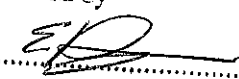


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# 'Most men drink... especially like when they play sports' – alcohol advertising during sporting broadcasts and the potential impact on child audiences

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- Alcohol advertising during sporting broadcasts, as well as the sponsorship of sporting events by the alcohol industry, is common practice in Australia, as in many other countries. The strength of the association between alcohol and sports prompts consideration of the potential for children who watch televised sport to be exposed to a considerable amount of alcohol advertising, and to learn to associate alcohol with sport and sporting success. This paper reviews the current alcohol advertising regulations in Australia, particularly in reference to the protection of children. It then details a pair of studies designed to examine the extent and nature of alcohol advertising during sporting telecasts, and the potential effects on young people. The first, a frequency and content analysis of advertising during two popular Australian sports final series, found that alcohol advertising (particularly during a sporting competition with alcohol company sponsors) is extensive and contains both features known to be appealing to children and messages which could be interpreted as associating alcohol consumption with social and sporting success. The second, a qualitative study with grade 5 and 6 primary school students, found that young people have a high awareness of the alcohol sponsors and alcohol brands advertised during these sporting telecasts, and associate these products with sport and with positive personal characteristics and outcomes.

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## Alcohol and sport

It is well known that attitudes towards alcohol consumption are strongly influenced by social

and cultural norms, and more directly by the specific social situation in which alcohol consumption occurs (e.g. Greenfield and Room, 1997; McDaniel *et al.*, 2001). It is currently unclear what part the association between alcohol and sports in Australia plays in reinforcing, or indeed creating, some of these norms. However, the strong association between sport and alcohol in Australian culture prompts consideration of the potential

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for children who watch a lot of sport to be exposed to a considerable amount of alcohol advertising, and to learn to associate alcohol with sport and sporting success.

Alcohol, and the promotion and advertising of alcohol, has been associated with sporting events in most countries for many decades - to the extent where it has been argued that it would 'be unusual to view a sporting event without seeing some form of event signage or a commercial for an alcohol or tobacco brand' (McDaniel *et al.*, 2001, p. 309). In the US, the alcohol industry spends more than \$540 million per year on advertising in sports programs on TV (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2003). University students who are sports fans have been found to drink more alcohol, be more likely to engage in binge drinking, and more likely to report alcohol-related problems than students who are not sports fans (Nelson and Wechsler, 2003).

Sponsorship of sporting events by the alcohol industry is a common practice in Australia, and there is currently much debate between industry groups and public health advocates about whether associating alcohol with sport is inappropriate because of the potential impact on underage consumers (e.g. Crompton, 1993). There are also concerns that the association contravenes the spirit of the advertising codes of practice (which in part are designed for the protection of vulnerable groups such as children and young people).

Indeed, the potential impact of the 'branding' of sport by alcohol marketers could create powerful emotional associations between the physical product, the sport and the 'sporting heroes' who are required to wear the branded merchandise of the alcohol sponsor and often feature in the associated commercials. Historically, Australia has recognized the strong links between advertising and health behaviours, having outlawed the practice of tobacco sponsorship of sport, as part of a total ban on tobacco advertising (Chapman and Wakefield, 2001); but, to date, there has not been similar regulatory action in relation to alcohol.

### ***Alcohol advertising, self-regulation and the protection of young people***

In Australia, the current social and cultural environment appears to be working to reinforce unhealthy drinking norms amongst young people. This is seen in the wide use of alcohol by Australian secondary students, with 49% of 17-year olds (and 35% of 15-year olds) surveyed in 2005 having consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, and 21% and 11%, respectively having consumed at dangerous levels (White and Hayman, 2006). The National Alcohol Indicators Project (NAIP) estimates that over 80% of all alcohol consumed by 14- to 17-year olds in Australia is drunk at a level that poses short-term risk of injury, and that each year over 3000 under-aged drinkers are hospitalized for alcohol attributable injury in Australia (Chikritzhs and Pascal, 2004).

There is a growing body of research into the effects of alcohol advertising on young people, with a general level of agreement that there is an association between exposure and alcohol expectancies<sup>1</sup> (Lipsitz *et al.*, 1993; Stacy *et al.*, 1994), drinking intentions (Grube and Wallack, 1994; Kelly and Edwards, 1998), and current or future drinking (Casswell and Zhang, 1998; Wyllie *et al.*, 1998). Three recent longitudinal studies (Stacy *et al.*, 2004; Ellickson *et al.*, 2005; Snyder *et al.*, 2006) have been credited with providing much-needed evidence of the direct relationship between advertising exposure and youth drinking, with important implications for policy change in this area. However, these studies have focused on econometric analyses of advertising spend at the state or community level and their association with alcohol consumption and/or on associations between individual-level self-reported exposure to alcohol advertising and current and later drinking behaviours (Stacy *et al.*, 2004; Ellickson *et al.*, 2005; Snyder *et al.*, 2006).

