

# FACT SHEET

## Alcohol portrayal in cinemas

### Overview of research studies about the impact of alcohol advertisements in cinemas

#### **Introduction**

While there has been a multitude of research on the various ways and media of alcohol marketing and their effects on young people, research on alcohol marketing in the cinema has only recently taken off. This fact sheet covers the prevalence, range and effects of alcohol marketing in the cinema as proven in recent studies in the Netherlands and the UK.

#### **Impact of alcohol marketing**

Alcohol producers use the cinema as a medium to advertise. Before we discuss the possible impact of alcohol advertising in the cinema, the effects of alcohol advertising on drinking behaviour of young people in general are discussed.

When it comes to alcohol advertisements there are two important aspects: the content and volume of the advertisements. The content relates to the appeal of advertising. "Is there an association between alcohol and social/sexual or sporting success?" "Is there humour in it?". Such advertisements are usually found attractive by young people (Chen et al, 2005). Providing only factual information in advertisements about the product reduces the buying intent of young people (Chen et al, 2005).

Volume represents the amount of alcohol advertising young people are exposed to. This last aspect appears to be very important in influencing their drinking behaviour (for a review see Anderson et al, 2009). Therefore, if you want to reduce alcohol consumption among young people it is important to reduce the volume of alcohol marketing to which they are exposed on a daily basis.

In discussing the scientific research on the impact of alcohol advertising on drinking behaviour a distinction is made between effects on the long and short term. A recent review of 13 longitudinal studies on this subject shows that the more young people are exposed to alcohol marketing, the younger they start drinking and the more they drink per occasion (Anderson et al, 2009). In total, these 13 studies, followed over 38,000 young people aged 13 to 18 for several years. A report by the Science Group

of the European Alcohol and Health Forum of the European Commission (2009) confirmed this conclusion.

Also the direct effects of seeing alcohol used on TV on the drinking behaviour of young people, has been researched. Two studies of the Radboud University Nijmegen have revealed that young men drink more and faster directly caused by exposure to alcohol consumption in movies and commercials on TV. Young people who watched both a movie depicting alcohol and alcohol advertisements drunk twice as much alcohol as people who watched neutral movies and neutral film commercials (Engels et al 2009; Koordeman et al, 2009b).

To put it briefly, young people who watch a movie depicting abundant alcohol usage, unnoticed by themselves drink more alcohol than they would otherwise have done (Koordeman et al, 2009b). The addition of a commercial block of alcohol advertisements appears to enhance this effect (Engels et al, 2009).

#### **Impact of alcohol advertisements in cinemas**

Finally, the above studies on the impact of cinema advertising in general and alcohol advertising in particular raise the question of the (direct) impact of alcohol advertising in cinemas on the drinking behaviour of young people.

This was recently examined by the Radboud University Nijmegen (Koorderman et al, 2009a). The study included 184 young people aged 16 - 28 years (mean age 22 years), half of which male. The youngsters were divided into two conditions: in the experimental condition four alcohol advertisements were shown before the movie (Watchmen) in addition to six neutral commercials. The control group only got to see the six neutral commercials before the film was shown.

Because the study took place in a 'service cinema' it could be exactly recorded what the participant had ordered. This was also asked after the movie, for verification, to the participants via a questionnaire. Only the consumption of alcoholic beverages was

analysed, non-alcoholic beverages were excluded.

There was a significant interaction found between weekly alcohol use (low versus high) and condition (control versus experimental). In other words, young people with a relatively high weekly alcohol consumption (i.e. > 7 drinks per week, based on a *split-half*) drank significantly more alcohol in the experimental condition than young people with relatively high alcohol consumption in the control condition. Young people with a relatively high weekly alcohol consumption in the control condition drank 75 ml of beer, while young people with a comparable high weekly consumption in the experimental condition drank more than double, i.e. 178 ml. The effect size Cohen's  $d = 1.7$  and can therefore be described as strong.

