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AUDIOVISUAL AND DIGITAL ALCOHOL MARKETING: REGULATION AND YOUTH EXPOSURE IN FINLAND



CREDITS

The comparison of International Alcohol Control Policies with a focus on Audiovisual and Digital Alcohol Marketing (CIPPAL-ADAM) was carried out by a wide partnership of research-oriented organisations. The interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OFDT. The OFDT assumes no responsibility for the opinions expressed or for any errors or omissions contained herein.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a Finnish study into alcohol marketing and exposure to alcohol marketing practices in audiovisual media amongst young Finnish individuals (15-21). The report draws from three datasets: (1) a systematic literature review into alcohol marketing regulations and research in the Finnish context; (2) qualitative interviews with 20 young individuals focusing on their experience with audiovisual alcohol marketing; (3) quantitative survey with 544 young individuals focusing on their alcohol consumption, use of audiovisual media, and alcohol marketing exposure.

The Finnish alcohol consumption landscape is characterised by a trend of declining total consumption, particularly amongst young individuals. Reasons for declining consumption include tighter enforcement of age limits and parental control as well as changes in attitudes. At the same time, declines in total consumption have been associated with polarisation in terms of alcohol consumption and harm. Furthermore, recent policy changes introducing wider alcohol availability have slowed down the decline in total consumption.

Current alcohol regulations remain stringent in a European comparison. Alcohol advertising is regulated via prohibitions on targeting underaged individuals, watersheds for advertising on television and radio, bans on advertising in public spaces and cinemas and bans on using consumer-generated content on social media. Sharing of alcohol advertisements is also prohibited on social media. Furthermore, alcohol advertising is restricted with a number of content-related regulations. Most Finns support regulations on alcohol marketing, but the current regulatory framework is also challenged by industry lobbying, political ideologies and the globalisation of alcohol industries.

Qualitative and quantitative results of youth exposure to alcohol marketing show that young people are widely exposed to alcohol marketing across social media and other audiovisual environments. Quantitative results showed that 86% of young individuals had seen positive portrayals of alcohol on any media in the past 30 days – with 75% reporting exposure to this type of content online. 90% reported exposure to any audiovisual alcohol advertising. 73% reported exposure online and 80% reported exposure in social networks. Most common types of exposure to alcohol content on social media included posts by influencers, peers and alcohol brands. Qualitative results show that exposure consists of Finnish marketing but also international content. The distinction between marketing messages and other user-generated content was therefore often unclear.

Survey results showed that alcohol advertising had some effect on reported consumption intentions. 21% of respondents reported having wanted to try a specific alcoholic product after viewing an advertisement. 16% of respondents reported having tried a product after viewing an advertisement. In addition, 34% of respondents felt that alcohol marketing could have an overall impact on young individuals in Finland. Qualitative findings similarly showed that young people consider alcohol marketing and other alcohol content on social media to have an impact on consumption. As a whole, alcohol marketing was considered attractive and effective. In addition, content shared by peers or influencers encouraged consuming alcohol.

Overall, the main drivers of drinking alcohol amongst young individuals included a positive cultural environment, peer attitudes, attractive social media content, and other attractive advertising content and branding. The main preventing factors for drinking alcohol amongst young individuals included effective regulations limiting availability and exposure, knowledge of risks to health and social welfare and negative peer attitudes towards alcohol.

Despite widespread exposure to alcohol marketing, many young individuals were critical towards alcohol consumption and marketing practices. In the quantitative findings, only 5% reported fully approving alcohol marketing. Overall, 69% of respondents who had seen any alcohol marketing in the past 30 days reported accepting the ban on alcohol advertising targeting minors.

In the qualitative analysis, critical reflections towards alcohol stemmed from negative personal experiences such as problematic drinking in the family, as well as from broader awareness of the negative effects of alcohol on health and social welfare. Due to these critical attitudes, many interviewees in our study had limited their own alcohol consumption or refrained from consuming alcohol altogether.

Young people, regardless of their drinking status, supported regulatory measures limiting exposure to and availability of alcohol. Particularly restrictions on alcohol marketing in social media were widely supported by our participants. The interviewed young individuals were well-informed about marketing regulations. However, enforcement, particularly in social media environments, was considered insufficient. Many participants called out for stronger regulations to limit unethical alcohol marketing practices, particularly if targeted at young audiences.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and its Member States regard strategies to regulate the commercial availability of alcohol as essential public health measures. (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021). At a global level, the ban on the sale of alcohol to minors (generally aged under 18) and restrictions on alcohol advertising are among WHO's 'best buys': cost-effective measures to prevent significant public health harms related to alcohol. The rigour with which these provisions are applied across countries is therefore crucial. Health authorities recommend regulating marketing practices to protect minors. Recommended restrictions include limiting the use of certain media and content of advertising (PAHO, 2017 ; WHO, 2018, 2019). In Europe, these measures vary between countries and across different alcoholic products. Regulations can also be statutory and binding, or based on industry self-regulation. Research shows that self-regulation by alcohol producers and advertisers is contrary to their economic interests and therefore unlikely to be effective in protecting minors from advertising (Pierce et al., 2019). For this reason, statutory codes and independent compliance monitoring are needed.