While these more recent studies have not examined the content of the alcohol adver-

<sup>1</sup>Positive or negative beliefs about the consequences of using alcohol.

tisements, rather focussing on their frequency, earlier research has found associations between certain types of messages and pro-alcohol attitudes and behaviours. Exposure to alcohol advertisements has been shown to produce both optimistic beliefs about alcohol (Grube and Wallack, 1994); and an association between drinking and positive personal attributes (such as increased sociability, sophistication and physical attractiveness), and positive outcomes (such as success, relaxation, romance and adventures) (Grube, 1993). Previous Australian research has found that alcohol advertisements contain imagery and messages that young people interpret as suggesting that alcohol consumption will have positive psychological and social outcomes (Jones and Donovan, 2001; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Jones *et al.*, in press).

Perhaps even more important than the direct effects on consumption, research from the 1980s and 1990s showed that alcohol advertising has a strong effect on young people's perceptions of drinking and their normative behaviour (Lieberman and Orlandi, 1987), and the reinforcement of gender and racial stereotypes (Alaniz and Wilkes, 1998).

The alcohol industry consistently asserts that their advertisements are directed at the adult population and are aimed at promoting brand loyalty, not increasing overall alcohol consumption (Zwarun and Farrar, 2005). However, the presence of particular features in advertising has been shown to make advertisements more attractive and appealing to young people. In relation to alcohol advertising, research conducted by Strickland (1984) found that the use of appealing role models in alcohol advertising increased the orientation of young people towards the advertising. Waiters *et al.* (2001) also found the use of appealing role models (celebrity product endorsements) increased the recall and likeability of alcohol advertisements among young people, along with other features including: humour; the use of cute, creative and funny animation or animals; and the use of youth-orientated music.

The broadcast of alcohol advertisements on commercial television in Australia is restricted in order to limit the exposure of young people to alcohol advertising. As such, alcohol advertising is only permitted during periods of M (mature classification), MA (mature audience classification) or AV (adult violence classification) programs (which are restricted to between 8:30 pm and 5.00 am). The one (somewhat counter-intuitive) exception to this is that the broadcast of alcohol advertisements is permitted during the live broadcast of sporting events on weekends and public holidays (Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, 2004). The potential impact of this exception on the vulnerable audience of young people who may watch sport on television has received little attention or investigation.

In Australia, two industry self-regulation codes apply to alcohol advertisements. The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA, 2007) Code of Ethics applies to all forms of advertising and covers issues such as discrimination and vilification, violence, sexuality and nudity, language and health and safety. The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) covers issues such as the portrayal of excessive alcohol consumption, encouragement of underage drinking and depiction of alcohol consumption and operation of a motor vehicle (see **Figure 1**). The ABAC contains a number of clauses which concern the way that alcohol is promoted, with three clauses most relevant to the present study. Firstly, advertisements 'must not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success and if alcohol beverages are depicted as part of a celebration, must not imply or suggest that the beverage was a cause of or contributed to success or achievement' and 'must not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, other than low-alcohol beverages, and... the engagement in any sport'. Finally, of significance to this study is a clause which

- (a) Must present a mature, balanced and responsible approach to the consumption of alcohol beverages and, accordingly—
- (i) must not encourage excessive consumption or abuse of alcohol
  - (ii) must not encourage under-age drinking
  - (iii) must not promote offensive behaviour, or the excessive consumption, misuse or abuse of alcohol beverages
  - (iv) must only depict the responsible and moderate consumption of alcohol beverages
- (b) Must not have a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents and, accordingly—
- (i) adults appearing in advertisements must be over 25 years of age and be clearly depicted as adults
  - (ii) children and adolescents may only appear in advertisements in natural situations (e.g. family barbecue, licensed family restaurant) and where there is no implication that the depicted children and adolescents will consume or serve alcohol beverages
  - (iii) adults under the age of 25 years may only appear as part of a natural crowd or background scene
- (c) Must not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to a significant change in mood or environment and, accordingly
- (i) must not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success
  - (ii) if alcohol beverages are depicted as part of a celebration, must not imply or suggest that the beverage was a cause of or contributed to success or achievement
  - (iii) must not suggest that the consumption of alcohol beverages offers any therapeutic benefit or is a necessary aid to relaxation
- (d) Must not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, other than low-alcohol beverages, and the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft or the engagement in any sport (including swimming and water sports) or potentially hazardous activity and, accordingly—
- (i) any depiction of the consumption of alcohol beverages in connection with the above activities must not be represented as having taken place before or during engagement of the activity in question and must in all cases portray safe practices
  - (ii) any claim concerning safe consumption of low-alcohol beverages must be demonstrably accurate
- (e) Must not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage, other than low-alcohol beverages, and must not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content

Figure 1. The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code.

specifies that alcohol advertising 'must not have any evident appeal to children or adolescents'. Overall, such clauses highlight that the alcohol industry's own code acknowledges the need to protect young people from alcohol advertising they may find appealing, and also recognizes the potential power of an association between alcohol and sporting success.

