ASHES, Vol. 5(2) – Advertising the smoking while drinking phenomena

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The tendency of people, especially young adults, to smoke while drinking is well documented in the scientific literature (e.g., Falk, Yi, & Hiller-Sturmhofel, 2006). The tobacco industry suggested using the associations between smoking and drinking to "leverage …the correlation… in our marketing efforts" (p.1; Troutman & R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co, 1990). This week's ASHES reviews a study that explores how frequently tobacco companies link alcohol to cigarettes in their advertisements.

Methods

Belstock, Connolly, Carpenter, & Tucker (2008) reviewed each 2003 and 2004 issue of Maxim, FHM, Cosmopolitan, and Ebony.

- The target audience of these magazines is 18-24 year olds for each magazine was (40.6%, 42.8%, 30.9%, and 18.9% of readers respectively).

The authors examined all alcohol and cigarette advertisements, using content analysis ($\kappa = 0.79–1.0$) to determine whether the advertisement:

- Was for alcohol, and pictured a bar or a club in the advertisement,
- Was for cigarettes, and pictured a bar or a club in the advertisement,
- Was for cigarettes, and contained a reference to drinking (e.g., a drink in the model's hand) in the advertisement, or
- Was for alcohol, and contained a reference to smoking (e.g., a cigarette in the model's hand) in the advertisement.

Results

- There were 114 unique cigarette advertisements and 317 unique alcohol advertisements.
- Of the cigarette advertisements, 32 (28.1%) referred to alcohol. Of the alcohol advertisements, none referred to cigarettes.
- Table 1 shows that cigarette and alcohol advertisements were not

statistically significant regarding their likelihood to show a bar or nightclub in the picture that appeared in the magazine.

	Cigarette advertisements (n=114)	Alcohol advertisements (n=317)		
	N(%)	N(%)	OR (95%CI)	*p*
Advertisement pictures a bar or club	23 (20.2%)	65 (20.5%)	1.02 (0.60-1.74)	.940

Figure. Characteristics of Cigarette and Alcohol Advertisements Adapted from Belstock et al. (2008). Click image to enlarge.

Limitations

- The researchers only reviewed four magazines during a two-year period. In addition to the limited magazine sample, tobacco companies use other advertising media, so the data reviewed might not be a representative sample of tobacco marketing.

Conclusion

Some tobacco advertisements referred to alcohol, but no alcohol advertisements referred to cigarettes. This imbalanced relationship might be because alcohol advertisers consider an alcohol-cigarette pairing unfavorable, while tobacco advertisers consider it favorable. It might be more favorable for tobacco advertisers because people smoke more while drinking (Falk et al., 2006), and unfavorable for alcohol advertisers because tobacco is less effective at changing people's opinion of alcohol.

References

Belstock, S. A., Connolly, G. N., Carpenter, C. M., & Tucker, L. (2008). Using alcohol to sell cigarettes to young adults: A content analysis of cigarette advertisements. Journal of American College Health, 56(4), 383-389.

Falk, D. E., Yi, H.-Y., & Hiller-Sturmhofel, S. (2006). An epidemiologic analysis of co-occuring alcohol and tobacco use and disorders: Findings from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. Alcohol Research & Health, 29(3), 162-171.

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