

Alcohol use common in TV music videos

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Dr. Fiona Imlach Gunasekara

(Medical Xpress) -- An analysis of music videos on New Zealand television shows that the portrayal of alcohol is commonplace.

The researchers from the University of Otago, Wellington, compared alcohol content in [music videos](#) from three [TV channels](#) in 2005 (C4, Juice and TV2) and one channel in 2010 (Juice), recorded over a period of up to two weeks. Juice was the only channel analysed in 2010 because of program changes.

The overall proportion of music videos which showed alcohol content increased from 15.7% to nearly 20%, but this increase was only statistically significant for the [music genre](#) of Rhythm and Blues. In this genre 12% in 2005 had alcohol content, but 30% in 2010.

The study examined 861 music videos in 2010 and 564 in 2005. In the 2010 sample, there was an average of 2.7 music videos with alcohol use per hour. In videos with [alcohol content](#), a third showed alcohol being consumed and a third showed the main artist involved with alcohol.

“The portrayal of alcohol in music videos shown in New Zealand is of concern as there is robust research evidence which shows that watching music videos, especially those with a high level of positive alcohol portrayals, encourages increased drinking in young people,” says researcher Dr. Fiona Imlach Gunasekara.

“The parliamentary select committee inquiry into alcohol reform also showed that we have a serious binge drinking problem in young people in New Zealand and a heavy drinking culture overall.”

“This new research indicates we therefore need to think carefully about the amount of alcohol use portrayed on popular media and how to control it.”

The study showed that videos with overseas artists were more likely to include alcohol than those with New Zealand musicians. Hip-hop and Rhythm and Blues music contained the highest percentage of alcohol references (30%). This fits with the findings of other international studies.

Alcohol branding was relatively uncommon (2.4% of sample) which suggests a lack of industry sponsorship.

“Of course there’s far more exposure to alcohol in videos than just one TV channel. You also see it on the internet, such as on YouTube, and within TV programmes and advertisements,” says Dr. Imlach Gunasekara.

“However ratings surveys estimate that even Juice TV hits 70% of viewers under 35 years, so there is potentially quite a significant impact.”

Given the major costs to health and wellbeing from a culture of heavy drinking, the study suggests several policy directions could be considered to address the issue of alcohol portrayal in music videos.

One approach would be to recommend that any music videos, and potentially all TV programmes that receive funding through NZ On Air, do not include reference to, or portrayal of, alcohol use. At present there are no such standards.

Another partial solution may be to restrict such videos to only be broadcast late at night, as with current advertising standards. Public health agencies could also work with the music and media industry to reduce alcohol promotion in music videos.

The study suggests that more attention needs to be paid to other forms of social media and the degree to which [young people](#) are being exposed to alcohol imagery that contributes to increased alcohol use. However if these ideas are rejected efforts need to be put into proven effective approaches such as restricting alcohol access, advertising bans and higher [alcohol](#) taxes.

More information: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22679924

Provided by University of Otago

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