### ***Frequency and content of alcohol advertising during sporting telecasts***

The nature of such clauses prompts an investigation of the current environment in relation to alcohol advertising that is associated with sports in Australia. When considering the possible impact on young people of alcohol sponsorship of sport, and alcohol advertising during sporting broadcasts, understanding both the frequency and the nature of this advertising is important. From studies conducted in the United States, we know that

children are frequent viewers of sporting programs, and that young people have their greatest exposure to alcohol advertising and promotion through televised sports (Grube, 1993). In a study of beverage advertisements shown during TV broadcasts of sporting programs in the US, the amount of time dedicated to alcohol advertising (77%) far exceeded that dedicated to the advertising of all other beverages (19%; plus 4% for non-alcohol beer) (Madden and Grube, 1994). There are however, no current studies that have quantified the frequency of alcohol advertisements during sporting programs in Australia, or the effects of childhood viewing of such programs.

There is evidence that by the age of 14 children are able to perceive and interpret even subtle messages within alcohol advertisements (Grube, 1993). This is relevant when considering findings regarding strategic ambiguity in relation to self-regulatory guidelines designed to protect young children. For example, Zwarun and Farrar (2005) found ambiguity in showing characters in advertisements who, whilst not seen physically drinking, are likely to be perceived as drinking due to the presence of open alcohol beverages. In the current Australian context, where we see the increasing use of sporting stars in alcohol advertisements and promotions (wearing the sponsors' branded merchandise and, in some advertisements, consuming the product) the sponsorship of sport may promote opportunities for even less ambiguous and more obvious breaches of the code.

### ***Aims of this research***

This paper describes the results from two small-scale studies designed to examine this important but under-researched topic: to develop an understanding of the amount and nature of alcohol advertising shown during sporting broadcasts on television in Australia, and to explore the potential impact of those advertisements on the alcohol beliefs of children who watch televised sport.

Specifically, the studies aimed to:

1. Quantify the frequency of alcohol advertising during the free-to-air TV broadcasts of two Australian sports, one with a major alcohol sponsor and one with a major sponsor other than an alcohol company.
2. Conduct a content analysis of alcohol advertisements shown during those broadcasts to determine the nature of the advertising (particularly examining the features known to be appealing to young people), and compliance with the relevant codes.
3. Explore the brand recognition, advertisement liking and alcohol beliefs of grade 5 and 6 (10–12 years old) primary school children, utilizing advertisements shown during the broadcasts as stimulus materials.

### Method

Mixed methods were used in this research; bringing together frequency analysis, content analysis and thematic analysis of friendship pair discussions to examine children's perceptions of these advertisements. This form of research design is gaining popularity as it combines the benefits of the different approaches to gain a more complete understanding of the research topic, and improves the strength of the findings compared to monomethod studies (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Past research on alcohol advertising during sport has been limited to generally one approach (mainly quantitative and descriptive methods), for example the Madden and Grube (1994) study described above where the frequency of all beverage advertisements during sporting telecasts was recorded and coded. More recently, mixed methods have been used for the formative evaluation of media campaigns, such as Canadian campaigns to raise awareness of binge drinking (Jack *et al.*, 2005). However, there is very little research on alcohol advertising which uses mixed methods to examine both the messages in alcohol advertising and children's interpretations of, and

responses to, these messages. The present exploratory study was designed to address this gap.

### Study 1 – frequency and content of alcohol advertising

In early 2006, broadcasts of two major Australian sporting events were recorded: the One Day Cricket finals between Australia and Sri Lanka (a five-game series); and the Australian Open Tennis finals including the men's and women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles matches.

These events were selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, both cricket and tennis are popular sports amongst Australian children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Secondly, the broadcasts were of similar duration and timing; both the cricket and tennis were held in mid-summer, started on a Friday and continued over the weekend, and were broadcast at similar hours (12 pm to 10 pm inclusive). Thirdly, they differed in the level of alcohol sponsorship; the One Day International Cricket Series had several alcohol companies as major sponsors (Victoria Bitter beer, Bundaberg rum, Johnnie Walker whisky and Cougar Bourbon), while the Australian Open tennis had no alcohol companies as major sponsors (major sponsors were KIA cars and Garnier haircare products).

All advertisements shown during the recorded broadcasts were coded for: dates and times shown; advertisement length; frequency of appearance; product category (see **Figure 2**) and the brand. Two research assistants were trained to administer the coding tool (including training on the content of the ABAC Guidelines and Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice). The coders, working independently, watched each advertisement several times to ensure no important information was missed before commencing coding, with any discrepancies between coders reported to the first author for adjudication.

