Talking Points: Stop Liquor Ads on Network TV

"With television, it's easier to get a large audience in one fell swoop"
-- Shane Ankeney, Executive Director, Audience Planning, TBWA/Chiat/Day
(The agency currently handles advertising for Absolut, Jameson & Seagrams, among others)
As quoted in the International Herald Tribune, Feb 8, 2009

“Big events demand to be seen live, so they counteract the ad avoidance you face in other environments… We're getting the big audience, the right demo and we're in a party-type atmosphere.”
-- Clare Kanter, Absolut senior brand manager
As quoted in AdWeek, Feb 9, 2009

- Alcohol advertising influences young people’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviors
  - Children and teens already view a disproportionately large number of alcohol ads on broadcast media that glamorizes and encourages drinking. In 2007, 12-20 year-olds were exposed to 38% more alcohol advertisements than they were 6 years earlier. On average, teens are exposed to 301 television ads for alcohol annually, up from an average of 216 in 2001.1
  - Young people’s awareness of alcohol directly translates into stronger intentions to drink as an adult. Studies as early as 1994 showed that alcohol advertising can predispose young people to drink.2
  - In 2007, the liquor industry spent over $118 million on television ads, almost a 4,000% increase since 1999.3 Underage drinking increased during that same time period.4

- Liquor ads appeal to and reach disproportionately large audiences of young viewers
  - In 2007, approximately one out of every five alcohol advertisements was placed on programming that youth ages 12 to 20 were more likely per capita to see than adults of the legal drinking age.8
  - 46% of 8- to 12-year-olds and 56% of 13- to 17-year-olds have TVs in their bedrooms.6
  - In a typical day, 81% of 8- to 18-year olds watch television. 66% of those report watching more than an hour of television.7
  - On average, children ages 2-17 watch almost 25 hours of television per week; almost one in five watches more than 44 hours of TV each week.8
  - 53% of all 8-18 year olds say their families have no rules about TV watching. 46% report that there are parental rules, but just 20% say those rules are enforced “most” of the time.9

- Underage drinking and its harms are widespread
  - In 2005, about 10.8 million persons ages 12-20 (28.2% of this age group) reported drinking alcohol in the past month. Nearly 7.2 million (18.8%) were binge drinkers, and 2.3 million (6.0%) were heavy drinkers.10 More males than females ages 12-20 reported current alcohol use (28.9% vs. 27.5%), binge drinking (21.3% vs. 16.1%), and heavy drinking (7.6% vs. 4.3%).11
  - By age 15, some 50% of boys and girls have drunk alcohol; by age 21, almost 90% percent report having done so.12 Even more worrisome is that those who begin drinking by age 15 are four times as likely to become alcohol dependent as those who wait until age 21.13
  - According to self-reports by U.S. high school students in 2007:
    - 75% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life
    - 23.8% had their first drink of alcohol before age 13
    - 44.7% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past month
    - 26% had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (binge drinking) in the past month, and
- 4.1% had at least one drink of alcohol on school property on one or more days in the past month.\(^\text{14}\)

- 5000 people under age 21 die each year from alcohol-related injuries.\(^\text{15}\)

- Alcohol is a factor in the top 4 causes of death (72% of all deaths) among persons aged 10-24: (1) motor-vehicle crashes, (2) unintentional injuries, (3) homicide, and (4) suicide.\(^\text{16}\)

- In 2005, underage drinking cost citizens of the United States $60.3 billion. The direct costs of underage drinking due to medical care and loss of work exact a burden of $21.1 billion each year, or $2,094 per year for each youth in the nation.\(^\text{17}\)

- **“Responsibility” messages and industry voluntary advertising codes are ineffective**

  - Between 2001 and 2007, alcohol companies aired 73,565 “responsibility” advertisements on television. Youth ages 12 to 20 were 22 times more likely to see an alcohol product advertisement than an alcohol industry-funded “responsibility” advertisement.\(^\text{18}\)

  - In order to be credible and effective, responsible advertising guidelines for alcoholic beverages should at minimum:
    - Require meaningful time, place, and manner restrictions on all television alcoholic-beverage advertising so that such ads reach as few underage persons as possible. That should include setting a cap on the absolute number and percent of potential underage viewers exposed to alcohol advertising, and possibly imposing limits on the number of alcohol ads or the time allotted for alcohol advertising within each broadcast hour. That restriction could vary, depending on time of broadcast and composition of the television audience;
    - Require equal time for public health and safety messages for young people and adults about the diverse risks of alcohol consumption. Those messages should be produced by government or independent agencies or public health experts not affiliated with alcoholic-beverage industry interests, and;
    - Require that all alcohol commercials carry visible, audible, health warning messages about the risks of alcohol consumption. Those messages should vary, rotate in ads, and address numerous documented risks of alcohol consumption.

