Case Study:
A Comparison of Outdoor Alcohol Advertising on Retail Outlets in Lower versus Higher Socio-Economic Neighborhoods in Albuquerque, New Mexico

An Update as of Spring 2014
Introduction:

The initial purpose of this case-study aims to address whether outdoor alcohol advertising varies in different socio-economic neighborhoods in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This case study originated in 2007, in which the two locations included the zip codes of 87105 (South Valley) and 87111 (Northeast Heights). The reasoning behind choosing these two locations is based off the Census Bureau findings. According to the 2000 findings the 87105 zip code is ranked with the lowest socioeconomic status, while the 87111 zip code is ranked with the highest socioeconomic status within the Bernalillo County. As of the 2010 Census Bureau findings, these remain to be consistent (Site!!!!!).

This case study can constitute as a longitudinal study. Over the past eight years, the monitoring of alcohol advertising has been conducted twice a year at both zip code areas. The locations of sites have evolved since the official launch of this study. As of February 2014, there are 15 alcohol outlets which are being monitored in the 87105 area and 13 outlets in the 87111 area. The addition of monitored alcohol venues was due to the expansion of the areas. The findings have been found to be intriguing and can be attributed to various factors.

The factors which seem to be most significant can be attributed to the location, time of year, sport season, time of day, and socioeconomic status. Alcohol marketing has evolved over the years and there is a greater outreach to people than ever before. The population which seems to be most affected because of alcohol advertisement is youth and adolescents. This population can be noted as a very fragile and absorbent group due to various factors such as peer pressure, acceptance, and societal messages. This article will examine new trends which have developed within the past few years in regards to alcohol marketing and its target towards youth and give an update on the case study over the past 7 years. It is evident from this case study that there are significant differences when it comes to examining alcohol signage and the abundance of signs when location and zip codes are taken into account. This information will be discussed in greater detail later on in this article.

Background Information:

There are many implications in regards to alcohol advertising/marketing. The production and consumption of alcohol has continued to increase since the “enactment of the 21st Amendment in 1933, which ended prohibition” (Smith and Geller, 2009, p.360). Throughout the many decades the popularity of alcohol consumption has increased significantly, especially amongst youth (individuals younger than the legal drinking age of 21). Youth have become the prime target for many alcohol companies. Throughout the years alcohol marketing has transformed into a much larger phenomena. Alcohol marketing, includes but is not limited to, billboards, television, radio, internet, social media sites, branding of products, placement, price, etc. Many of the alcohol marketing tactics are being directly targeted toward youth/adolescents.

National Youth Statistics:

According to findings in regards to the U.S., “youth under the legal drinking age are exposed to substantially more alcohol advertising on a per capita basis than the rest of the
population” (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005, p. 346). From the Jackson et al. study it was found that “by age 15 years, 71% of males and 72% of females have consumed a whole alcoholic drink, while 34% of males and 21% of females aged 16-24 years consume more than the weekly recommended level of alcohol” (2000, p. S601). Youth are consumed by television. It has been found that youth “see approximately 20,000 commercials each year, nearly 2,000 of which market beer and wine” (Smith & Geller, 2009, p. 359). What has been found to be even more significant is the fact that youth are “188 times more likely to see an alcohol product ad than one combating drinking and driving” (Smith & Geller, 2009, p. 359). In regards to recent new methods of advertising, a U.S. survey of teens found that “70% of respondent in their sample were daily SNS (social networking site) uses were three times more likely to use alcohol than other users” (McClean et al., 2013, p. 115).