1. Alcohol beverage (any alcohol beverage product, excluding retailer/store advertisements)
2. Non-alcohol beverage (any beverage other than alcohol)
3. Food (any food product)
4. Motor vehicles (any motor vehicle or motor vehicle-related product)
5. Home products (products for the home or garden - such as furniture, paint and roofing materials)
6. Electronics (products such as mobile phones, televisions and computers)
7. Personal care (grooming products, make up and health products)
8. Entertainment (such as television program promotions, advertisements for concerts and movies)
9. Services (non-product related advertisements such as insurance, banking)
10. CSAs (Community Service Announcements)
11. Other (including retailer advertisements such as those for supermarkets)

Figure 2. Product categories for advertisement coding.

Simple descriptive statistics were then generated using SPSS, for each sporting event, including: total advertising time; total number of advertisements; most frequently occurring product categories and advertisers; and total advertising time for beverages (non-alcohol and alcohol). Statistics were also generated for the amount of alcohol beverage advertising shown on days and at times not permitted under the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (2004).

Each alcohol beverage advertisement was then coded against the clauses of the ABAC, and for the presence of features that have been found to be appealing to young people in previous studies, such as celebrities, cartoon characters and humour (e.g. Waiters *et al.*, 2001), see Figure 3.

### Study 2 – children's recognition and liking of alcohol advertisements

Six friendship-pair interviews (three pairs of boys and three pairs of girls) were conducted with children aged 10–12 years (grade 5 and 6), recruited from two public primary schools in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, Australia. A discussion guide and various games and stimulus activities were utilized to discuss the advertisements, and explore the place of sport and sports watching in the children's lives. These included techniques such as card games and pile sorting which are advocated as particularly helpful tools for engaging children in focus groups and in

#### Model Type

1. male sports celebrity
2. female sports celebrity
3. male celebrity
4. female celebrity
5. male model
6. female model
7. mascot
8. cartoon character
9. none

#### Model Age

0. no model
1. under 25
2. over 25

#### Environment

1. none
2. motor vehicle
3. boat
4. aircraft
5. water
6. sports

#### Success

0. no portrayal of success
1. sports success
2. social success
3. other success

#### Humour

1. yes
2. no

Figure 3. Categories for advertisement coding.

aiding the investigation of children's thoughts and perceptions on particular topics (Hennessy and Heary, 2005).

During the discussions, the children were shown stills (photographs) from advertisements broadcast during the One Day Cricket finals (described above). The stills used were designed to exclude actual product shots and brand names in order to ensure that the children were recalling advertisements they had previously seen and not identifying the product/brand from the visual cue. The children were also shown photographs of three adult male cricket celebrities and three non-sporting adult male celebrities along with stills of product advertisements, and asked to match the various celebrities with what they thought would be the celebrity's favourite three products. The different product advertisements were drawn from a sample identified

**Table 1.** Total advertisement numbers and duration

Sport	Total program time (h)	Total number of advertisements	Total time of advertisements	Advertising as proportion of viewing time (%)
Cricket	18	613	3h59m36s	22.2
Tennis	24	503	3h37m59s	15.2

as being products that would appeal to the adult male demographic (e.g. cars, razors, aftershave, etc.) that had been advertised during sports programming and other prime time television in the previous month.

### Results

#### Study 1 – frequency and nature of alcohol advertising

##### Total advertising

The total advertising time during the One Day Cricket finals was compared to that during the Australian Open tennis finals. As shown in

**Table 1**, the cricket – despite being 6 h shorter than the tennis – contained 110 more advertisements and 12 more minutes of advertising, with advertising comprising 22% of the cricket broadcast compared to 15.2% of the tennis. However, the number of advertisements and total advertising time were sufficiently similar to enable comparison of the advertising during the two sporting events.

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, the product categories most commonly advertised during the cricket were entertainment, services, alcohol and motor vehicles; and during the tennis were services, motor vehicles, home products and personal care products.

**Table 2.** Advertisement frequency and total time during cricket (major alcohol sponsors)

Category	Number of advertisements	Total time	% of total advertising time
Entertainment	122	39m43s	16.6
Cars	84	38m26s	16.0
Services	77	32m59s	13.8
Electronic	67	28m13s	11.8
Alcohol	64	23m43s	10.0
Food	54	19m20s	7.7
Non-alcohol	30	11m38s	4.9
Personal care	22	9m09s	3.8

**Table 3.** Advertisement frequency and total time during tennis (no major alcohol sponsor)

Category	Number of advertisements	Total time	% of total advertising time
Entertainment	99	41m45s	19.2
Services	93	41m59s	19.3
Home products	67	24m15s	11.1
Personal care	57	22m30s	10.3
Cars	50	24m00s	11.0
Electronic	34	13m15s	6.1
Food	24	8m15s	3.8
Alcohol	16	7m30s	3.2

### *Alcohol advertising*

Alcohol was the fifth most commonly advertised product category during the cricket, but the eighth (out of 10) during the tennis. The 18 h of cricket included 64 alcohol advertisements (10% of all advertising); that is, approximately 3.5 alcohol advertisements per hour, lasting just under 24 min. The 24 h of tennis included 16 alcohol advertisements; that is, less than one per hour, lasting a total of seven and a half minutes.

