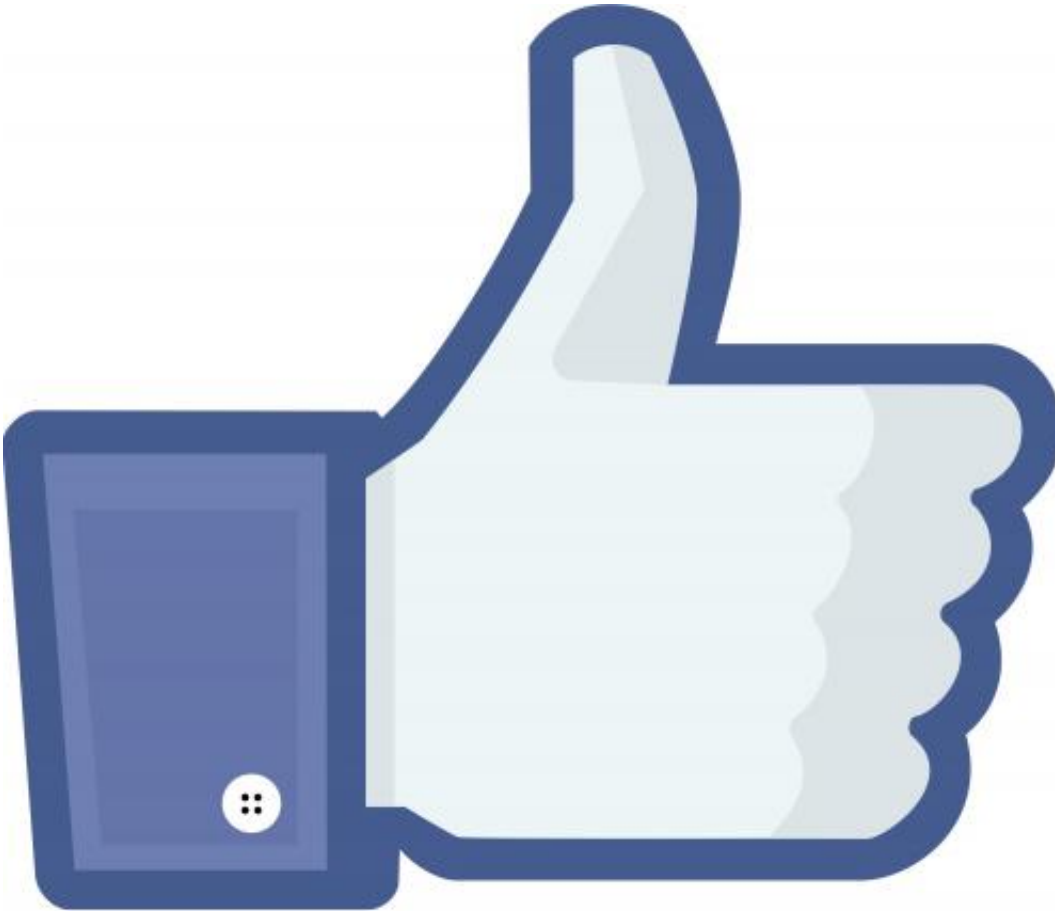


Alcohol industry 'likes' Facebook

May 20 2014, by Nicholas Carah



(Medical Xpress)—A University of Queensland study shows Facebook is one of the alcohol industry's key promotional tools, sparking concerns about inadequate regulation of alcohol marketing on social media.

The study, examined the activities of 20 alcohol brands on Facebook in 2012 and since its conclusion, the Facebook fan base of those brands has grown by 44 per cent.

The study's author, Dr Nicholas Carah from UQ's School of Journalism and Communication, said it included well-known brands such as Bundaberg Rum, Jim Beam, XXXX Gold and Rekorderlig, with fan bases ranging from 223,687 people to 55,579.

"At the end of 2012, the top 20 alcohol brands in Australia had more than 2.5 million engaged followers on Facebook and had posted more than 4500 items, which had been commented on, liked or shared more than 2.3 million times," Dr Carah said.

He said the amount of [alcohol advertising](#) on [social media](#) was just one issue that needed to be considered in determining future directions for the regulatory environment.

Issues of privacy and transparency were also discussed in the research.

"Working together, the alcohol industry and Facebook are accumulating extensive data about consumers that is becoming increasingly central to the way in which alcohol companies build brands," Dr Carah said.

"They are creating messages that target consumers based on who they are, their cultural preferences, their peer network and location.

"Currently there is no regulation to address how the [alcohol industry](#) collects information about consumers, the kind of information collected and how it is used to target consumers."

Dr Carah said the content of [alcohol](#) advertising and time of day it was being promoted were also causes for concern.

"Less than one in 10 items featured responsible consumption messages and only four brands used a responsible consumption watermark or message in more than 20 per cent of their content," he said.

"Brands strategically arranged the timing of their posts to fit in with the drinking rituals of Australians with the most common time to post between 3pm and 5pm and the most common day to post was Friday."

In February this year the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) recommended in a draft report that the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) should include all forms of marketing within its self-regulatory scope, for example sports sponsorship and merchandise.

Dr Carah said the suggested recommendations didn't go far enough as they were still predominantly concerned with what was being shown in ads or where a [brand](#)'s logo appeared.

More information: The study, "Like Comment Share: Alcohol brand activity on Facebook," is available online:

alcoholireland.ie/download/rep...vertising-report.pdf

Provided by University of Queensland

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