

Study: Ads Boost Drinking Among Young

January 3, 2006

Young adults as well as teenagers drink more under the influence of advertising for alcoholic beverages, researchers found.

A survey of young people aged 15 to 26 found that for each additional alcohol advertisement viewed per month, there followed a 1 percent rise in the average number of drinks consumed, said study author Leslie Snyder of the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

The study's findings counter industry arguments that only adult drinkers heed alcohol advertising, Snyder wrote in the journal *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

In the study -- released around the New Year's holiday that is often associated with toasts and excessive imbibing -- the researchers conducted four rounds of interviews between 1999 and 2001 with a group of young people, with the initial 1,872 subjects selected randomly.

Another finding was that for each additional dollar spent per capita on alcohol advertising in a particular media market, study participants drank 3 percent more per month.

In markets with heavy alcohol advertising of more than \$10 per capita per month, alcohol consumption increased over time and reached a peak of 50 drinks per month by age 25.

The study measured advertising exposure on each of four media: television, radio, magazines and billboards.

"The results also contradict claims that advertising is unrelated to youth drinking amounts: that advertising at best causes brand switching, only affects those older than the legal drinking age or is effectively countered by current educational efforts," Snyder wrote.

In an editorial in the journal, David Jernigan of Georgetown University in Washington said the study was the first of its kind to link young people's alcohol use directly to objective measures of industry spending on advertising.

The study "calls into question the industry's argument that its roughly \$1.8 billion in measured media expenditures per year have no impact on underage drinking," he wrote.

Snyder doubted whether the industry was heeding voluntary guidelines that 70 percent of the audience for its advertising be at least 21 years old, the legal drinking age.

--Reuters Monday, January 2, 2006