

New Media Accelerates Consumption of Alcohol

Use of social media related to alcohol marketing predicted alcohol consumption and engaging in risky behaviors.³⁴

The rapid growth in the use of new social networking technologies raises new issues regarding alcohol marketing, as well as potential impacts on alcohol cultures more generally. Young people, for example, routinely tell and re-tell drinking stories online, share images depicting drinking, and are exposed to often intensive and novel forms of alcohol marketing... Social networking systems are positive and pleasurable for young people, but are likely to contribute to pro-alcohol behavior environments and encourage drinking.³⁵



Message meaning must be clear. “Drink Responsibly”— What does this mean to college students who engage in risky behavior? Alcohol companies engage in this strategically ambiguous messaging with presumably pro-health messages that have instead been shown to advance industry sales and public relations interests yet not deter drinking.³⁶

Tailor messages to different audiences. For under-age moderate drinkers, negative –restrictive slogans such as “don’t drink” increased their risk of excessive drinking and increased their level of intention to change their drinking behavior; whereas, for underage binge drinkers, the negative restrictive slogans lowered their risk perception of excessive drinking and lowered their intention to change drinking behavior³⁷

Messaging needs to be easily understood and believable. A large public university’s campaign failed to reduce perceived drinking norms or alcohol use because most of the students didn’t find the statistics credible; the higher the students’ use of alcohol already, the lower the campaign credibility. Only 38.5% understood the campaign’s intended purpose.³⁸

Combine messaging with probable policy and enforcement sanctions.

Among students, perceived likelihood of actual drinking and driving consequences lowered their likelihood of drinking and driving more than their knowledge and

Avoiding Pitfalls Associated with Social Marketing and Norms Messaging Campaigns

awareness of BAC or zero tolerance laws.¹⁴

PSAs focusing on relevant, localized consequences would have more meaning to underage college students than more general campaigns – the consequence sampled college students feared most is being charged with a DUI so anti-drinking and driving PSAs must portray this as a possible negative consequence.³⁹

Social media strategies need to be “cutting edge.”

If Twitter is to be used for counter marketing, adopt the practices of corporate marketers - accounts of alcohol companies are followed by more people than safe driving tweets, are more likely to use interactive features such as hash tags (#), to be forwarded to others, and to be associated with positive stimuli. This suggests more influence than pro-health twitter messages.⁴⁰

Other strategies may work better than social norms marketing.

In the Cochrane review of research trials, web/computer feedback, individual face-to-face feedback, group face-to-face feedback definitively reduced drinking and alcohol related problems for between 3 and 16 months, mailed feedback had no effect and the few experimental studies done on social norms marketing had mixed results.⁴¹

National Campus Alcohol Intervention Web Links

www.acha-ncha.org/reports_ACHA-NCHAI.html

www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

www.stopalcoholabuse.gov

www.nhtsa.gov/Impaired

www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/underage-drinking-community-guide.pdf

www.campushealthandsafety.org/alcohol/campus

<http://nccpsafety.org>

www.samhsa.gov/prevention

www.nrepp.samhsa.gov

www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/bacchus-initiatives/research-grants

www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/alcohol/dotpartners/chapter_6.htm

<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol/lawsprohibitingsales.html>

www.crimesolutions.gov/

www.communitycollegereview.com/articles/164

www.madd.org/underage-drinking/college-initiatives/

<http://community.iaclea.org/home>