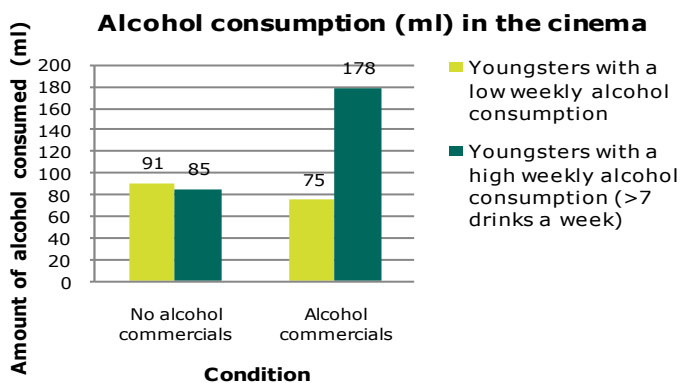


Figure 1. Koordeman et al., 2009a. Alcohol consumption in the cinema.

Apparently, alcohol advertisements in cinemas are especially tempting for youngsters who are already risky drinkers to an increased consumption. The results stayed significant, even after checking for weekly alcohol use and attitudes to movies and commercials.

### Comparing the impact of advertising in the cinema and on television

One of the key differences we see when comparing cinema advertisements with television advertisements is the setting in which the advertisements are seen. While in the cinema people are generally very focussed on the movies they see in front of them, people at home divide their attention between different media channels at once. One might, for example, read a magazine while also listening to the radio. In this sense the home environment, in which people generally watch television, is a continuous media "multi-tasking environment". The cinema however can be called a single-task and "focused attention" environment, also because of social etiquette (Digital Cinema Media / Carlton Screen Advertising,

2007). Usually people remember things better when focusing their attention on one point, than when they divide their attention between several (Coren et al, 1993).

Cinema also offers another important advantage in comparison to television: it creates a more impressive experience by employing a big screen and surround sound. More emotions are thus generated and the level of arousal is higher. This contributes to a deeper encoding of experiences in the memory. Which means that these experiences can be remembered easier and often with more detail. So it could be possible that an advertisement shown in cinemas is better remembered than its television counterpart.

### Qualitative research on differences in memory

In the UK the Digital Cinema Media (DCM) conducted a qualitative research that examined the difference in recall of commercials after being exposed to advertising at home (on TV) or in the cinema. Two groups of young people spent an evening at home watching television and three other groups of young people went to the movies one night. All evenings were filmed. Afterwards they were asked to draw what they could still remember of the commercials they had seen that night.

The study found that the drawings of young people who had watched television one night only contained basic thematic impressions of the commercials. The drawings of those who had been to the cinema however contained much more detailed information. The stories of the advertisements were extensively drawn out and the meaning of the commercial as well as the intent of the advertiser where conveyed (DCM, 2007). This shows how the focused attention combined with the increased arousal contribute to improving the recall of advertisement and brand.

### Quantitative research: cinema has eight times more impact than TV

There have also been quantitative studies on the impact of cinema advertising versus television advertising. In 2007 the British Cinema Advertising Association (CAA) examined the impact of cinema advertising versus television advertising on the recall of advertising. The CAA did so by interviewing 500 television viewers and 500 moviegoers, the day after they were first exposed to a new advertising from a certain brand. The average rate of recall for television viewers was just 3%, while the average recollection of an advertising measured one day after a

single exposure in the cinema was 25%. The conclusion is that the average rate of recall for cinema advertisements was about eight times higher compared to the recall of television advertisements, while the costs for cinema advertisements were only three times as high, making it a highly cost efficient way of advertising ([www.dcm.co.uk](http://www.dcm.co.uk)).

This study also showed that exposure to advertising through the cinema had a positive effect on the appreciation of the advertisement, brand awareness, word of mouth advertising and improvement of the perception of the brand (21% stylish and 17% quality, 13% hip/trendy).

#### ***Effect of repetition?***

A side note that needs to be placed with the above mentioned research is that in both studies there has been only one single measurement. Therefore it remains unclear how large the repetition effect is of the commercials that people see on television. Young people usually visit the cinema only few times a year. The fact that they generally watch television on a daily basis, increases the likelihood that they see the same commercial several times. Whether this repetition effect ultimately contributes to the memory of commercials seen on TV transcending impact of commercials in the cinema can not be concluded from the above studies.

