

Experts call for football alcohol advertising restrictions

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Newcastle University academics have called for the Government to consider restricting alcohol marketing during televised football matches after studying a selection of games and finding they were 'bombarded' by references to drink.

In a paper published in the journal *Alcohol and Alcoholism* and announced at a press conference at the British Science festival in Newcastle, the team describe their results. They found that on average there were 111.3 visual references to alcohol for every hour of football broadcast in the six games they looked at, nearly two every minute. This includes images on billboards at the side of the pitch and other references during replays or when scores were shown or substitutions were being made.

The total broadcast time for the six matches, shown on the BBC, ITV and Sky TV, was 18 hours and 21 minutes. During that time there were 2042 visual references to alcohol of various types, mainly beer. There were also 32 verbal mentions, mainly of match or competition sponsors and 17 adverts during the matches, from last season, including games in the Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup, League Cup, UEFA Cup and Championship.

Alcohol marketing and children

In the UK £202.5 million is spent every year on advertising alcohol, while over £800 million goes on marketing every year. Previous studies have shown that [alcohol marketing](#) increases the likelihood that young people will start to use alcohol and will drink more if they already use it.

It has been found that 96% of all 13 years olds are aware of alcohol marketing and it has been suggested that 5.2 million 4-15 year olds were exposed to [alcohol advertising](#) during the 2008 European Championship.

In the UK [tobacco advertising](#) has been banned since 1989 and in 2003 it was made illegal for [tobacco companies](#) to sponsor sporting events. Alcohol advertising is self-regulated by the industry itself through a code of practice and the Advertising Standards Authority, but previous studies have highlighted the belief that self-regulation is not working. There are restrictions, such as not equating drinking with social or sexual success or promoting irresponsible behaviour but there are no legal powers of enforcement.

Dr Jean Adams, senior lecturer in [public health](#) at Newcastle University and a member of Fuse, the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, said: "Alcohol-related hospital admission are continuing to rise, despite alcohol consumption falling overall because the heaviest drinkers are consuming more.

"This type of study has never been done before in the UK, looking at alcohol marketing during televised football matches. We wanted as broad a picture as possible, which is why we chose the matches from different broadcasters and from different competitions."

Need for restrictions

Andy Graham, speciality registrar in public health with the NHS, said: "Our findings show that young

people are likely to be hugely exposed to alcohol marketing during televised football matches, and this is likely to have an influence on their attitudes to alcohol. We were surprised by just how many images there were during these games, it was a constant bombardment.

"We believe a similar restriction to that imposed on tobacco products may be justified."

Newcastle University is hosting the [British Science Festival](#) from 7-12 September, with Northumbria University and Newcastle City Council as associate partners. The Festival is one of Europe's largest and longest-running public science events and will provide Newcastle with a unique opportunity to showcase its impressive scientific and technological credentials to the world.

Provided by Newcastle University

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