

Evaluation of Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages on Social Media

Background

Drinking, in general and in excess, has become part of a culture that students often see as integral to the post-secondary education (PSE) experience, often ignoring the variety of consequences associated with this prominent tendency. As the popularity of using social media platforms to promote venues increases, so does the promotion of alcohol consumption through those media. Currently, there are no specific codes or regulatory bodies in Canada to govern messages about drinking over social media or to evaluate how responsible these messages might be for encouraging young people to over-consume.

Approach

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) is a not-for-profit organization that has extensive experience in conducting research with various stakeholders to support change and work towards reducing the harms associated to substance use. CCSA proposes to work collaboratively with four Canadian post-secondary education institutions, each from a different region, to conduct a research project assessing alcohol promotion around campuses. This partnership will contribute to the understanding of how social media are being used to advertise venues and if they are promoting alcohol consumption among students. This partnership will also facilitate an evaluation of social media in relation to Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission guidelines.

The proposed project would have two phases. The first phase will ask students, via an online survey, which local bars, pubs and clubs they are frequenting the most and the least and why. The second phase will follow up by conducting a focus group with a smaller group of students to analyze the advertisements and promotions of the venues, and their compliance with existing regulations.

Outcome

The goal of this project is to build capacity among campuses and communities to promote a safe and healthy environment for students. The findings from the project will inform evidence-based recommendations for effective policies for alcohol advertising, harm reduction activities and dedication of resources. In addition, CCSA will provide participating institutions with a summary report highlighting the main results of the survey and the advertising analysis, as well as a tailored implementation outline to assist with the application of an alcohol harm reduction framework. Other than the summary report, all of the information collected in both phases will be private and confidential, and only accessible to CCSA staff.



Activities to Be Conducted on Campus

Phase I: Survey of Students

The first phase of this project aims to explore reasons why students prefer certain local bars, pubs and clubs, and what keeps them going back. The survey will include a number of demographic questions and a few general questions about drinking behaviours, as well as some questions about knowledge of standard drinking sizes and [Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](#). The eligibility criteria are to be 19 years of age or older (18 for Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec), to be a student at the institution, to have visited a bar, pub or club at least once a month over the course of the semester, and to be fluent in English. For this initial phase we hope to recruit 200 participants.

To recruit students, **CCSA is looking for support from participating institutions to help promote the completion of the online survey (posters, etc.), and provide a space for a CCSA staff member to visit the campus and encourage student participation.** Students will be given a \$10 honorarium for filling out the survey and be asked if they want to be involved in the second phase of the project.

Phase II: Focus Groups

For the second phase, a group of 40 students will be recruited via email to rate various advertisements against the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission guidelines. Only those participants from Phase I who indicated interest will be contacted. **CCSA is seeking a space on the campus of participating institutions to gather students to conduct the focus groups.**

Advertisements and promotional images from the social media accounts of the bars, pubs and clubs reported most popular by students will be presented to the students. Students will be asked via questionnaire to rate the images in relation to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission guidelines. It will take approximately 90 minutes. A \$30 honorarium will be given to students for their participation in a focus group.

Support for Ethics Submission

CCSA will prepare the protocol and all associated materials (e.g., communication materials, recruitment email language, etc.) required for an ethics submission. However, a point of contact on campus will be required to facilitate the process.

Proposed Timeline

Pending approval of the ethics application, CCSA proposes Phase I to be conducted in September 2017 and Phase II in October 2017.



Canadian Centre
on Substance Abuse
Centre canadien de lutte
contre les toxicomanies

CCSA was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

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