Given the multifactorial complexity of the responses implemented, it is essential for states to better distinguish what can be learned from specific national experiences and trajectories in the implementation of alcohol control policies. Thus, in November 2024, with the financial support of the Fonds de Lutte Contre les Addictions (FLCA, French Fund for Combatting Addiction), the French Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Addictions (OFDT) launched the Comparison of International Alcohol Control Policies (CIPPAL), with a focus on Audiovisual and Digital Alcohol Marketing (ADAM). This study is referred here by the acronym 'CIPPAL-ADAM'. The study aimed at **describing and comparing the factors and patterns of young people's exposure to audiovisual and digital alcohol marketing in six European countries**: Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Switzerland. The CIPPAL-ADAM study was carried out over 2024 and 2025, by six European organisations with an expertise in mixed methods (universities, advocacy or research bodies), following a common methodology. The overall project was coordinated by the OFDT.

This monograph summarises the study results for Finland. It thus includes contextual data on the Finnish system of regulation and control regarding audiovisual and digital alcohol advertising as well as qualitative and quantititative results on young people's attitudes towards this type of advertising and their exposure to advertising.

Within the CIPPAL-ADAM project, Finland represents a country with comparatively strict alcohol regulations. Total alcohol consumption in Finland is approximately at the European average level with 8.7 litres of 100% alcohol consumed per capita aged 15 and over (Jääskeläinen et al., 2024; World Health Organization, 2024). In the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Drugs (ESPAD) conducted in 2024, two thirds of Finnish 15-16-year-old adolescents reported having drunk alcohol at least once during their lifetime. 20% of them had been intoxicated from alcohol at least once during the previous month, while 35% reported that they had never had alcohol (Raitasalo, 2024). The prevalence of lifetime alcohol use as well as heavy episodic drinking among adolescents is lower in Finland compared to the European average (ESPAD, 2021).

METHOD

The general objective of CIPPAL-ADAM is to show how young people in the six countries compare in their way of identifying and being exposed to audiovisual and digital marketing techniques. In other words, the study assesses the empowering capacity (marketing awareness) and the protective nature (less exposure) of different control systems, from a comprehensive statutory system (Lithuania) to less restrictive statutory systems (Finland, France) or more liberal systems appealing to self-regulation by economic players (Ireland, Italy, Switzerland). To this end, investigators have pursued four operational objectives to be declined in each country case:

- Describe the national regulations – legal/statutory restrictions and/or industry self-regulation –- on alcohol marketing (AM) via audio-visual and digital media and the related control and enforcement framework.
- Assess the knowledge, acceptability and attitudes of minors and young adults regarding the national AM regulation and how they perceived its efficacy/role in reducing incentives to purchase and consumption, peer or family pressure to drink alcohol, etc.
- Analyse how minors and young adults perceive their exposure to AM via the audiovisual media and the Internet, considering various explanatory variables (age, gender, drinking status.

Investigators have implemented a mixed method based on a documentary analysis on the regulations, sociological interviews on norms and perceptions and a web survey on ADAM exposure and related factors. The recruiting and data collection methods were submitted to the internal ethical procedure of each partner.

The review of the national regulation system of alcohol marketing was based on agreed guidelines with regards to types of sources, bibliographic databases, keyword sets and search strategies. The selection of references followed the PRISMA rules for traceability. Figure 1 illustrates the PRISMA process for the Finnish review.

Data collection targeted young people aged between 16 and 19 for semi-structured interviews. Selection criteria based on age (minors and adults), gender, alcohol consumption and socio-economic background (parents' profession) were applied when recruiting interviewees, in order to achieve a diversity of profiles. Multi-channel recruiting was used (via social media, by direct soliciting or via a poll firm) and prior parental consent was required for minor respondents. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and anonymised. Data was processed with Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Atlas or Nvivo 14-15).

For the websurvey, samples varied in number between countries, with three larger samples for Finland, France and Italy. Sampling was based on common quotas applied to respondents belonging to access panels, with a minimum target of 30% minors in each national sample and an age range extended from 15 to 21, for reasons of feasibility. Common quotas referred to gender (men, women) cross-referenced with age (minors, adults), activity (schooling vs employment). For the three larger samples, additional quotas related to more detailed categories of schooling, the size of urban unit, region and the parents' occupation were applied. Final data were weighted on the basis of these quota criteria.

Incentives worth 15 euros on average were awarded to young interviewees and panel respondents to the web survey. The final samples of the set of interviews and web survey are respectively detailed in Tables 1 and 2, for Finland.

For the qualitative analysis, we interviewed 20 young Finnish individuals (see Table 1). Recruitment took place via an advertising campaign on Instagram, by contacting youth services across Finland, by placing advertisements in youth spaces around the Helsinki capital region, and through direct contacts and snowballing. The interviews were conducted between May 8th and September 10th 2024.

