

Study finds the mere presence of alcohol is enough to make women appear more sexually available

December 11 2014



With office Christmas party season in full swing a new Deakin University study provides a timely reminder of the role alcohol plays in unwanted sexual advances.

According to the research simply sitting next to a beer is enough for a woman to be considered sexually available. The results have implications for understanding how [alcohol](#) might contribute to sexual assault.

Deakin School of Psychology researchers examined whether the mere presence of alcohol could be used as a sexual cue. They found that men

were more likely to perceive a woman sitting alongside a bottle of alcohol, not even actually drinking it, as being seductive, promiscuous or flirtatious.

"The role alcohol plays in the processing of sexual information, and sexual harm, is complex," said Dr Eric Koukounas, the lead researcher on the study.

"We know from previous studies that people who drink alcohol are perceived to be more sexually available than those who abstain, and that men see women who are drinking as more likely to consent to sex. Approximately half of all [sexual assaults](#) are also associated with either the perpetrator and/or the victim having consumed alcohol.

"While research is pointing to exposure to alcohol as playing a significant role in how sexual information is processed, relatively little investigation has been made into how the simple presence of alcohol placement influences perceptions or behaviour."

The study involved 147 sexually experienced men and women who were shown a video of a social interaction between a man and woman depicted with a bottle of water or alcohol. The participants were asked to rate the woman on sexual intent ie seductiveness, promiscuity and flirtatiousness.

"The study didn't just find that it was men finding women attractive, or that it was just that alcohol made people in general more attractive, it revealed that men perceived greater sexual intent in the woman in the video when depicted with the alcohol than with the bottle of water," said study co-investigator Associate Professor Peter Miller.

"These findings have implications for understanding how alcohol might contribute to sexual assault and also point to the need for further

research on the relationship between how [alcohol advertising](#) might reinforce negative sexual beliefs toward women.

"That the mere imagery of alcohol in a social context can influence sexual beliefs toward women points to a need to explore whether many of the strategies used by media and advertising organisations are in fact perpetuating conditions in which [men](#) misperceive integral cues and whether this leads to potential sexual violence." The study, 'The effect of gender and alcohol placement in the processing of sexual intent', is published in the online, early view section of the journal *Drug and Alcohol Review*.

More information: "The effect of gender and alcohol placement in the processing of sexual intent." *Drug and Alcohol Review*
DOI: 10.1111/dar.12214

Provided by Deakin University

Citation: Study finds the mere presence of alcohol is enough to make women appear more sexually available (2014, December 11) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-mere-presence-alcohol-women-sexually.html>

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