  - Industry “responsibility” messages are belied by routine liquor industry targeting of "entry-level" consumers in such youth-oriented magazines as Rolling Stone, Vibe and Spin. Transferring those aggressively youthful ads into network television will snare millions more teenage targets of liquor producers. Messages designed for 21-year-olds will also have appeal for 18-year-olds and younger teens.

- **Acceptance of liquor advertising may have adverse side-effects on network content and public interest responsibilities.**

  - Increased dependence of broadcasters on revenue from alcoholic-beverage producers may also have more subtle and undesirable effects. Those include: influencing station programming decisions; compromising news and public service coverage of alcohol health and safety issues; jeopardizing licensees' implementation of their statutory public interest responsibilities; and hardening broadcaster opposition to policy efforts to balance pro-drinking advertising messages with public health information about the risks of alcohol consumption. Numerous studies have documented how the heavy reliance by some magazines on tobacco advertising revenues has distorted -- and in some cases, extinguished -- their coverage of health issues related to smoking.

- **The public opposes broadcast liquor ads.**

  - 72% of Americans support keeping network television free of hard-liquor ads.\(^\text{19}\)
- 79% of Americans think that allowing liquor ads on television will be a factor in causing young people under 21 to try liquor, and 70% agree that it is dangerous to have liquor ads on TV because they will introduce young people under the age of 21 to liquor.\textsuperscript{20}

- 57% of surveyed Americans believe that teens would be influenced by hard liquor commercials.\textsuperscript{21}

- According to AdWeek magazine, more than two-thirds of surveyed persons said liquor ads should be limited to responsible-drinking messages and not extend to product appeals. 54% of respondents also strongly or somewhat agreed that liquor ads should include responsible drinking and health warnings, and voiced opinions that the most acceptable time for liquor ads is after 11 p.m.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. “Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001 to 2007.” Online at: http://camy.org/research/tv0608/
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Adams Beverage Industry Liquor Handbook, 2008.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/surveillance81/tables/Table1-1.htm and http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k7nsduh/2k7Results.cfm#Ch3
  \item \textsuperscript{5} The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. “Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001 to 2007.” Online at: http://camy.org/research/tv0608/
  \item \textsuperscript{10} 2005 SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health
  \item \textsuperscript{11} 2005 SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health
  \item \textsuperscript{12} NIAAA Alcohol Alert No. 73, October 2007. Online at http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA73/AA73.htm
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Center for Disease Control (CDC). (2007) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Danice K. Eaton, PhD; Laura Kann, PhD; Steve Kinchen; Shari Shanklin, MS; James Ross, MS; Joseph Hawkins, MA; William A. Harris, MM; Richard Lowry, MD; Tim McManus, MS; David Chyen, MS; Connie Lim, MPA; Nancy D. Brener, PhD; Howell Wechsler, EdD. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States 2007. MMWR Surveillance Summaries, June 6, 2008 / 57(SS04);1-131. Online at: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5704a1.htm
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center. Online at: http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. “Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001 to 2007.” Online at: http://camy.org/research/tv0608/
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Poll conducted for the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates on broadcast liquor advertisements. The nationally representative poll was conducted from December 14 to December 15, 2001 among 500 American adults 18 years of age and older. The margin of error is +/- 4.2% (95th percentile).
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Poll conducted for the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates on broadcast liquor advertisements. The nationally representative poll was conducted from December 14 to December 15, 2001 among 500 American adults 18 years of age and older. The margin of error is +/- 4.2% (95th percentile).
  \item \textsuperscript{21} TV Guide Poll, January 14, 2002.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} AdWeek Magazine, January 14, 2002. Survey conducted online by Initiative Media North America.