A comparison of all beverage advertising during the cricket and tennis broadcasts shows that while alcohol advertising occurred much more frequently than non-alcohol beverage advertising during the cricket (64 alcohol advertisements compared to 11 non-alcohol beverage advertisements), the frequency of advertisements for alcohol and non-alcohol beverages was similar during the tennis (16 alcohol advertisements compared to 9 non-alcohol beverage advertisements).

### *Content analysis*

While there was a total of 64 alcohol advertisements recorded during the cricket broadcast and 16 recorded during the tennis, most of the advertisements were shown multiple times, resulting in 10 *unique* alcohol advertisements broadcast during the cricket and 3 during the tennis. These 13 alcohol advertisements were examined using the coding guide described above and can be seen in Table 4, which also highlights which advertisements were coded as potentially in breach of the ABAC and/or Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (2004) and the reasons for the breach.

*Features known to appeal to children.* Six of the ten alcohol advertisements shown during the cricket included human 'models' compared to two of the three shown during the tennis. Of those six shown during the cricket, two utilized sporting celebrities (Australian cricket stars David Boon and Justin Langer) and the remaining four utilized actors/models. The two Bundaberg Rum advertisements

shown during the cricket used a mascot (Bundy Bear - a giant polar bear character). Both of those shown during the tennis were advertisements for James Boag's beer featuring attractive models of both sexes.

Nine of the ten alcohol advertisements shown during the cricket used humour, compared to two of the three shown during the tennis. Furthermore, 5 of the 13 advertisements showed people enjoying themselves (e.g. laughing) in a social environment. This can also be seen in the Bundaberg Rum advertisement with the Bundy Bear (the main protagonist) finding himself in several humorous social situations throughout the series of advertisements.

*Alcohol consumption and success.* There were six advertisements that were judged by the coders to be in violation of the ABAC (2004) guidelines regarding the association between alcohol consumption and success. One of the Victoria Bitter advertisements appears to associate consumption of the product with sporting success using former Australian cricket player, David Boon. Both of the Bundaberg Rum advertisements suggest an association between consumption of the product and social success. For example, in the first of these Bundy Bear turns up late to a social BBQ with his fur stained pink because his friends had placed a red sock in his bath. He is handed a can of Bundaberg Rum. Then an attractive young female notices him and invites him to 'come meet my friends'. The shot pans to the group of friends who are also young and attractive, and Bundy and his friends salute his 'success' by raising their Bundaberg Rum cans in unison. The association between alcohol consumption and success is complex and subtle. Not only is 'Bundy' holding a can of the advertised product (and only approached by the young women when holding this can), he is the personification of the alcohol product Bundaberg rum (thus the association of him as a *character* with social success carries a subtext associating the *product* with success).



Table 4. Apparent compliance with the codes of practice

Company	Advertisement title	Sport	ABAC code violation	Television code violation	Code violation/reason/s
VB	Boony beer promotion	Cricket	Yes	Yes	C (i): There is a strong link between David Boon's sporting success and the advertised product: VB The advertisement was shown before 8:30 pm on a weekday The Talking Boony figurine is potentially appealing to children
VB	Kebab always appears	Cricket	No	No	—
VB	Meat Ad-Kangaroo with national emblem	Cricket	No	No	—
Johnnie Walker	Men playing video games at work	Cricket	No	No	
Johnnie Walker	'Always one more' Justin Langer	Cricket	Yes	Yes	A (i): The tagline in the commercial encourages excessive consumption of alcohol The advertisement was shown before 8:30 pm on a weekday
Bundaberg Rum	Bundy Bear turns pink	Cricket	Yes	Yes	C (i): Bundaberg Rum is a contributing factor for the Bundy Bears 'success' in getting women to talk to him The advertisement was shown before 8:30 on a weekday
Bundaberg Rum	Bundy Bear goes to the wrong party-hens night	Cricket	Yes	Yes	C (i): Bundaberg Rum is a contributing factor for Bundy Bear's social 'success' at the ladies hens' night Advertisement was shown before 8:30 pm on a weekday
Cougar	Bottle of Cougar bourbon, green background, voice over	Cricket	No	Yes	The advertisement was shown before 8:30 pm on a weekday
Cougar	Viewing restriction on 'pies' - dark rum	Cricket	No	Yes	The advertisement was shown before 8:30 pm on a weekday
Cascade	Tassie drought, but beer still produced	Cricket	No	No	—
Wolf Blass	Australia's finest wine	Tennis	No	No	—
James Boag's	Girl on car bonnet	Tennis	Yes	No	C (i): James Boag's was a contributing factor for sexual success with the semi-naked women posing on the car bonnet
James Boag's	Girl using her stocking to pass a beer to a male on the floor below	Tennis	Yes	No	C (i): James Boag's was a contributing factor for sexual success with the semi-naked man relaxing on his balcony