However, it is known that the effect of repetition ensures that consumers are more familiar with a brand. Given that Dutch alcohol advertisers usually spend about two thirds or even three quarters of their total media expenditures (excluding sponsorship) on the medium of television (Nielsen Media, 2008, 2009), it seems clear that television as a medium is much more important than the cinema. This seems to be caused by the big range and the repetition factor.

The fact remains that although a consumer visits the cinema less often, the impact of one single exposure at the movies is approximately 8 times as strong, compared to exposure of the same commercial on TV.

#### ***Marketing mix: combined effect of Cinema and Television***

Of course, media like television or movies do not stand on their own. It is virtually never the case that a certain marketing campaign is exclusive to only one medium. In this section we look at the effects of the incorporation of both cinema and television in marketing campaigns.

#### ***Media Vision Research Jean Mineur***

In 2001 Jean Mineur Media Vision instructed Intomart GfK to examine the additional effect of cinema advertising in combination with exposure to television advertising in the Netherlands. For this purpose 300 moviegoers and 300 non-moviegoers in the age of 13 to 49 years were asked to fill out a questionnaire which included questions about brand recall, ad recall and purchase intent.

The respondents who were exposed to advertising on TV as well as in cinemas showed a significantly greater recollection of both brand and ad as well as purchase intent compared to respondents who had only seen the advertising on TV. The study also concluded that cinema as a medium is particularly suitable to reach those groups that watch little to average TV. The effects were most significant in these groups. Further studies of Ewing et al (2001) show that advertising in the cinema has further value in addition to television advertising. All age groups show a better memory of the advertising after exposure to both media compared to single exposure through TV.

#### ***An example of the marketing mix: Guinness Extra Cold***

In 2005 Guinness wanted to know what the cinema could add to the campaign for Guinness Extra Cold which was only broadcasted on television.

On behalf of Carlton Screen Advertising (Ireland) the researchers of SPA were brought in to examine the added value of advertising for Guinness Extra Cold in theatres ([www.carltonscreen.ie](http://www.carltonscreen.ie)). The main aims for Guinness were testing the memory of advertising, testing the attitude to and understanding of the advertising, examining attitudes toward the Guinness brand and whether cinema advertising changes this.

The results of the investigation were: almost half of all participants who had seen the advertisement recalled the major themes of the commercial (Eskimos or surfers who are cold). In total, 58% of moviegoers got the message of the campaign that Guinness must be served cold. The cinema ad increased the rate of recollection with 9% over that of exposure by TV. Furthermore the theatre campaign seemed to influence the appreciation of the Guinness commercials positively. Approximately 25% of the respondents said they "loved the Guinness commercials". Also there was a strong shift in image and positive perception of Guinness among the moviegoers.

In short, the impact of cinema advertising, in addition to more conventional forms of media such as television, is showed clearly in the above mentioned research. The cinema as a medium has particular added value because the visitors there have a concentrated focus, have few distractions and show increased levels of arousal. This leads to a deeper storage in the memory, and better recall of brand and advertising, to more appreciation, word-of-mouth advertising and a higher purchase intent. It is a valuable addition to advertisements on television, because the cinema reaches a different audience. The fact that costs are relatively "low" in relation to impact (eight times as strong as TV), results in cinema as a medium being more attractive to the advertiser.

### Conclusion

Cinema is a very compelling marketing medium, especially when compared to more traditional advertising media like TV. The message of the advertisements comes across better, both the commercial and the brand lodge themselves stronger in the memory and the overall appreciation of the advertisement is higher. Additionally, cinema advertising reaches groups of people that are otherwise hard to reach.

This can not come as a surprise to those who know the effects of more traditional alcohol marketing on the drinking behaviour of young people. Both direct (faster and up to two times more drinking, directly after being exposed to depictions of alcohol usage in movies or advertising) and in the long term (youths drink more and start drinking at an earlier age), strong positive effects have been found on the drinking behaviour of this vulnerable and impressionable group (Anderson et al., 2009, Engels et al., 2009, Koordeman et al., 2009b).

The impact of alcohol advertisement in cinemas should therefore not be neglected. As a medium for alcohol advertising, cinemas should be taken into account in the discussion of restricting or banning alcohol marketing.

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See for more information: [www.eucam.info](http://www.eucam.info)

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