercials taken

together had a mean grade of 7.36. In summary, the results show that the alcohol advertisements were attractive to young people.

Table 3. *Attractiveness of the shown alcohol commercials*

Alcohol commercials	N^a	Attractive (%)	Grade
Amstel, My Lite	220	66.3	7.81
Bacardi, Missed the Train	225	58.7	7.45
Grolsch, Pianist	207	39.6	6.93
Bacardi, Quick Pour	218	65.1	7.39
Baileys, Zero Gravity	240	62.9	7.24
Mean		58.9	7.36

^a N = 261 participants in total. Part of the participants viewed 4 commercials, other viewed 5 commercials; hence, the five commercials had different Ns.

Appreciation of alcohol advertisements

The third sub-question investigated to what extent attractive elements contribute to the judgements of the young people concerning the shown alcohol advertisements. In order to reveal the basic dimensions of the elicited appealing elements, the obtained data of the five alcohol commercials were collapsed into one dataset and an exploratory principal components analysis with Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization was performed on the variables of the questionnaire. Values less than .60 were suppressed. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure how well each set of variables represented single uni-dimensional latent construct. Seven sets of items had a Cronbach's alpha larger than .70 and were found reliable. These sets were renamed into the following scales: 'appeal of alcohol commercials', 'targeted at young people', 'risks', 'product information', 'appealing age', 'feminine elements', 'masculine elements' (Appendix 3). Five items ('social success', 'sexual success', 'sporting success', 'confident', 'cool/ tough') could not be assigned to any of the new scales and were not renamed (Appendix 3).

Regression analysis. A linear regression analysis tried to explain the 'appeal of alcohol commercials' (dependent variable) with the 11 scales mentioned in the previous section that correspond with the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. The regression analysis resulted in a R² of .196, which means that 19.6% of the variance in the scale "appeal of alcohol commercials" was explained by the 11

scales. Looking at Table 4, the scales ‘targeted at young people’, ‘product information’, ‘social success’ and ‘sporting success’ were generally associated with a higher appeal of alcohol commercials. The scale ‘targeted at young people’ contributed most with a Beta of .216. Conversely, the scales ‘risks’, ‘appealing age’ and ‘sexual success’ were associated with a lower appeal of alcohol commercials. The scales ‘feminine elements’, ‘masculine elements’, ‘confident’ and ‘cool/ though’ were not significant.

The low R^2 of the regression analysis shows that it is difficult to predict which of the 11 elements contributed to the attractiveness of the alcohol commercials.

Table 4. *Regression Analysis of the Influence of 11 Scales on Appeal of Alcohol Commercials.*

Scale ^a	Standardized Coefficients Beta ^b
Targeted at Young people	.216 ^{***}
Risks	-.121 ^{***}
Product information	.094 ^{**}
Appealing age	-.135 [*]
Feminine elements	.016 ^{ns}
Masculine elements	-.049 ^{ns}
Social success	.179 ^{***}
Sexual succes	-.104 ^{**}
Sporting success	.162 ^{***}
Confident	-.098 ^{ns}
Cool/ tough	.102 ^{ns}

^a Dependent variable: ‘appeal of alcohol commercials’

^b * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$, ^{ns} = not significant

Attractive elements in alcohol advertisements

The last sub-question analysed elements in alcohol advertisements in general that young people find attractive. Table 6 shows what elements in alcohol advertisements the participants (N=195) found attractive by means of frequency (in percentages), mean and standard deviation with test value 3. The elements in Table 5 are listed in order of frequency height.

Appealing elements The mean scores of the elements ‘humor’, ‘celebrities attractive to young people’, ‘special effect’, ‘use of slang’ and ‘bright colours’ were significantly higher than the constant. Of these appealing elements, the element ‘humor’ was found attractive by the largest part of the participants. This outcome is remarkable, for the element ‘humor’ is not mentioned in the Council Recommendation or in the Dutch Advertising Code (Appendices 1 and 2). The mean scores of the elements ‘animation/ cartoons’, ‘animals’, ‘fairy tales/ nursery rhymes’ and ‘puppets’ were significantly lower than the constant. The element ‘puppets’ was found least attractive.