Statistics (Local/New Mexico)

**New Mexico Statistics**

Youth substance abuse in New Mexico has been found to be an evident problem in this state. Many of the problems have severe implications on the health and well-being of the community. In 2010, it cost the citizens of New Mexico $0.7 billion to cover underage drinking costs. The costs included medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering which was associated with multiple resulting from the use of alcohol by youth. This can also be viewed in terms of $3,303 per year for each youth in the state of New Mexico or $4.68 per drink consumed by an underage individual. It is estimated that there are 86,000 underage customers in New Mexico annually. From survey conducted in 2009, it was found that students in grades 9-12 reported that 29.4% had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13, 40.5% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past 30 days, 25.0% had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (binge drinking) in the past 30 days, 8.0% had at least one drink of alcohol on school property in the past 30 days. In 2009, underage customers consumed nearly 30.7% of all alcohol solid in the state of New Mexico, which resulted in a $157 million in sales. These sales provided $77 million to the alcohol industry. New Mexico is ranked as number 20 (1 being the highest) in regards to the percentage of alcohol consumed underage (Produced by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), September 2011). New Mexico has a law that prohibits alcohol advertisement which is targeted toward minors; however New Mexico is ranked number 1 in regards to alcohol-related youth driver traffic fatalities per million aged 15-20 (Smith & Geller, 2009, p. 361).

**Various Methods of Marketing**

Within the alcohol marketing industry there are many different methods that are being utilized. Many of these methods are recently new. There are several types of marketing strategies. Traditional marketing include television, radio, magazines, billboards and sponsorships (Griffiths & Casswell 2010; Casswell & Maxwell 2005; Gordon 2011; Pridemore & Grubesic 2012; Mart 2011). Television continues to be one of the leading methods in alcohol marketing. It has been found that “exposure to programming likely to contain alcohol advertising on television predicted higher odds of drinking beer and liquor use as well as greater likelihood of drinking three or more drinks on a single occasion” (Jernigan & Ross, 2010, p. 37). Two new
types of marketing have developed within the past few decades. The term convergence culture refers to “a concept that recognizes the viral sharing of media content across multiple media platforms, a process significantly driven by the active participation of consumers” (Griffiths & Casswell, 2010, p. 527). Another term used frequently is known as viral marketing. This term refers to “technique that employ interpersonal interaction on behalf of the brand, also uses these new technologies” (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005, p. 344). It has been found that “contemporary viral marketing began in the mid-2000s and has subsequently become a defining marketing trend of the early 21st century” (Griffiths & Casswell, 2010, p. 527). Both terms convergence culture and viral marketing are forms of reciprocal engagement. These types of marketing agents make the consumers feel like they are getting an increase in personalized attention. As McCreanor et al. states in regards to viral marketing, “they are often seen as online extension of face-to-face relationship” (2013, p.112). Viral marketing is directly related and targeted toward youth, being that they are the largest population which partakes in these media methods.

The main categories which fall under viral marketing include: text messaging, internet, email, and social networking sites (SNS) (Gordon et al. 2010; Mart 2011; Chakravarthy et al 2013). Research has found that the majority of “alcohol marketing spend does not go on advertising, but on below the line activities such as new media, viral marketing and sponsorship (Gordon et al. 2010, p.90). The reason for attraction to certain media sites has found that “young adults have flocked to SNS which are seen as enjoyable, practical domain for everyday social interactions” (McCreanor et al., 2013, p. 111). These sites continue to be on the rise of alcohol marketing outreach toward youth. The rise is due to a term known as “cyberspace ethnography”. This term refers to an “ ethnographic approach is a ‘media-hybridised’ method that involves researchers collecting fans’ comments about television programs, movies, or other forms of popular culture that have been posted on internet newsgroups, forums, chat rooms or other websites” (Griffiths & Casswell, 2010, p. 526).The reason why viewing alcohol marketing is crucial is due to the fact that it has been found that “both advertising variables were positively associated with increased drinking over time” (Gordon et al., 2010, p.91).