The two advertisements shown during the tennis which appeared to be in breach of the ABAC Code were both for James Boag's beer. For example, one of these features an attractive woman peering over a balcony at a handsome man on the floor below. She removes her stocking in a suggestive manner

and uses it to lower a bottle of beer to the man, who is wearing only a towel. Although there is no dialogue in the commercial, background music is used to set the mood for the characters, and the woman uses slow suggestive movements throughout the advertisement.

*Encouraging excessive alcohol consumption.* The ABAC (2004) states that alcohol advertisements should 'not encourage consumption that is in excess of, or inconsistent with, the Australian Alcohol Guidelines issued by the NHMRC' (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2001).<sup>2</sup> One advertisement that appeared to be in breach of this clause was a Johnnie Walker scotch whisky advertisement featuring Australian cricket player Justin Langer. While the advertisement may not breach the letter of the Code, it appears inconsistent with the spirit, with a tagline 'there's always, just one more' which could readily be interpreted by viewers as a reference to having one more drink (perhaps, a Johnnie Walker).

*Alcohol sponsorship and the commercial television code of practice.* Six of the 13 advertisements were broadcast in apparent violation of the Commercial Television Code of Practice (2004), which restricts the broadcast of alcohol advertisements 'only in M, MA or AV classification periods (8.30 pm to 5.00 am weekdays and weekends and 12.00 noon to 3 pm on schooldays); or as an accompaniment to the live broadcast of a sporting event on weekends and public holidays'. Each of these six advertisements were shown at least once during the broadcast of the cricket on a weekday (Tuesday 10/01/06; Thursday 12/01/06) before 8:30 pm which puts them in breach of the industry's code of practice. None of the advertisements screened during the tennis appeared to breach this clause of the Commercial Television Code of Practice (2004).

## Study 2 – children's recognition and liking of alcohol advertisements

The friendship pair discussions highlighted the significant role of playing sport and watching

<sup>2</sup>At the time of data collection for this study, these Guidelines were: for men an *average* of no more than four standard drinks a day, not more than six standard drinks in any one day; and for women an *average* of no more than two standard drinks a day, not more than four standard drinks in any one day (the Guidelines were revised in 2009 and now recommend lower levels of consumption).

sport on TV for the children interviewed. The children associated playing sport with positive life outcomes such as good health, success and maintaining a healthy weight. Watching sport on the TV was a regular part of life, especially for boys, and included a wide variety of sports such as rugby, AFL (Australian Rules football), soccer and cricket. Most of the children were able to name favourite teams and players; and many owned merchandise from their favourite teams.

*I: Do you have any of the gear of your favourite soccer teams?*

*P: Yeah I have like shorts... I have shorts and shin pads and that stuff.*

*I: And do you know who sponsors your favourite team?*

*P: Adidas. Yeah. Adidas sponsors them. (M, GRP 5)*

The children were also aware of the concept of sponsorship and were able to correctly identify the sponsors of the sporting teams, including the Australian Cricket Team:

*I: What about the Australian Cricket Team do you know who sponsors them?*

*P: Abem, yes VB [beer] abem and Bundaberg [rum]. (M, GRP 1)*

There was considerable variation in the children's recall and recognition of advertisements from the still photographs, which appeared to vary on the basis of both the appeal of the product and the appeal of the actual advertisement. For example, the children consistently recognized both the VB [beer] and the Bundaberg [rum] advertisements that had been part of the summer promotions during the cricket broadcast. They were able to name the brand (VB/Bundy) and the product (beer/alcohol), and were quick to point out that the advertisements were

appealing because of features such as humour and the use of mascots:

*P1: ... it makes you laugh at the start. You always want to stay and watch the end of it to see what happens [F, GRP 2]*

*P2: I like it because it's got the pink polar bear in it [F, GRP 2]*

Consistent with previous research, some features in advertising were described as appealing, regardless of the product, such as humour or music.

*P: A lot of the ads are hilarious on TV they like attract attention and so like people will buy them or something like that. [F, GRP 3]*

*P: My dad drinks VB. So it's funny... and I like you know the music part [F, GRP 2]*

The children reported that they do not pay attention to advertisements unless they hold their interest, and some were also able to differentiate between the appeal of the advertisement and the desire for the product.