Table 5. Elements in Alcohol Advertisements Young People find Attractive

Elements	Attractive (%)	Mean ^a	Standard Deviation
<i>Appealing elements</i>			
Humor	88.6	4.27 ^{***}	.79
Celebrities attractive to young people	78.8	3.95 ^{***}	.84
Special effect	76.6	3.97 ^{***}	.91
Use of slang	68.3	3.69 ^{***}	1.04
Bright colours	50.0	3.34 ^{***}	1.09
Animation/ cartoons	24.6	2.80 [*]	1.13
Animals	19.6	2.53 ^{***}	1.12
Fairy tales/ nursery rhymes	10.3	2.09 ^{***}	1.03
Puppets	5.5	1.80 ^{***}	.96
<i>Themes</i>			
Fun/ good times	84.1	4.13 ^{***}	.83
Refreshing	75.4	3.92 ^{***}	.89
Energy	68.4	3.77 ^{***}	1.00
Social success	63.9	3.68 ^{***}	.97
Friendship	60.7	3.57 ^{***}	1.01
Glamour/ wealth/ status	60.7	3.63 ^{***}	1.09
Impress/ be noticed by others	59.9	3.65 ^{***}	1.05
Romance/ courtship	59.3	3.58 ^{***}	1.08
Personal freedom	57.9	3.57 ^{***}	1.00
Seizing opportunities/ achievement	57.9	3.52 ^{***}	1.11
Sporting success	48.6	3.41 ^{***}	1.07
Sporting connotation	45.3	3.26 ^{**}	1.13
Sexual connotation	40.7	3.15 ^{ns}	1.26
Belonging to a group/ conformity	39.9	3.19 [*]	1.11
Sexual success	39.6	3.10 ^{ns}	1.28
Competition	36.0	3.14 ^{ns}	1.08
<i>Activities</i>			
Dancing/ partying/ celebrating	83.6	4.15 ^{***}	.91
Relaxing	74.5	3.91 ^{***}	.93
Musical performance	67.6	3.79 ^{***}	1.05
Exotic activities	64.2	3.66 ^{***}	1.14
Drinking alcohol	50.6	3.48 ^{***}	1.10
Pouring alcohol	50.0	3.44 ^{***}	1.12
Sports participation	45.9	3.36 ^{***}	1.07
Socializing/ dining	39.6	3.17 [*]	1.05
Holding alcohol	37.7	3.21 ^{**}	1.08
Idiotic behavior	33.7	2.78 [*]	1.50
Observing	25.1	2.99 ^{ns}	.99
Risky-/ violent-/ antisocial behavior	21.7	2.47 ^{***}	1.37

^a Test value= 3, * = p < 0.05, ** = p < 0.01, *** = p < 0.001, ^{ns} = not significant

Themes The mean scores of the themes 'fun/ good times', 'refreshing', 'energy', 'social success', 'friendship', 'glamour/ wealth/ status', 'impress/ be noticed by others', 'romance/ courtship', 'personal freedom', 'seizing opportunities/ achievement', 'sporting success', 'sporting connotation' and 'belonging to a

group/ conformity' were significantly higher than the constant. Of these themes 'fun/ good times' was found most attractive. The mean scores of the themes 'sexual connotation', 'sexual success' and 'competition' did not differ significantly from the constant, however, their attractiveness scores were moderate. The theme 'social success', as mentioned in the Council Recommendation (Article II-1.b-V), was found attractive by a large part of the participants, however, the themes 'sporting success' and 'sexual success' were only moderate attractive to the participants.