Figure 1. Identification of studies via databases

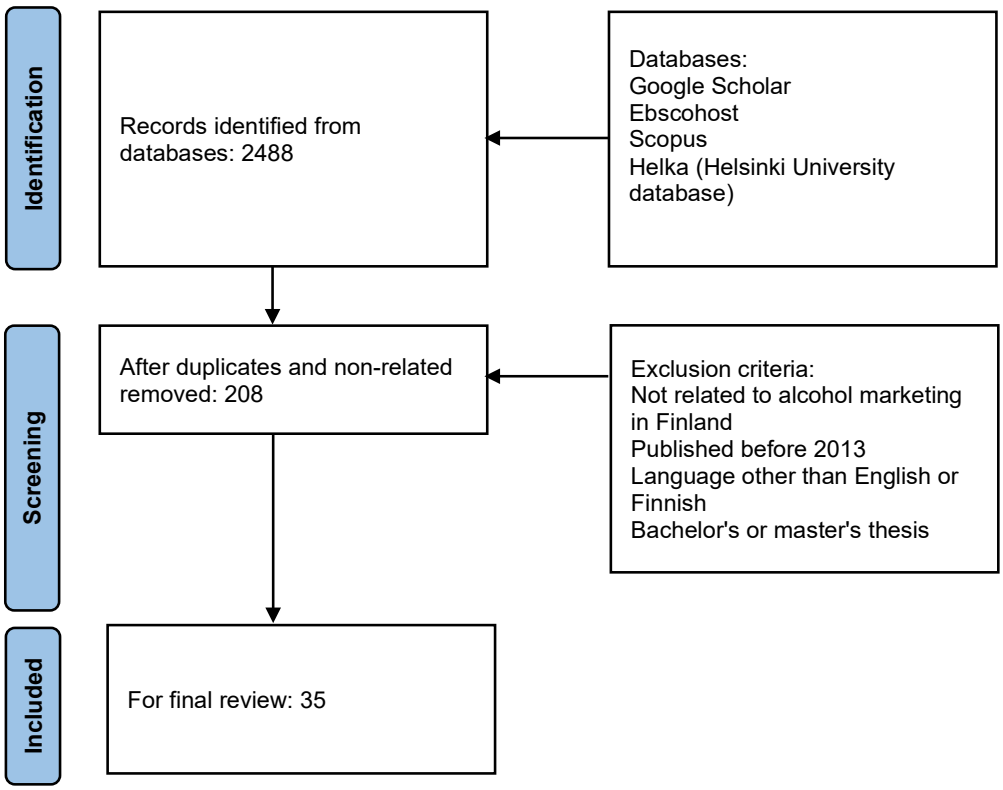


Table 1: Qualitative sample overview

		N	%
Total sample		**20**	**100**
Age	16-17	6	30%
	18-19	14	70%
Average age	/	17.75	
Gender	Male	11	55%
	Female	8	40%
	Non-binary	1	5%
Area	Rural	4	20%
	Urban	16	80%
Last month alcohol use	Never	8	40%
	1-2 times	8	40%
	Once a week or so	4	20%
	Everyday or so	0	0%
Lifetime non drinker	/	3	15%
First drink	With relatives	9	45%
	With friends	8	40%
	Never	3	15%
	Alone	0	0%
Average age (first drink)	/	15.5	
Drunkenness	Yes	14	70%
	Not	6	30%
Economic situation	Not well-off	0	0%
	Fairly well-off	10	50%
	Very well-off	10	50%

All interviews followed a set interview protocol and thematic interview grid as established by the CIPPAL-ADAM project. Sticking to this protocol allows us to compare findings across participating countries. The thematic interview grid consisted of five themes: internet and social media use, exposure to digital or audiovisual alcohol marketing, opinions on alcohol marketing, knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol control and legislation, and family and peers' influence.

All interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. The online setting made it easier to recruit and interview participants from across the country. Interviews lasted on average 59 minutes, ranging from 28 to 81 minutes.

We transcribed the interviews verbatim. All interviews were conducted in Finnish. We give quotations from the data in the analysis to illustrate findings. All quotations are translated into English by the research team.

In total, 11 participants were male, eight were female, and one identified as non-binary. Six interviewees were aged between 16 and 17 years, and 14 interviewees were between 18 and 19 years of age. Most lived in urban areas (N=16). Half of the respondents described their family's economic situation as well-off or fairly well-off. Table 2 provides detailed characteristics of the qualitative sample of this study regarding sociodemographic factors.

Table 2: Qualitative sample characteristics: sociodemographics

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Area of residence	Family's economic situation
FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker	M	19	Urban	Very well-off
FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker	M	18	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_03_M_16_non-drinker	M	16	Rural	Very well-off
FI_04_F_18_non-drinker	F	18	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_05_F_16_non-drinker	F	16	Rural	Very well-off
FI_06_M_17_non-drinker	M	17	Rural	Fairly well-off
FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker	F	19	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker	F	18	Urban	Very well-off
FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker	M	19	Urban	Very well-off
FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker	M	19	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker	M	18	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker	F	18	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_14_F_18_monthly drinker	F	18	Rural	Very well-off
FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker	M	16	Urban	Very well-off
FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker	M	18	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_17_M_18_non-drinker	M	18	Urban	Very well-off
FI_18_F_16_non-drinker	F	16	Urban	Fairly well-off
FI_13_M_18_non-drinker	M	18	Urban	Very well-off
FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker	NB	17	Urban	Very well-off
FI_20_F_19_non-drinker	F	19	Urban	Fairly well-off

In terms of alcohol use (see Table 3), eight participants had not used alcohol in the past month, eight had used alcohol once or twice, and four participants had used alcohol approximately once a week. Three participants had never tried alcohol. The average age for the first drinking experience was 15.5 years; in this context drinking means a proper glass of an alcoholic beverage instead of just a tiny sip. About one third of the interviewees had not tasted alcohol before they turned 18. Nine participants had had their first drink with family members and eight in the company of friends. Fourteen interviewees reported having experienced drunkenness at least once in their lives, while three of those who had tried alcohol had never been drunk.

