



ALCOHOL MARKETING DURING THE 2018 AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL GRAND FINALS

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ADVERTISING
IN SPORT

AIM

To investigate the amount and type of alcohol marketing during two major sporting events in 2018. The two games chosen for analysis were the Australian Football League (AFL) grand final, played on 29 September 2018, and the National Rugby League (NRL) grand final, played on 30 September 2018.

BACKGROUND

Globally, three million people died as a result of the harmful use of alcohol in 2016, representing 1 in 20 deaths. Overall, the harmful use of alcohol causes more than 5 per cent of the global disease burden.¹ And yet alcohol remains one of the most heavily promoted products in the world.²

Alcohol advertising during sport is extensive, has features that appeal to children, and instils the idea that consumption of alcohol is associated with sport as well as positive personality traits and success.³ While children's viewing hours on broadcast TV are normally free from alcohol advertisements, an exemption in the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice allows alcohol advertisement alongside sport.⁴ The exemption is heavily exploited by the alcohol industry, with 49.5 per cent of all alcohol advertising shown during the broadcast of live sporting events.⁵

Young people's exposure to alcohol advertising and marketing is associated with young people drinking more and from an earlier age.^{6,7,8} A systematic review of longitudinal studies on the impact of alcohol advertising on adolescent alcohol use reviewed thirteen longitudinal studies that followed up a total of more than 38,000 young people over periods ranging from 8 to 96 months. The studies measured exposure to advertising and promotion in a variety of ways, including estimates of the volume of media and advertising exposure, ownership of branded merchandise, recall and receptivity. The researchers concluded that alcohol advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol, and drink more if they are already using alcohol.⁹

METHOD

BROADCAST SELECTION

The two broadcasts as shown on free-to-air television in the ACT were identified and recorded in full:

- The AFL grand final on 29 September 2018 at the MCG, broadcast on Channel 7
- The NRL grand final on 30 September 2018 at the Sydney Olympic Park/ ANZ Stadium, broadcast on Channel 9

The eligible content was the entirety of the game and advertisements in the commercial breaks, plus pre-game coverage of 10 minutes and post-game coverage of 10 minutes.

The AFL grand final was shown in its entirety during children's viewing hours (before 8.30pm).

The NRL grand final began at 7.20pm during children's viewing hours but ended after 8.30pm. The game was analysed in full but segmented into two categories – a) during, and b) after 8.30pm – to enable a separate analysis of alcohol advertising exposure during children's viewing hours.

CODING FRAMEWORK

A customised coding framework was used to identify and categorise all verbal and visual alcohol references. The following types of alcohol marketing were included in the analysis:

- Any marketing communication for an alcohol product
- Any marketing communication for an on-licence or off-licence premise whose primary function is to sell alcohol
- PR branding by alcohol industry-funded bodies such as the SAPRO, DrinkWise¹⁰

The following types of marketing and references were excluded from the analysis:

- Any on-licence premise whose primary function is not to sell alcohol, e.g. supermarkets, casinos, resorts and accommodation
- Visual or verbal references to alcohol that were not associated with a specific brand
- Spectators' clothing
- Actual alcoholic drinks being consumed in the stadium

In line with Graham et al (2014) 'Alcohol Marketing in Televised English Professional Football: A Frequency Analysis', for visual references, each instance of an identifiable alcohol brand in the stadium or on the screen coming into shot was counted as one occurrence. Thus, for example, a static advertising billboard alongside the field of play may have been counted multiple times each time it came into shot.¹¹

No useful precedent was found in the literature for quantifying the impact of rolling banner or dynamic adverts (herein referred to as dynamic adverts). Despite this type of advert having the potential to be more attention-grabbing than a static advert, it was decided to count these adverts in the same way, i.e. to count a dynamic advert only once each time it (a) appeared in a new camera shot; or (b) disappeared and then reappeared in the same shot. Thus, a camera shot in which the content was repeated multiple times across the length of the advert was only counted as one occurrence of advertising.

In accordance with the method used by Jones et al (2013) in 'Alcohol Advertising During Televised Australian Football Finals', all visual occurrences were only included if the brand was visible for one second or more.¹² In addition to this, an advertisement was only counted as one occurrence if it was identifiable with at least a quarter of the brand visible, and not distorted or blurred.

Any replays shown during the game time were treated as new coverage for the purposes of coding.

The type of marketing communication was recorded using a customised version of the framework outlined by Jones et al (2013) in 'Alcohol Advertising During Televised Australian Football Finals'.¹³ Categories used were:

- Fixed advertising: Advertising on static banners or other static forms within the stadium.
- Field advertising: Advertising on the field itself, e.g. painted on the grass.
- Dynamic advertising: Advertising on revolving or electronic banners or screens within the stadium.
- Commercial break advertising: Advertisements that appeared during commercial breaks.
- Integrated advertising: Advertising that appeared on the screen as opposed to in the live coverage itself. For example, popups and pull-through banners.
- Sponsorship: Specific segments relating to the game that were sponsored such as replays, score reviews, referee decision reviews, and half-time on-field activities; team sponsorship including logos on players' uniforms, logos within locker rooms, and team banners.
- Verbal: References by commentators, presenters or interviewees.