*P1: That one's so funny. ...*

*P2: It's a cricketer I think. He's itching his boxer shorts.*

*I: If that ad came on the tele would you... do you think you would pay attention to it?*

*P1: Yeah because it's funny. Sometimes we change it. [the channel] ... but if it is funny we watch. [M, GRP 6]*

*I: Does it matter what they're selling or is it just that the ad's funny?*

*P: Abem, It's just that the ad's funny. I wouldn't buy it just because it's on TV. [M, GRP 1]*

It appears that the presence of celebrities alone did not make the advertisement appealing to this age group, in the absence of humour or

other features. For example, the children were not attracted to the Johnny Walker whisky advertisement which features the Australian cricket player Justin Langer (shot in black and white on a London street and showing Langer walking past various house numbers as he discusses the mental processes he goes through as he is batting). Unlike other advertisements that had been shown during the broadcast, the advertisement lacks colour, animation, mascots and humour and was not interesting to the children, even though it featured a favourite cricket player. They could not name the product being advertised, and some did not recall even seeing the advertisement:

*I: Do you know what it was for? Have you seen it?*

*P1: Not really.*

*P2: No, no. It's a walking something...*

*P1: I wouldn't watch it. It's boring. [M, GRP 4]*

*I: So does it matter that the cricket players were in it? That doesn't make it interesting enough?*

*P: No. [M, GRP 1]*

*P: It's pretty boring. [M, GRP 1]*

When matching celebrities to their favourite products, children often attributed preferences to celebrities on the basis of products they were known to endorse. For example, Brett Lee (a cricketer) who appears in advertisements for Weetbix (breakfast cereal) was consistently assumed to favour this product.

*I: If you thought he [Brett Lee] was going to buy three different things, what three things would he most want ...?*

*P1: Weetbix [M, GRP 1]*

*P2: Weetbix of course. [M, GRP 1]*

*P: Ok - I think Weetbix because he's like sponsored by them ... he's on the ads and everything... and then I think VB - or I think Johnny Walker. [F, GRP 2]*

Others linked product preference, such as for alcohol, to characteristics of the person, such as gender (males drink beer and spirits, females drink wine), or age (with being a teenager or young adult associated with alcohol), or being a humorous person.

*I: Why did you think he liked... VB and Johnny Walker?*

*P1: Because he's a man. [F, GRP2]*

*P2: And... and... and... and his wife would probably drink wine. [F, GRP2]*

*P: ... Most men drink beer. [M, GRP 3]*

*P1: Like he's [Brett Lee] still... sort of like a teenager... So he won't be drinking like say - milk and other stuff he would be drinking... like wine and beers and other stuff. [F, GRP 3]*

*P2: I chose Victoria Bitter, Solo and Johnnie Walker because I think - he's still like young so he could drinks um, beer, wine and can drinks sort of thing [F, GRP 3]*

*P: The funny guy... Drinks all the alcohol [M, GRP 1]*

The association between alcohol and sport, for some young people, clearly goes beyond sponsorship; with one of our participants inferring that the players consume alcohol both while they are playing and to recover after the game.

*P: that's a very good one [VB] because most men drink... Especially like when they play sports, and yeah and when they're tired from sports they might go and then have a drink and stuff. [M, GRP 4]*

## Discussion

An examination of advertising during the finals of the One Day Cricket during the summer of 2006 reveals a high frequency of alcohol advertisements, dominated by the products of the alcohol sponsors. From this pilot study it would appear that alcohol sponsorship increases the frequency and duration of alcohol advertising during sporting broadcasts, and thus increases exposure to alcohol advertising among children who watch televised sports. Alcohol advertising was three times more frequent during the telecast of the One Day Cricket (which had three major alcohol company sponsors) than the tennis (which had no major alcohol sponsors). Also of note is the broadcast of alcohol advertisements outside the stated exceptions in the Commercial Television TV Code of Practice (2004). This study noted the broadcast of alcohol advertisements during the telecast of the sponsored sport (cricket) on weekdays before 8.30 pm during this period of monitoring, but did not observe this to occur during the broadcast of the tennis (no major alcohol sponsor). As such, it would appear that in Australia, the current Commercial TV Code of Practice (2004) may not be effectively restricting the exposure of young audiences (who may watch these sports on TV) to alcohol advertising, and that the alcohol sponsorship of sport may increase the likelihood of this exposure. The nature of such relationships would benefit from more comprehensive monitoring of advertising associated with sports broadcasts (both with and without alcohol sponsors) over at least a 12-month period.

The fact that alcohol beverages were advertised far more frequently than non-alcohol beverages during the cricket telecast also has potential to impact on normative drinking beliefs via sending a subtle message to young people about the frequency of alcohol versus non-alcohol beverage consumption and the relative place of the different products in Australian culture and, particularly, the Australian sporting culture.