Table 3: Qualitative sample characteristics: experiences with alcohol

Participant ID	Age at first drink	First drink with	Past month alcohol use	Lifetime drunkenness
FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker	18	Friends	1-2 times	No
FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker	17	Family	1-2 times	No
FI_03_M_16_non-drinker	14	Friends	Never	Yes
FI_04_F_18_non-drinker	18	Friends	Never	Yes
FI_05_F_16_non-drinker	-	Never tried alcohol	Never	No
FI_06_M_17_non-drinker	15	Family	Never	Yes
FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker	16	Family	1-2 times	Yes
FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker	16	Friends	Once a week or so	Yes
FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker	18	Family	Once a week or so	Yes

Participant ID	Age at first drink	First drink with	Past month alcohol use	Lifetime drunkenness
FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker	12	Family	1-2 times	Yes
FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker	14	Family	Once a week or so	Yes
FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker	18	Family	1-2 times	No
FI_14_F_18_monthly drinker	15	Friends	1-2 times	Yes
FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker	14	Friends	1-2 times	Yes
FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker	16	Friends	Once a week or so	Yes
FI_17_M_18_non-drinker	-	Never tried alcohol	Never	No
FI_18_F_16_non-drinker	-	Never tried alcohol	Never	No
FI_13_M_18_non-drinker	18	Friends	Never	Yes
FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker	13	Family	1-2 times	Yes
FI_20_F_19_non-drinker	14	Family	Never	Yes

Table 4 provides an overview of the quantitative sample characteristics. The sample size is indicated in each table respectively, since not all respondents have replied every question.

Table 4: Quantitative sample overview (n=544)

		N	%
Total sample		**544**	**100**
Age	15-17	162	30%
	18-21	382	70%
Average age	/	18,45	
Gender	Male	256	47%
	Female	261	48%
	Non-binary and other	27	5%
Male	15-17	81	15%
	18-21	175	32%
Female	15-17	77	14%
	18-21	184	34%
Non-binary and other	15-17	4	1%
	18-21	23	4%
Drinking status	Non drinkers	136	22%
	Drinkers	408	78%
	Occasional drinkers	*82*	15%
	Regular drinkers	*326*	*60%*
Socio-economic categories	Superior category	232	43%
	Intermediate category	286	53%
	Lower category	26	5%
Education	Higher education	81	15%
	General secondary school	192	35%
	Other secondary school	39	7%
	No answer	232	43%
Activity	At school, university	312	57%
	Employed	168	31%
	Inactive	64	12%

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REGULATION

This section presents a narrative review of our systematic literature search into alcohol regulations and research in the Finnish context. We start by describing the epidemiological situation and a brief legal history, followed by an up-to-date review of current alcohol and alcohol marketing regulations as well as their enforcement. The section finishes with a SWOT analysis of the main characteristics of alcohol marketing regulation in Finland.

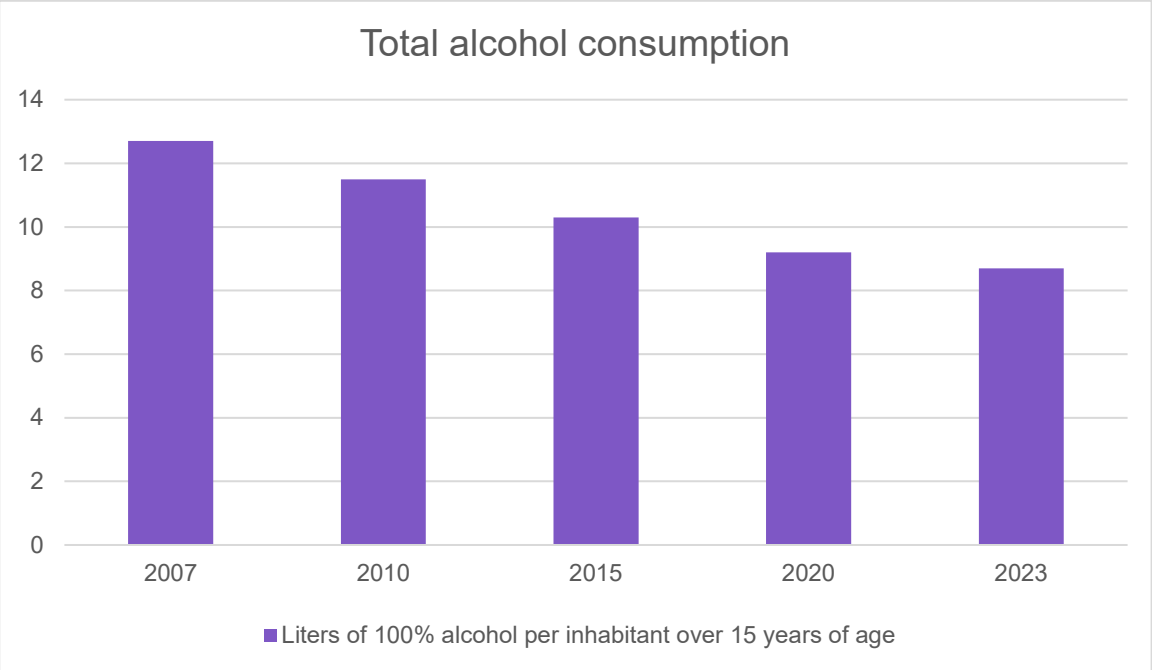
Foundation and rationale of alcohol advertising regulations

Finland has been described as having a "dry drinking culture", characterised by a comparatively low volume of consumption, infrequent heavy drinking and high rates of drunkenness (Room & Mäkelä, 2000). Similar circumstances and trends apply in Sweden and Norway. However, there are several factors contributing to a shift in habits and attitudes, especially among adolescents (Raitasalo et al., 2021). Finns' drinking preferences have changed substantially over the last decades, and Finland has shifted from spirits to beer. Wine has also gained popularity in an increasing manner (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2023).

Epidemiological situation

Overall, alcohol consumption in Finland has been declining since 2007, after reaching an all-time high of 12.7 litres of pure alcohol per over 15 years old inhabitant. In 2023, the total consumption was 8.7 litres of pure alcohol per inhabitant 15 years and older (Jääskeläinen et al., 2024). Figure 2 illustrates the steady decline of total alcohol consumption between 2007 and 2023.

