

Study of US popular music links luxury alcohol brands with degrading sex

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In a study published online today in the international journal *Addiction*, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh reported that the average US adolescent is heavily exposed to alcohol brand references in popular music.

Branded [alcohol](#) references are most common in rap, R&B, and hip hop songs, and they are commonly associated with a luxury lifestyle characterized by degrading sexual activity, wealth, partying, violence and the use of drugs.

This analysis of 793 of the most popular songs in the youth market between 2005 and 2007 found that about 25% of the songs that mention alcohol also mention a brand name. This represents about 3.4 [alcohol brand](#) appearances per song-hour. Given that the average [adolescent](#) is exposed to about 2.5 hours of popular music per day, young people's annual exposure to alcohol brand references in popular music is substantial. The consequences that these songs associated with alcohol were more often positive than negative (41.5% vs. 17.1%). Alcohol brand appearances were commonly associated with wealth (63.4%), sex (58.5%), luxury objects (51.2%), partying (48.8%), other drugs (43.9%), and vehicles (39.0%).

The investigators note that frequent exposure of young people to brand-name references in popular music may constitute a form of advertising and could contribute to the early initiation and maintenance of substance use among adolescents. Typically, brand-name references to alcohol are

strongly associated with positive feelings and associations, which are often the goal of advertisements. The brands found in music, such as Patron Tequila, Grey Goose Vodka, and Hennessy Cognac, represent the same distilled spirits brands that are increasingly named as favourites by underage drinkers, especially women.

The authors suggest that the relatively high level of brand-name alcohol appearances in popular music may be a consequence of strengthening ties between the alcohol and music industries. Some alcohol companies have formally entered the music industry, such as Seagram's ownership of Universal and Polygram between 1995 and 2001. And individual artists, particularly those in the rap and hip hop communities, have begun to establish and promote their own alcohol lines, including Lil' Jon (Little Jonathan Wineries, 2008), Ludacris (Conjure Vodka, 2009), Jay-Z (Armada Vodka, 2002), Snoop Dogg (Landy Cognac, 2008), TI (Remy Martin Cognac, 2010) and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs (Ciroc Vodka, 2001).

According to the authors, most instances of brand-name references in song lyrics seem to be unsolicited and unpaid for by advertising companies.

However, the line between paid advertising and brand references is difficult to distinguish because advertising companies have begun retroactively to reward artists with product, sponsorship, or endorsement deals after a song containing their product's name becomes popular. For example, when Busta Rhymes and P. Diddy's hit "Pass the Courvoisier" was released in 2002, the cognac's sales jumped 18.9% and Courvoisier's parent company, France's Allied Domecq, subsequently reached a lucrative promotional deal with Busta and P. Diddy's management company, Violator.

Alcohol trade associations such as the Distilled Spirits Council of the

United States (DISCUS) have developed self-regulation codes that specify inappropriate marketing practices, such as a guideline forbidding marketing to audiences below legal drinking age. However, because rap music is popular among high school students, the authors suggest that advertising campaigns that focus on rap artists are not consistent with the alcohol industry's stated intent to avoid marketing to underage drinkers.

Provided by Wiley

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