Activities The mean scores of the activities 'dancing/ partying/ celebrating', 'relaxing', 'musical performance', 'exotic activities', 'drinking alcohol', 'pouring alcohol' and 'sports participation' were significantly higher than the constant. Of these activities, the activity 'dancing/ partying/ celebrating' was found most attractive. The Council Recommendation states that 'risky-/violent-/ and antisocial behavior' is attractive to young people (Article II-1.b-IV). However, the mean score of the element 'risky-/ violent-/ antisocial behavior' was significantly lower than the constant and was therefore found unattractive by the participants. The element 'idiotic behavior' also had a lower mean score than the constant. The mean score of the activity 'observing' did not differ significantly from the constant.

Discussion

The general questionnaire, which was used to discover which elements young people find attractive in alcohol advertisements in general, was handed out at the end of each rating panel procedure. It is possible that bias has occurred, for the participants had already seen five examples of alcohol commercials. However, handing out the general questionnaire at the beginning of the procedure could also have biased the other questionnaires.

Another limitation was that the participants rated either four or five commercials. By showing the commercials at random and by rotating the order of the commercials, the results of this study were justified scientifically.

Conclusion

This study found that young people have a broad knowledge of alcoholic beverages and alcohol advertisements. Especially designer drinks were mentioned most. This confirms earlier findings of Hastings et al. (1997): apparently, designer drinks are very popular among young people. A large part of the young people mentioned an alcoholic beverage they had tasted or seen before. The alcohol advertisements with a humorous nature were recalled most.

The content analysis showed that not all alcohol commercials mentioned by the young people contained many attractive elements. For example, the most popular alcohol commercial amongst the young people, “Martini, Cockatiel for two”, contained according to the coders of the content analysis the fewest appealing elements. It appears that alcohol advertisements do not necessarily have to contain many attractive elements in order to be appealing to young people. It is possible that not all attractive elements have the same amount of impact concerning the attractiveness of an alcohol commercial.

To answer the first sub-question ‘To what extent do alcohol advertisements comply with the guidelines of the European Council Recommendation and Dutch Advertising Code?’, the rating panel analysed the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code concerning young people. The rating panel procedure pointed out that in general, the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code were well used: the alcoholic beverages shown in the five commercials were not produced to appeal to minors (article II-1.a of the Council Recommendation and article 10 of the Dutch Advertising Code); the packaging and look of the alcoholic beverages were not designed to appeal to minors (article II-1.b of the Council Recommendation and article 10 of the Dutch Advertising Code); the main characters of the shown alcohol commercials were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (article II-1.b-II of the Council Recommendation and article 11 of the Dutch Advertising Code); consumption of drugs or other harmful substances was not present (article II-1.b-III of the Council Recommendation); no links with violence or antisocial behavior were present (article II-1.b-IV of the Council Recommendation); and no sexual and sporting success was implicated (article II-1.b-V of the Council Recommendation).

The alcohol advertisements were violating the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code in only two ways: according to the young people, social success was implicated (article II-1.b-V of the Council Recommendation) and young looking people were featured in the five shown alcohol commercials (article II-1.b-II of the Council Recommendation).

Although the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code were not heavily violated, the young people still found the alcohol commercials attractive (sub-question 2). This statement was confirmed with a mean grade of 7.36 the young people gave to the alcohol commercials. This is above moderate.

To understand which elements contributed to the appreciation of the alcohol advertisements by young people (sub-question 3) a regression analysis was conducted. The low R^2 (.196) of this regression analysis shows that it is difficult to predict which elements used in this study contributed to the attractiveness of the alcohol

commercials. The regression analysis showed that the scale 'targeted at young people' had the most positive influence. The more the alcohol commercials were targeted at young people, the more young people found the alcohol commercials appealing. This was the same for the scales 'information', 'social success' and 'sporting success'. The scales 'hazardous', 'appealing age' and 'sexual success' were of negative influence, for the more the alcohol commercials used these scales, the less young people found the alcohol commercials appealing.