**Targeted Youth Marketing**

Many products which are produced by the alcohol industry are directly developed to target towards youth. Alcohol marketing does this in a fashion which is appealing towards youth. The alcohol industry has begun to use “multiple technologies to promote sales of their products… they have also created market-specific beverages that are attractive to the youth demographic” (Mart, 2011, p. 889). Certain beverages which are “aimed at the young market are commonly promoted with stylish, colorful, or innovative packaging such as test tube shots and sachets and witty or daring names such as HEMP (highly enjoyable magic potion) vodka” (Casswell & Maxwell, 2013, p. 345). Some of the most common designer drinks which have been developed to be targeted toward youth include: ice lagers, alcopops, white ciders, and alcoholic energy drinks (Jackson et al., 2000, p. S600). The term FAB (flavored alcoholic beverage” is also used to describe fashionable alcoholic beverages. This term was “coined in the 1990s to encompass the growth of fashionable beers, wines, and spirits” (Jackson et al., 2000, p. S600).These types of drinks are intended to cover up the taste of alcohol. The taste of alcohol is “disguised by the sweet and fruity flavors, the relatively low volume and screw top bottle increase portability, easing illicit consumption, and a high alcohol content satisfies the need for rapid intoxication” (Jackson et al., 2000, p. S603). Of these designer drinks, alcopops are specifically common amongst underage drinkers. Alcopops are “ready to drink, sugary sweet
alcoholic beverages, often carbonated and/or fruit-flavored, and sold in single serving bottle or cans” (Mart, 2011, p.890). These types of beverages contain the same amount of alcohol as beer (about 5%), but there are some that have 8-12% alcohol by volume (ABV) (Mart, 2011, p.890). Designer drinks have implications due to the fact that “caffeinated alcohol is associated with high levels of dangerous drinking behaviors and related negative consequences in youth populations” (Mart, 2011, p.890).

Normalization and Intoxigenic Social Identity
One of the many reasons behind youth consuming alcohol at an early age can be attributed to the fact that alcohol has become normalized in everyday lives and as a result society builds a certain type of social identity. There is a term used known as ‘intoxigenic social identity’ this refers to individuals on social networking sites and in everyday life. As McCreanor et al. stated that young people “willingly display inebriated behavior on SNS and share their drinking stories online, often using digital images; this occurs across demographically diverse adolescent communities” (2013, p. 115). Griffiths & Casswell refer to intoxigenic social identity as an “identity that positions alcohol consumption, and in many cases binge drinking, as a normative practice among youth” (2010, p.528). The reasons why these types of social identities have thrived is due to the fact that alcohol within society has become normalized. Partaking in the consumption of alcohol has become enriched within social culture. Within everyday life, the “content around alcohol, with all its attractions, pleasures and utility, is playing a role in normalizing drinking with young people’s lives and cultural worlds, contributing to intoxigenic environments” (McCreanor et al., 2013, p.115-116). Normalization can be attributed to other individuals such as family members and peers.

Risk Factors: Individual & Community
Having youth consume alcohol has many significant problems not only on the individual, but also within the community/society. It has been found that “risky harmful use of alcohol seems to be at the heart of concerns about youth alcohol use” (Morgenstern et al., 2011, p.147). Many contributing risk factors aside from alcohol advertisement can be attributed to “exposure of drugs, socio-economic status, and quality of parenting, peer group influence and biological/inherent predisposition towards drug addiction” (Chakravarthy et al., 2013, p. 1021). As a result being at risk regardless if it is inherent or social, this places youth at various levels of implications, both short term and long term. By engaging in alcohol and other drugs within the “adolescent population carries a high risk for school underachievement, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and depression” (Chakravarthy et al., 2013, p.1021). Another set of short term implications include “alcohol poisoning, accidents, violence, and absenteeism” (McCreanor et al., 2013, p.110). As Griffiths & Casswell claim “younger people’s heavier drinking is a public health issue due to both the short-term associated harms and the future risks” (2010, p.528). Younger individuals who engage in drinking alcohol place a significant concern on the public. Smith & Geller found that in 2003, there were 24 states that had laws prohibiting alcohol advertisements which were targeted toward minors. These states which had laws, found a significant decrease in alcohol related youth driver traffic fatalities (2009, p.361-362). If youth continue to drink in abundance through their adolescent years and onto their adult years there will in fact develop long term implications. These long term risk factors include “heart, liver, and
brain damage, cancers, diabetes, dementia, and addiction” (McCreanor et al., 2013, p.110). From this information it is evident that change within policy and regulations need to occur.