Figure 2. Total alcohol consumption in Finland



As the total consumption trend has been descending, heavy episodic drinking has also decreased among the Finnish population. However, binge drinking is still quite prevalent, and differences between socioeconomic strata have increased (Tigerstedt et al., 2020). In 2022, 17% of 20–64-year-old Finnish men and 4% of women engaged in binge drinking at least once a week. Excessive alcohol

consumption still causes significant harms, and more than 2000 deaths are caused by alcohol annually. 75% of them are due to chronic illnesses (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2023). The heaviest drinking ten% of the population consumed 52% of all alcohol consumed in 2023. Approximately 10% of the adult population abstain from drinking altogether (Mäkelä & Warpenius, 2024).

Middle-strength beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage, although stronger beer has gained foothold especially after the change in legislation in 2018, when alcohol up to 5.5% abv was allowed in grocery stores. This change has also reduced the Finnish alcohol retail monopoly Alko's share of the alcohol market (Tigerstedt et al., 2020). Among 15-16-year-olds, long drink is the most commonly used alcoholic beverage, followed by strong liquor that is easily accessible via inofficial sales on Snapchat and Telegram (Raitasalo & Markkula, 2024).

The downward trend in alcohol consumption has been even stronger among young Finns than among the general population. Since the turn of the millennium, alcohol consumption among Finnish adolescents has significantly decreased. According to the 2024 ESPAD survey, two-thirds of Finnish 15-16-year-olds have tried alcohol at least once, and 20% had been intoxicated in the past month, compared to 50% in 1999. Additionally, 35% reported never having consumed alcohol, with the number of total abstainers more than tripling over the past 25 years (Raitasalo, 2024).

The reasons for such a significant change may be associated with tighter enforcement of age limits, stricter parental control, change in attitudes toward drunkenness and restrictions on advertising (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). The perceived availability of alcohol plays a key role, as difficulty in accessing alcohol contributed to the decrease in heavy episodic drinking in a study that used the ESPAD data (Raitasalo et al., 2021). The decline in adolescents' drinking has concurred with the rise of social media. Thus, a factor potentially contributing to the shift in youth’s drinking culture is the introduction of new technology, which has created an institutional change in the way social and romantic relationships are formed among teenagers. The meaning of social drinking may have changed, making drinking less common and less self-evident (Luomanen & Alasuutari, 2022).

A legal change in 2018 raised the percentage limit for alcoholic beverages sold in grocery stores to 5.5%. There have been no statistically significant changes in total consumption and the immediate impact has remained smaller than anticipated (Karlsson et al., 2020). However, the decline in adolescents’ alcohol consumption has slowed down and alcopops have become a significant source of alcohol for minors in Finland (Lintonen et al., 2020). In recent years, adolescents’ weekly alcohol use and drunkenness have even slightly increased (Raitasalo & Markkula, 2024). Furthermore, according to the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare, alcohol-related deaths increased by 160 individuals in the first two years following the liberalisation of the Alcohol Act. Alcohol-related mortality increased more than alcohol consumption at the population level, which suggests that heavy drinkers have increased their alcohol consumption more than other consumers (Mäkelä, 2022). This development indicates a further polarisation of alcohol harms.

In the Youth Health Habits Survey 2019, 62% of respondents aged between 12 and 18 years reported having seen alcohol advertising during the last month, which was nine percentage units lower than in 2017. The most common advertising platform was the internet (47%) and television (45%). (Kinnunen et al., 2019.) Unfortunately, more recent data of adolescents’ exposure to alcohol marketing has not been available before the current study.

Implementation

Finnish alcohol policy has alternated between liberal and restrictive measures (Tigerstedt et al., 2020). In 2000-2010, EU regulations and Estonia's EU membership preceded a significant reduction in alcohol taxation, while economic development was simultaneously favourable. This led to a more than 10% increase in total alcohol consumption, consequently accumulating alcohol-related harms (Tigerstedt et al., 2020). Travellers' imports and online purchases from abroad add up to unrecorded alcohol consumption, which is a factor that has affected Finnish alcohol policy over the years. The so called 'booze rallies' to Estonia cause, among other repercussions, a loss of tax revenue to the state. The Finnish government reacted by passing new policies to diminish the market discrepancy, cutting excise taxes on alcoholic products (Gloukhovtsev et al., 2018).

As there was such a sharp rise in alcohol consumption and related harms after the alcohol tax was significantly reduced in 2004, a call for effective harm reduction measures surfaced. The Finnish government then passed restrictions on alcohol sales hours and on advertising, followed by tax increases (Gloukhovtsev et al., 2018). The increased harms also affected the public opinion. In a study conducted in 2012, 50% of opinion poll respondents felt that alcohol advertising should be limited to only showing prices and actual characteristics of the product (Österberg et al., 2014). During the preparations for a 2015 amendment restricting social media marketing, a ban on all image advertising was proposed and widely supported. Even a total advertising ban for all alcoholic beverages was suggested by a minister in the government (Purves et al., 2022).

In the opposing stakeholder group, increased alcohol control was claimed to contradict with the essential values of freedom, responsibility and free speech (Lauronen et al., 2017). Eventually, the Constitutional Committee of the Finnish parliament stated that the marketing restrictions do not limit free speech and do not apply to private communications among consumers (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). Ultimately, restrictions were fewer than initially planned. This was attributed to the lobbying efforts of the alcohol industry (Katainen et al., 2018). Research shows that the engagement of industry stakeholders in policy making is an established practice in the EU as well as in Finland (Sama et al., 2021).