However, the question remains to what extent the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code ensure that young people are not attracted to alcohol advertisements. Do the guidelines cover all elements that are attractive to young people? The last sub-question 'What elements in alcohol advertisements in general do young people find attractive?' answers these questions. The elements 'humor', 'fun/ good times' and 'dancing/ partying/ celebrating' were found most attractive by the young people. When one of these elements is present in an alcohol advertisement, the appeal of the advertisement becomes larger. Elements that were mentioned in the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code (Appendices 1 and 2) scored considerably lower. The element 'social success' was the only attractive element.

This study investigated to what extent it is effective to control alcohol advertisements by means of guidelines of the European Council Recommendation on alcohol advertising and Dutch Advertising Code directed at young people. The results show that the perception of young people complies with the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code, however, elements that were most appealing to the young people were not mentioned in the guidelines. One can therefore question whether the wrong elements were submitted in the guidelines and whether the guidelines sufficiently cover the perception of young people towards appealing elements in alcohol advertisements. The element 'humor' is for example not mentioned in the guidelines, however the present study showed that this element is very important in the appeal of alcohol advertisements. In conformity with this study, Geuens and De Pelsmacker (1998) found that humorous appeals exert a positive influence on ad and brand recognition. Furthermore, the same feelings seem to enhance an improved impression of the brand, and the attitude towards the ad and the brand.

The current Council Recommendation and Dutch Advertising Code seem moderate effective in controlling alcohol advertisements towards young people. Revision of the guidelines is therefore recommended. Future research should investigate if it is possible to submit the element 'humor' in the guidelines of the Council Recommendation and the Dutch Advertising Code. Alternatively, it is possible to follow the Loi Évin and ban all alcohol advertisements on television.

This study developed a method that can be used to evaluate the Council Recommendation in other European member states, applicant countries and Norway. The knowledge gained by this study can be used for a better understanding of trend patterns. Changes in one part of Europe may serve as a forecast for possible changes in other parts and as an incitement for preventive measures.

Notes

1. The 37 substantive (content) features investigated in the total sample (N=11) of commercials: type of advertisement (lifestyle-, product-, story-focused); locations (outdoors, restaurant, bar/ club/ discotheque, sports event, music event, school, home, work, holiday, nature); activities depicted aimed at the leading characters (drinking alcohol, socializing/ dining, dancing/ partying/ celebrating, observing, musical performance, relaxing, sports participation, exotic activities, risky-/ violent-/ anti-social behavior, idiotic behavior); young attractive content features (celebrity endorsers, animals, use of slang, special effects, animation/ cartoons, bright colours, humor, fairy tales/ nursery rhymes, puppets); type of music (R&B/ soul/ funk, pop, rap, rock, Latin/ salsa).
2. The 22 thematic appeals investigated in the total sample (N=11) of commercials: thematic appeals (friendship/ camaraderie, romance/ courtship, sexual success, sexual connotation, sporting success, sporting connotation, social success, glamour/ wealth/ status, impress/ be noticed by others, fun/ good times, having the best, belonging to a group/ conformity, personal freedom/ individuality, competition, seizing opportunities/ achievement, energetic, refreshing) and product characteristics (product power, newness, product characteristics, product quality, comparisons to other alcohol products).
3. The 17 characteristics of the main character investigated in the total sample (N=11) of commercials: personality variables (confident, cool/ tough, legendary, real, gracious, attractive, sympathetic, funny, gangster/ bad boy, masculine, feminine, modern/ hip) and age estimates (below age 18, between 18-25, between 26-35, between 36-50, above age 50).

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Appendix 1 European Council Recommendation

The Council Recommendation of 5 June 2001 on the drinking of alcohol by young people, in particular children and adolescents (2001/458/EC) state that Member States should,

II. [...]

1. encourage, in cooperation with the producers and the retailers of alcoholic beverages and relevant non-governmental organisations, the establishment of effective mechanisms in the fields of promotion, marketing and retailing;

[...]