Findings from Case Study:

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From this data it is evident that over the past 7 years there have been fluxions in the number of alcohol advertisements which are displayed at various locations. There is a significant difference in the number of signs in the South Valley (87105) compared to the Northeast Heights (87111). It is evident that bigger stores which specialize in only selling alcohol (e.g. Kelly’s Liquors) have a much higher number compared to venues which also sell other items besides alcohol (e.g. grocery stores, Walgreens, Sports Bars). However an exception to this rule is Quarter’s in which this is a restaurant and a liquor store and they continue to display an abundance of advertisements. Whereas Albertsons consistently does not display visible alcohol signs on their property. It is evident that each property varies, however the total number continues to stay consistent.

The alcohol signs are calculated based on several factors. The signs can constitute as either a large or small sign. It is also taken into account whether signs are neon, meaning that the signs light up using electricity. If signs are targeting a certain group such as a certain as ethnicity, race, gender, etc. it is noted on the sheet. It is also noted whether or not the signs are visible from the main streets. It is important to take all these factors into consideration because they all are reflective as to what methods companies are taking in order to draw in customers, even underage customers.
South Valley:
Studies in regards to SES:

There are many studies which have been conducted in regards to socioeconomic status (SES) and the amount of alcohol people consume. It is crucial to understand that there are many factors which contribute to the individual and societal level when it comes to alcohol consumption. One finding which remains consistent across multiple studies has found that “the general pattern is that people in higher SES groups, are more often drinkers and drink smaller amounts more frequently, whereas those in lower SES groups have a higher proportion of abstainers but those who do drink do so more often in problematic ways” (Grittner et al., 2012, p. 333). From this information alone, it is can be deduced that people in the Northeast Heights may drink at frequent rate, however residents of the South Valley may drink less frequently but do so in a large manner which may mirror binge drinking.

It is important to consider how accessible alcohol is for consumers. There are different types of availability such as physical availability, subjective availability, and social availability. Physical availability is how close an individual lives to an alcohol venue. Studies found that “states with high rates of on-premise alcohol outlets tended to have higher rates of alcohol consumption than did states with low rate of on-premise alcohol outlets” (Abbey et al., 1993, p.489). Subjective availability is defined as how close and accessible an individual feels that alcohol is available. There are factors when it comes to determining subjective availability such as “willingness to travel far or go out of their way to obtain alcohol, perceived convenience of
buying alcohol, perceived convenience of buying alcohol, concern about the price of alcohol, and discomfort about buying alcohol” (Abbey et al., 1993, p. 490). The last type of availability known as social availability can be defined as “availability within small social or family groups” Members of one’s social network influence availability both by the norms their behavior sets and their selection of social environments in which alcohol is readily accessible” (Abbey et al., 1993, p. 490). From this information it is plausible to assume that while comparing the differences between the South Valley and Northeast Heights that the rural area may experience more venues and accessibility to alcohol, and as a result this may have implications for future and on-going problems for the individual and also the community.

**What can/needs to be done?**

It is evident that alcohol marketing tactics are a problem not only on the individual level, but also on the societal level. In the past, The Partnership has been able to talk with local vendors as to what implications are in having a large amount of advertisements and what messages they are sending toward others and the community itself. If there were a decrease in alcohol venues, there would be a decrease in lowering underage drinking, less violence, and less drinking and driving related incidents.

In conclusion, it can be determined that alcohol marketing does in fact have a significant role on adolescents/youth. The measures that the alcohol industry takes in order to have an outreach toward youth are expensive, appealing, and as result have significant short term and long term implications. Due to the increase in new types of marketing, there are new concerns which have arisen. It can be concluded that “alcohol marketing does influence youth drinking behaviors” (Gordon, 2011, p.369) and that the earlier an individual begins to consume alcohol this is predictor of future addiction and dependency (Gordon et al., 2010, p.470). Although alcohol advertising and marketing are “independent risk factors for early problematic alcohol use”, it is also crucial to consider other factors such, as psychosocial factors (Morgenstern et al., 2011, p.149). Due to the fact that “the abuse of alcohol and drugs has resulted in significant morbidity and mortality among adolescents worldwide” is evidence as to why this is a serious problem and why change needs to occur so that society does not continue down this path of sending normalized alcohol consumption messages toward youth (Chakravarthy et al., 2013, p.1023).
References:


Produced by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), September 2011. http://www.udetc.org/factsheets/NM.pdf