

ALCOHOL PROMOTION: WHY MARKETING REGULATION MATTERS?

Breadth of marketing practices

Alcohol marketing refers to all elements of the effort to sell commercially produced alcoholic beverages, including TV, radio, print and digital media.

Integrated marketing campaigns have expanded beyond print mass media, **direct mail, billboards, TV and radio** and now commonly include **digital components including social media, internet advertisements, and the use of “influencers”**.

The expanded use of media that crosses national boundaries occurs in an internationally unregulated environment in which digital trade clauses in international trade and investment agreements protect the obscure nature of the digital media.

Smart phones are a central platform of digital marketing. In low and middle-income countries they are more likely to be owned by the prime targets for alcohol marketing, namely younger, better educated, and higher-income people.

Public relations activities – also known as **corporate social responsibility programs** – by industry organizations may also be a form of brand marketing and a way to ward off effective policy at the same time.

Promotion of alcohol brands by digital platforms has expanded significantly to include:

1. SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

People paid to promote products and show a positive social context, influencing their social media followers to purchase/consume products.

2. LIVE STREAMING EVENTS

3. CAMPAIGN PRODUCTS

available on YouTube

7. DIGITAL MARKETING DATA

Captures from users including their interests, mood, and preferences to market alcohol products to various target markets.

6. EXPOSURE OF YOUNG ADULTS TO ALCOHOL THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Merchandise competitions, sharing and liking posts, which establishes new drinking contexts, perceptions of alcohol use, and brand preferences and leads to earlier drinking initiation and heavier drinking in adulthood.

4. ENGAGEMENT OF FANS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

5. USE OF DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORMS

Such as contests, promotions, and sponsorships to develop brand loyalty and display drinking behaviors in social and positive contexts, shaping perceptions of alcohol use.

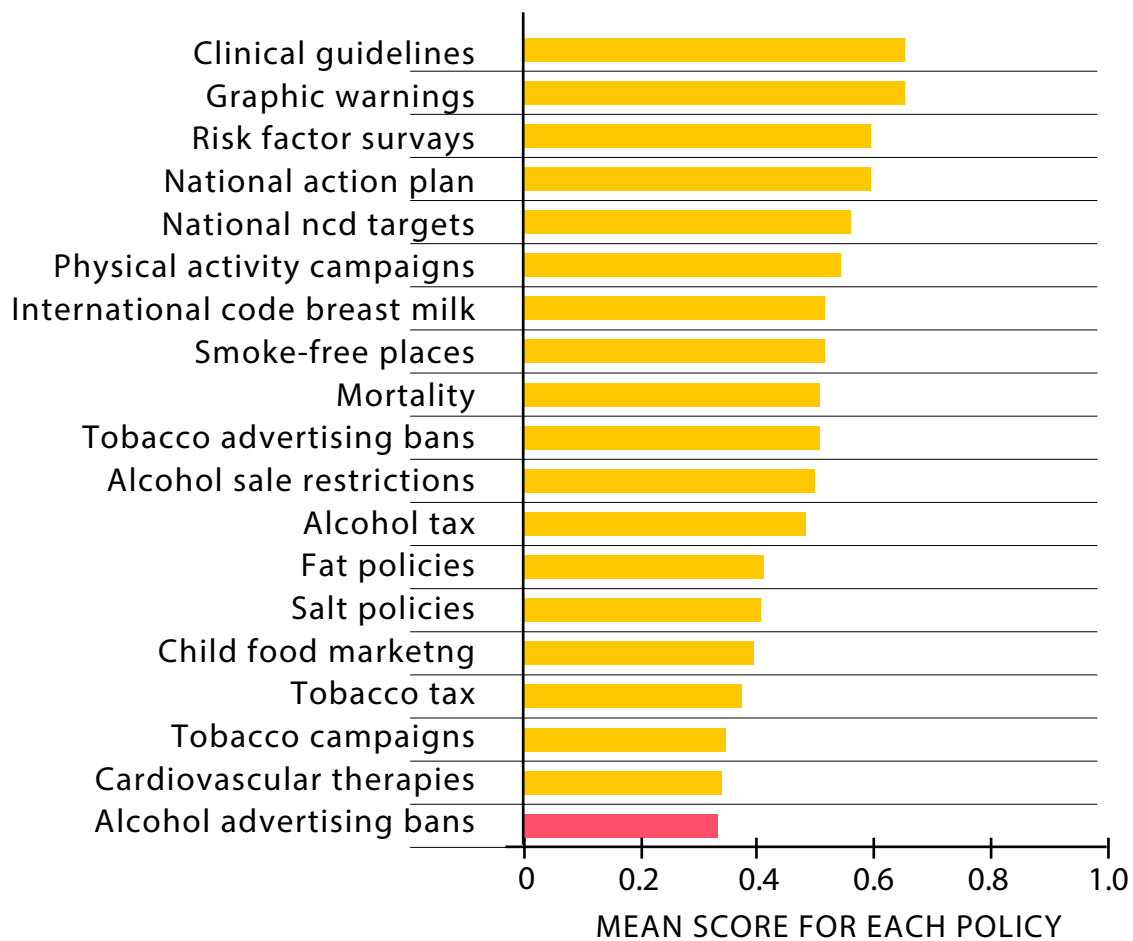
What the research shows

- Exposure to alcohol marketing increases the attractiveness of alcohol and the likelihood of early onset of drinking and binge drinking by young people.
- Exposure to alcohol images and messages can precipitate craving and relapse in persons with alcohol dependence.
- Marketing spending is likely contributing to increased alcohol consumption in emerging economies.
- A recent study of adults in the United States of America suggested that every 1% increase in exposure to TV alcohol advertisements over the past 12 months was associated with 11% higher odds of drinking in the past month and a 5% increase in the number of drinks consumed.



FIGURE 1.

MEAN 2017 IMPLEMENTATION SCORE FOR EACH NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASE (NCD) POLICY ACROSS ALL 151 COUNTRIES



Alcohol marketing bans were the least implemented of all the noncommunicable disease strategies evaluated in a study of 151 countries

Status of alcohol marketing regulation at the national level

- Partial restrictions predominate, leaving large gaps and poor enforcement.
- When some restrictions are implemented, the economic operators redeploy funds to unregulated modes/venues.
- Digital marketing is often ephemeral and hidden.
- Intricate, well-publicized self-regulatory regimes are ineffective.

Status of alcohol marketing regulation at the global level

- The market power of transnational corporations is a significant obstacle to cross-border marketing regulation.
- Trade and investment agreements led by commercial interests often override national regulations.
- The WHO Global Alcohol Strategy and the Global Alcohol Action Plan identify a strong need to control cross-border alcohol marketing.

Conclusions:

- Partial bans on alcohol marketing have limited effectiveness and are not sufficient to prevent alcohol-related harms.
- Industry voluntary self-regulation of marketing is considered ineffective and potentially harmful practices.
- Transformation of alcohol advertising into digital marketing allows for cross-border, ephemeral and targeted advertising.
- There is a large and multi-method research literature on the impacts of exposure to alcohol marketing on alcohol consumption by minors and people with alcohol dependence.
- The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control could serve as a model for a marketing ban.

Comprehensive bans are considered a 'Best Practice' because:

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