(a) to ensure that producers do not produce alcoholic beverages specifically targeted at children and adolescents;

(b) to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not designed or promoted to appeal to children and adolescents, and paying particular attention *inter alia*, to the following elements:

- I. the use of styles (such as characters, motifs or colours) associated with youth culture;
- II. featuring children, adolescents, or other young-looking models, in promotion campaigns;
- III. allusions to, or images associated with, the consumption of drugs and of other harmful substances, such as tobacco;
- IV. links with violence or antisocial behavior;
- V. implications of social, sexual or sporting success;
- VI. encouragement of children and adolescents to drink, including low-price selling to adolescents of alcoholic drinks;

Appendix 2 Dutch Advertising Code for Alcoholic Beverages concerning young people

GENERAL

Article 1

Since the irresponsible consumption of alcoholic beverages can cause problems, restraint shall be exercised in all advertising messages for such beverages. Advertisements of alcoholic beverages shall not show, suggest, nor stimulate any excessive or otherwise irresponsible consumption.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Minors

Article 10

Advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not be aimed specifically at minors. Advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not make use of illustrations, a colour scheme or design, cartoons, symbols or idols, sound, ring tones, SMS or language and expressions typical for minors, which hold a noticeably greater appeal for minors than for adults.

Article 11

Advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not show persons younger than twenty-five who drink alcoholic beverages or who encourage the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Article 12

Advertising messages for alcoholic beverages shall not suggest that the consumption of alcoholic beverages is a sign of maturity and that abstinence is a sign of immaturity.

Article 13

The offer free of charge or at less than half the normal retail price of objects bearing advertising messages for alcoholic beverages to persons, who have not yet reached the legal age for purchasing the alcoholic beverage concerned, is not permitted.

Appendix 3 Definition of variables after components analysis

Scales	Cronbach's alpha	Definition items
Appeal of alcohol commercials	.87	How appealing are the images in the shown alcohol commercial to you? How appealing is the language in the shown alcohol commercial to you? How appealing is the music in the shown alcohol commercial to you? How appealing are the activities in the shown alcohol commercial to you? How appealing are the situations in the shown alcohol commercial to you? How appealing is the location in the shown alcohol commercial to you?
Targeted at young people	.81	The alcoholic beverage from the advertisement is produced to appeal to minors; The packaging and look of this alcoholic beverage is designed to appeal to minors; This advertisement is specifically targeted at minors; This advertisement features young looking people; This advertisement encourages minors to drink the alcoholic beverage.
Risks	.74	This advertisement shows associations with the consumption of drugs or harmful substances (such as tobacco); In this advertisement, links with violent and/ or anti-social behavior are shown; This advertisement gives information about the alcoholic content of the alcoholic beverage; This advertisement gives information about the possible harmful consequences after drinking the alcoholic beverage.
Product information	.69	This advertisement gives information about the quality of the alcoholic beverage; This advertisement gives information about the newness of the alcoholic beverage; This advertisement gives information about the production process of the alcoholic beverage.
Attractive age	.77	The images of this advertisement are most appealing to people: below age 18/ between 18 and 24/ between 25 and 34/ between 35 and 50/ or above age 50; The language in this advertisement is most appealing to people: below age 18/ between 18 and 24/ between 25 and 34/ between 35 and 50/ or above age 50; The music in this advertisement is most appealing to people: below age 18/ between 18 and 24/ between 25 and 34/ between 35 and 50/ or above age 50.
Feminine elements	.92	When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more legendary; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more real; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more gracious; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more attractive; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more sympathetic; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more feminine; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more modern/ hip.
Masculine elements	.74	When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more funny like; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more gangster/ criminal; When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more masculine.
Social success	-	This advertisement makes implications of <i>social success</i> ;
Sexual succes	-	This advertisement makes implications of <i>sexual success</i> ;
Sporting success	-	This advertisement makes implications of <i>sporting success</i> ;
Confident	-	When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more confident.
Cool/ tough	-	When I drink the alcoholic beverage from the commercial, I feel more cool/ tough.