The joint interests of digital platform owners and transnational alcohol companies is to keep the digital environment as free from regulation as possible. Major digital platforms have lobbied for free-trade agreements providing exemption from requirements demanding disclosure of source codes and algorithms (Anderson-Luxford et al., 2021). In 2015, alcohol industry lobbying prevented the initial idea of banning 'suggestive advertising' from being incorporated in the law (Kauppila et al., 2019). The 2015 amendment's ban on alcohol advertising in public spaces raised a lot of public debate, while marketing restrictions on social media were not equally covered in the media (Katainen et al., 2020).

During the political process preceding a 2018 alcohol law reform, a positioning strengthened that Karlsson and colleagues (2020) describe as "a conflict between public health objectives and neoliberal goals". The initial motive of the Alcohol Act reform was only to implement some technical updates. This, however, opened a broader discussion on how Finnish alcohol policy should be arranged, ending up in a prolonged and highly politicised process. The alcohol industry lobbied strongly, targeting both politicians and the general public, with the aim of creating support for laxer regulation (Lauronen et al., 2017). The primary objective of the Alcohol Act is to reduce harms caused by alcohol consumption, but in a press release from 2016, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health stated that it was aiming to make Finnish alcohol policy more liberal to balance the public health harms with the needs of business and industry (Decorte et al., 2019). The public opinion was

sharply divided, as public health advocates and researchers opposed liberalisation (Karlsson et al., 2020).

A newly appointed centre-right government included the alcohol industry representatives in the preparations of the legislation, and as a part of the government's objective of dismantling so-called overregulation, some substantial liberalisations were introduced in the reform. The alcohol law reform process shifted the perspective from harm reduction to a business-oriented approach. An alcohol tax hike was incorporated in the new legislation as a means of bargaining with the MPs concerned with the harmful effects of a more liberal alcohol policy (Karlsson et al., 2020).

The right-wing National Coalition Party, which was in the government at that time, had especially strong connections with the alcohol industry. This was a significant asset for those benefitting from more liberal policies (Karlsson et al., 2020). The Finnish Brewers' Association Panimoliitto was a central industry representative, influencing the policy process significantly. A study conducted by Sama and Hiilamo in 2019 identifies three main political strategies used by Panimoliitto: 1) 'information', meaning providing or misrepresenting evidence by lobbying through MPs of the National Coalition Party; 2) 'constituency building' forming alliances with grocery-retail interest groups to advocate for liberalisation and to lobby the public via Twitter; and 3) policy substitution to promote self-regulation (Sama & Hiilamo, 2019).

Alcohol industry strategies included dissemination of information in order to strengthen public support, to steer the political discussion to a favourable direction and to disrupt the opponent's research-based argumentation. The revolving door phenomenon, public campaigning, and international cooperation were strategies to mobilise interest groups. The industry had significant resources for lobbying, unlike the public health advocates (Lauronen et al., 2017).

A study conducted by Sama and colleagues identifies three main arguments used by the alcohol industry actors to influence policy during the alcohol law reform: 1) revenue is generated by liberalising alcohol policies; 2) liberties are a priority above bureaucracy and control; 3) education about individual responsibility is the best answer to alcohol-related harm. The police and NGOs in the addiction field opposed liberalisation, but the reform was nonetheless carried out (Sama et al., 2021).

Regulations on alcohol advertising in force in 2024

Finland has a long-standing tradition of strict alcohol regulations and follows the Nordic alcohol policy model (Bruun et al., 1975). The main principle of this policy framework is to restrict alcohol consumption and related harm by controlling the physical and economical availability of alcoholic products. The foundation for these measures has been the Finnish alcohol retail monopoly Alko, which was founded in 1932 (Karlsson, 2014).

In Finland, any beverage containing more than 1.2% alcohol by volume is classified as an alcoholic drink. The advertising of all alcoholic beverages was prohibited until 1995, when Finland became a member of the European Union. The EU membership led to a comprehensive revision of alcohol policies, including marketing regulation. Advertising for mild alcoholic beverages with less than 22% abv was allowed under certain conditions. Advertisement for stronger beverages remained prohibited (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017).

The Finnish Alcohol Act, originally issued in 1994, was amended in 2008. At that time, alcohol advertisements on television were banned between the watershed of 7 am and 9 pm, alcohol ads were prohibited in cinemas, and volume discounts and the public advertisement of happy hour offers

were disallowed. In 2015, the Alcohol Act was further amended to address online advertising. Additionally, outdoor advertising in public places such as billboards, bus stops, and public transportation was banned, although sports events were not included in this restriction. The time limit for alcohol commercials on television was pushed further to 10 pm and the watershed was extended to include radio advertisements (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017).

According to the Alcohol Act chapter 7, all marketing of alcoholic beverages, with a maximum strength of 21% abv is prohibited if:

- it is directed at or portrays minors or other persons to whom the alcoholic beverage may not be sold to;
- it associates alcohol consumption with driving a vehicle;
- it emphasises the alcoholic strength of the beverage as a positive characteristic;
- it portrays heavy drinking in a positive light or sobriety or moderation in a negative light;
- it portrays alcohol consumption as performance enhancing or promoting social or sexual success;
- it portrays alcohol as having medicinal or therapeutic properties, as a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving conflict;
- it is unfair, uses unfair means or otherwise gives untrue or misleading information about alcohol, its use, effects or other characteristics.