It is also important to note that we counted and coded only alcohol advertisements - the total exposure time of commercial messages about alcohol would have been significantly higher than these results indicate as the coverage of the game itself was infused with alcohol signage around the ground, alcohol messages scrolling across the screen during the play, and alcohol-related comments from the commentary team.

In relation to the content of alcohol advertisements shown during sporting broadcasts, the authors note the observation of a number of advertisements which appeared to be at odds with the self-regulatory code. Such observations suggest the need for tighter regulation and monitoring of the industry's own code, and should be further investigated with more extensive and comprehensive monitoring of compliance. Such observed breaches, whilst subjective (due to lack of specificity in the wording of the code), are particularly significant when the offending advertisements are broadcast during sporting events that are likely to attract a large younger viewing audience.

Whilst not technically in breach of the specific clause in the ABAC (2004), this study also reveals that the content of some advertisements may also contradict the spirit of the code in relation to the appeal of particular advertisements to a younger viewing audience. For example, although the alcohol advertisements coded for this study do not show evidence of the use of children or adolescent models (which is prohibited in the ABAC), the presence of other features known to be appealing to children such as humour, mascots (e.g. Bundy Bear) or cartoon-like characters (e.g. the Boony doll<sup>3</sup>) are certainly ambiguous in relation to their 'strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents'. We note that alcohol advertisements broadcast during the cricket (which had major alcohol sponsors) were twice as likely to use human models and

<sup>3</sup>A plastic toy caricature of the former Australian cricket captain, available with the purchase of a carton of VB beer, which 'talks' during cricket broadcast if placed near a television set.

humour as those broadcast during the tennis (with no major alcohol sponsors). Such results also prompt the need for a review of the current ABAC, and specifically the inclusion of clearly stated clauses which prohibit or limit the use of features that have been shown in research to have evident appeal to a younger audience.

Some of the advertisements in the cricket also used what Zwarun and Farrar (2005) identified as 'strategic ambiguity'. For example, one advertisement included footage of a previously played sporting event and, although not stated, it could be inferred (particularly by more naive audiences) that some of the success was due to consumption of alcohol. The fact this message is received by young people was evident in some of the comments made by the children in the friendship pair interviews.

Conversely, those advertisements shown during the tennis - notably the two that conveyed a strong association between alcohol and sexuality - were clearly targeted at an older, more 'sophisticated' audience, conveying a message which (while inappropriate) was less likely to have attracted the interest of child and adolescent audiences. The fact that there were some alcohol advertisements that the children did not recall, or did not find appealing even when they included sporting celebrities (such as the Johnny Walker whisky advertisement which did not include mascots, cartoon characters, etc), demonstrates that it is possible to develop adult-targeted advertisements that do *not* appeal to children.

We cannot conclude from this that the types of messages and appeals used in alcohol advertisements are influenced by the presence (or absence) of sponsorship. The fact that potentially inappropriate messages about alcohol, and message factors appealing to young people, were more prevalent during the cricket broadcasts is likely to be largely the result of differences between the target audiences of the two sporting events (and thus their sponsors and advertisers). The reason that alcohol companies choose to

sponsor the cricket, rather than the tennis, is likely to be because cricket audiences tend to include a greater proportion of males and younger people than tennis audiences, and thus a greater potential market for the sale of beer and spirits. Unfortunately, from a public health perspective, these same audiences are also likely to contain a large proportion of children and adolescents; thus, while the industry would state that they are only targeting those over the age of 18, their messages are clearly being heard, and internalized, by those under the legal drinking age.

The friendship pair data revealed a high awareness amongst the grade 5 and 6 (10–12 years old) children of the alcohol products and brands advertised during the cricket broadcast, and confirmed previous research findings about the association between advertisement liking and features described previously such as humour, music and mascots. Children were aware of celebrity endorsement of products and, in some cases, associated these with a preference for these products. Importantly, alcohol was identified as a product preferred by males, young people, people who were humorous, and men who play sport.

### Conclusion

Although only small-scale studies, both the frequency and content analysis of alcohol advertisements shown during the cricket broadcast and the children's responses regarding the appeal of those advertisements, demonstrate the need for further investigation into the impact that alcohol sponsorship of sport may have on children's alcohol beliefs and expectancies. This is particularly so in light of the central place of sport in the Australian culture, and the increasing levels of underage and binge drinking amongst our young people. These results suggest the need for a more comprehensive monitoring and review of alcohol advertising during sport, and consideration of a broader review of the current Commercial TV Code (2004) and the ABAC

(2004). It is evident that these industry self-regulatory processes are not effective in limiting exposure of younger audiences to inappropriate alcohol advertising messages.

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