A commercial break advertisement was counted as one occurrence, regardless of the duration of the advertisement. However, the duration of each advertisement was recorded to allow for separate analysis.

To minimise individual coder bias, coding of each game was undertaken by three individuals, and results were compared for their consistency. The coders watched each game in full, with the ability to pause and re-watch certain sections. Where there was variation, the mean of the three results was taken. Some discrepancy was anticipated, owing to the subjectivity inherent in judging which occurrences of branding were identifiable, and the likelihood that individuals' attention would be drawn to different stimuli during moments of multiple simultaneous occurrences.

Coders were also asked to identify and count occurrences of any alcohol counter-advertising or alcohol-related health awareness campaigns.

RESULTS

In the AFL grand final, 121 occurrences of alcohol marketing were identified across the 181 minutes of pre-game, game and post-game coverage analysed. This amounted to 0.7 occurrences per minute. There were 118 occurrences during the game itself (including quarter and half times), again amounting to 0.7 per minute (when rounded to one decimal point).

All of these took place within children's TV viewing hours. The vast majority of this exposure was driven by dynamic advertising in the stadium. The alcohol industry-funded SAPRO (*Social Aspects and Public Relations Organisation*) Drinkwise¹⁴ sponsored the Score Review, which had three occurrences across the game. Brands that were identified as advertising during the final were Carlton Draught, IGA Liquor, Plonk (off-licence in Canberra), DrinkWise, Canadian Club, Mercury Hard Cider, Johnnie Walker, Iron Jack, The Bottle-O, Wolf Blass and Hahn.

In the NRL grand final, 376 occurrences of alcohol marketing were identified. This amounted to 2.9 per minute across the 131 minutes of pre-game, game and post-game coverage analysed. Advertising was most frequent during the match itself, with 365 occurrences in the 111 minutes of the game (including half time), or 3.3 per minute.

211 of these occurrences took place within the 64 minutes of the game (including halftime) that were broadcast during children's TV viewing hours. This amounted to 3.3 per minute during children's viewing hours. Given that children's viewing hours ended (officially) at 8.30pm, all occurrences from the start of the second half onwards were excluded from this calculation.

The majority of alcohol advertising exposure during the NRL was driven by the on-field advertising which was visually pervasive during game play. Fixed advertising in the stadium was the second most common type of alcohol advertising, followed by dynamic. Brands that were identified as advertising during the final were Victoria Bitter, Tooheys, Bundaberg Rum, Mercury Hard Cider, Wolf Blass, Liquorland, 1st choice liquor, Iron Jack and Canadian Club.

During the NRL game, 11 occurrences were logged of a NSW Government anti-drink driving fixed advertisement.

The table below displays the type of advertising by occurrence in each game. Figures displayed are the mean averages of the coders' data. 'All coverage' refers to all analysed coverage including ten minutes pre-game and ten minutes post-game. 'Game only including breaks' refers to game time only, including quarter, half and three-quarter time where applicable.

TYPE OF ADVERTISING	AFL	AFL	NRL	NRL
	ALL COVERAGE	GAME ONLY INCLUDING BREAKS	ALL COVERAGE	GAME ONLY INCLUDING BREAKS
Fixed	3	3	95.3	85
Field	0	0	215.3	214.6
Dynamic	98.3	97	60.7	60.7
Commercial break	11	10	5	5
Integrated	2.3	2.3	0	0
Sponsorship	5	5	0	0
Verbal	1	1	0	0
Total	120.6	118.3	376.3	365.3

DISCUSSION

This analysis reveals that the AFL and NRL 2018 grand finals were highly saturated with alcohol advertising, the vast majority of which took place during children's TV viewing hours.

Saturation of alcohol advertising during the NRL grand final was just over three times higher than during the AFL grand final. This difference was largely driven by the on-field advertising during the NRL which was visually pervasive during game play. The two on-field advertisements, for Victoria Bitter, were placed close to the try line on either end of the field. As well as ensuring high exposure this also associated the alcohol brand with many of the key moments in the game, being visible as teams were in the penultimate, high stakes moments before scoring.

These are likely to be conservative estimates of the exposure to alcohol advertising that occurred during the full televised broadcast, due to the exclusions and measures put in place for this research study to avoid over-estimation.

Exposure to alcohol advertising in the stadium itself is likely to have been higher due to the potential to be constantly exposed to the static advertising within the stadium.

There were 100,000 spectators at the AFL and 82,688 at the NRL. The estimated TV audience was 3.38 million and 3.03 million people respectively.¹⁵ As per previous years, the real audience is likely to be more than double that figure.¹⁶

In conclusion, a significant proportion of the population was potentially exposed to a high level of alcohol advertising during the grand finals. This indicates that professional sport is currently being used as a highly effective conduit for mass population alcohol marketing during children's viewing hours.

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ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR ALCOHOL RESEARCH & EDUCATION

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. More than 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised, making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges. For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harm by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. FARE is guided by the World Health Organization's Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol for stopping alcohol harm through population-based strategies, problem directed policies, and direct interventions. If you would like to contribute to FARE's important work, call us on (02) 6122 8600 or email info@fare.org.au.

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