Finland has been a frontrunner in regulating digital advertising of alcohol. The 2015 amendment limited alcohol marketing on social media by targeting media-specific advertising techniques, rather than just content features. Advertising campaigns featuring games, lotteries or contests are prohibited. User-generated text or audiovisual material cannot be used in alcohol marketing, nor is it permitted for marketers to provide promotional content for consumers to share on social media platforms (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). In line with these regulations, and according to the interpretation of the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health Valvira, social media content needs to disable the option to share (Kauppila et al., 2019). The 2015 regulation has served as a preventive measure. During the time the restrictions were passed, Finnish alcohol companies' social media accounts did not have a widespread usage of these methods. However, the regulations do not prevent alcohol companies from engaging more social media users in the future (Katainen et al., 2018).

In 2018, the Alcohol Act went through an extensive reform. Further restricting alcohol marketing was discussed in the legislative process, but eventually no new marketing limitations were issued.

Synopsis of the regulation on alcohol marketing in 2024

Figure 3. Alcohol marketing restrictions in Finland



Control systems and enforcement in 2024

Valvira (the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health) oversees compliance with alcohol legislation. Valvira maintains guidelines for alcohol marketing, which include specific directions for marketing via online services. The guidelines are updated regularly. The purpose of the over 70 pages long instructive document is to supply marketers with specific interpretation and practical examples of the Alcohol Act's marketing provisions (National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health, 2024). The Council of Ethics in Advertising, operating under the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Board of Business Practice, issue statements on ethical acceptability and other problematic matters related to alcohol advertisement (Decorte et al., 2019).

The Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVI) are responsible for supervising alcohol advertising activities within their region. If the regulations are violated, Valvira or AVI can enact criminal penalties. For example, targeting promotion of alcoholic beverages to minors can lead to a fine or a maximum of six months of imprisonment. (Decorte et al., 2019.) Five advertising cases were processed and registered in Valvira during the year 2022 and 19 in the Regional State Administrative Agency (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2023).

In addition to the Alcohol Act, other national policies affecting alcohol marketing include the Finnish Consumer Protection Act, which for example bans hidden advertising, and the Finnish Information Society Code. The Finnish Consumer Ombudsman has issued guidelines for influencer marketing on social media (Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority, 2025; Montonen & Tuominen, 2017).

Because of the strong statutory regulation in Finland, industry self-regulation is not an important element (Decorte et al., 2019). However, industry stakeholders have issued instructions for responsible alcohol marketing. For example, The Finnish Brewers' Association Panimoliitto has published recommendations for its members. Panimoliitto's recommendation states that in addition to the watershed imposed by legislation, alcohol advertising should be avoided on television and digital channels during programs where more than 30% of the audience is known to be or can reasonably be assumed to be minors. The age limit of 18 years is to be followed on social media channels according to the possibilities offered by the channel (The Finnish Brewers' Association, 2023).

Finland also regulates alcohol marketing that emanates from across national borders. Restrictions on social media advertising have been drafted in a way that also extends their application to actors advertising from other countries, if this advertising is targeted at Finnish audiences. Targeting Finnish audiences can be identified via, for example, use of Finnish language and availability of the product in the Finnish market (Kauppila et al., 2019).

In the coming years, alcohol policy is governed by the Substance Use and Addiction Strategy published by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 2022. The strategy sets guidelines for alcohol policy across government terms until 2030. According to the strategy, 'Alcohol policy measures are based on the most cost-effective alcohol policy measures, which are, according to WHO and OECD and medical and social scientific evidence, measures that target the entire population: access restrictions, taxation and advertising restrictions.' (Kotovirta et al., 2021).

Finnish alcohol marketing regulations are also governed at the European Union and global levels. The EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive governs member states' national legislation on audiovisual media, and the EU's Beating Cancer Plan identifies alcohol marketing control as one means of reducing alcohol consumption and related harms (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). In 2010, Finland was one of the 193 member states to sign the World Health Organisation's Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol. In the strategy, a total ban for alcohol advertising is considered a 'best buy' policy for reducing alcohol harm. The same view is shared by the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance and the World Bank (Purves et al., 2022).

SWOT: Strenghts of the Finnish regulatory system

The main strenghts of the Finnish alcohol control and regulation framework relate to a long history of restrictive policy, a strong grounding of regulations on the WHO best buys, and widespread public support for alcohol regulation. These strenghts also carry to regulations focusing on restricting exposure to alcohol marketing in audiovisual media which are extensive as well as supported by most Finns.

The proportion of those in favour of laxer alcohol policy has been declining in recent years. In a survey conducted in 2025, 54% of the population supported the current alcohol policy measures, and 20% were in favour of further liberalisation. 17% wanted stricter alcohol policy (Karlsson & Raitasalo, 2025). The Finnish drinking culture changes slowly; even though there are developments, many typical drinking habits have remained unchanged. Economic availability explains the fluctuations in alcohol consumption. National alcohol policy can regulate the level of alcohol consumption, but much less so the prevailing drinking culture and habits. For young people, global influences may have more of an effect than national policies (Tigerstedt et al., 2020).

SWOT: Weaknesses of the Finnish regulatory system

The main weaknesses relate to problems with compliance and enforcement, particularly with regard to social media marketing. The 2015 regulations limiting marketing on social media have not prohibited all forms of commercial communications on social media. Alcohol industry actors are still able to create engaging content and use social media as a marketing platform. In addition to more traditional marketing slogans and posts, alcohol brands also co-operate with events and influencers and produce recipes and serving suggestions (Katainen et al., 2020; Kauppila et al., 2019).

The enforcement of advertising regulations, particularly in social media, is complicated by unsystematic monitoring and the vast amount of content (Katainen et al., 2018). Valvira is responsible for monitoring alcohol advertising and has the burden of proof to show violations (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). Yet, Valvira has no resources for monitoring social media advertisements, and only investigates cases that are reported (Katainen et al., 2020). This means that control is carried out 'post-hoc' (after publication). Significant burden is therefore placed on parents to monitor youth's social media use and exposure (cf. Raitasalo & Markkula, 2024).

Monitoring guidelines are ambiguous and open to interpretation, and make it difficult to distinguish which types of comments are considered recommendations and what is consumer-produced content (Anderson-Luxford et al., 2021; Purves et al., 2022). The significant personalisation of social media marketing allows algorithmic targeting of communications to ensure high levels of user engagement and interest (Kauppila et al., 2019). This personalisation makes it difficult to identify advertisements even with effective monitoring.

A significant weakness in enforcing regulations relates to attempts at regulating a global industry at a national level. Global industry actors produce social media content and other commercial communications that are visible to Finnish consumers despite national law (Kauppila et al., 2019). Cross-border advertising undermines national restrictions and advertisers can make use of the legal vacuum by bending rules and looking for loopholes (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017).

SWOT: Opportunities of the Finnish regulatory system

Increased international collaboration in alcohol regulation is a necessary step towards improved control over a global industry (Kauppila et al., 2019). Some have suggested that the Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC) could work as a guiding example for more effective alcohol marketing regulation. The FCTC works as a tool to prevent multinational companies from circumventing national regulation. Signatory countries of the FCTC agree to apply the same restrictions to domestic and international advertising (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017).

Another opportunity exists in more specific guidelines of what is allowed and what is prohibited. Any ambiguity creates significant challenges in monitoring advertising content, as companies will keep pushing limits (Anderson-Luxford et al., 2021). According to some, a full ban on social media advertising would better serve the purpose of limiting exposure (Katainen et al., 2020). Others have suggested applying a principle of a "positive list", detailing what is allowed rather than what is not, as a better basis for enforcement (Montonen & Tuominen, 2017). Removing the tax deductibility of alcohol companies' marketing costs has also been suggested as a way to reduce the overall quantum of advertising (Anderson-Luxford et al., 2021).

Recommendations and interventions need to consider the constantly evolving digital environment and the multifaceted challenges posed by it. Regulatory authorities struggle to keep up with the rapidly changing social media marketing environment. For example, traditional informative campaigns have produced mixed results (Savolainen & Oksanen, 2024). At the same time, the online

environment produces new opportunities for prevention and interventions, particularly using social media data. Personalisation can be used to disseminate health-promotion and prevention messages or virtual peer-group interventions. Interplay patterns on user-oriented social media platforms could also be examined to identify at-risk individuals (Savolainen et al., 2020).

SWOT: Threats to the Finnish regulatory system

The Finnish regulatory system for alcohol marketing is threatened by strong stakeholder lobbying for laxer regulations and a stronger focus on self-regulation. In particular The Finnish Brewers' Association has been a vocal advocate for alcohol industry self-regulation in Finland (Sama & Hiilamo, 2019). Finnish alcohol policy is also strongly connected to the interests of the international alcohol industry (Lauronen et al., 2017). Industry actors have argued that individual freedoms should be prioritised over bureaucracy and control measures, and that the availability or percentage of alcohol does not increase consumption or harm. They have further argued that countries with liberal alcohol policies experience minimal harm. Supporters of stricter control are labelled as lobbyists for protecting Alko's role as a state monopoly. To bypass Finnish regulations, companies register subsidiaries abroad or create alternative social media accounts to replace those that have been restricted (Purves et al., 2022; Raitasalo & Markkula, 2024).

The alcohol industry has gained leverage in policy-making processes after Finland's EU membership. It has legitimacy and opportunities to influence political decision-making, limiting the policies that protect the public from alcohol-related harm and weakened alcohol regulation. The international alcohol industry now has a prominent role in the alcohol sale, marketing and policy making in Finland. Their argument shifts the responsibility for alcohol harm to the individuals experiencing alcohol problems (Sama & Hiilamo, 2019). The alcohol industry has unlimited opportunities for campaigning and promoting their arguments in social media applications. Social media is used to advocate, lobby, build interest and interact with followers (Sama et al., 2021).
Industry lobbying has been accompanied by a policy shift that has been taking place in the Finnish alcohol policy landscape. The current right-wing government led by National Coalition Party's Petteri Orpo has set out a liberal policy path for alcohol, stating that Finland should become more 'European' in terms of alcohol policy. After taking office in 2023, the government has increased the allowed alcohol percentage for beverages sold outside the monopoly network to 8% abv, and is considering an additional raise to 15% abv. An amendment to the Alcohol Act is also being drafted to permit online sales and home delivery of alcohol (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). In international studies, the introduction of home deliveries has increased alcohol harm among young people (Raitasalo & Markkula, 2024).

Non-governmental organisations and authorities including the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health Valvira, and the police have criticised the liberalisation of alcohol policy. In a policy recommendation published in January 2025, the Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention Ehyt calls for research-based alcohol policy measures. Among other actions, they recommend limiting alcohol marketing via social media influencers with young audiences and placing warning labels on alcoholic products (Ehyt, 2025).

YOUTH'S PERCEPTIONS ON ADAM AND ITS ROLE IN ALCOHOL DRINKING

This section presents the results of qualitative interview data into young individuals' perceptions and experiences with alcohol marketing. We present our interview and analysis methods, followed by a thematic analysis of perceptions of and exposure to alcohol marketing, knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol regulation, and attitudes towards and drivers of alcohol consumption.

Analysis methods

We analysed the data using deductive content analysis. The initial coding framework was developed by the CIPPAL-ADAM research team. We applied this to the Finnish context to ensure best possible comparability. The coding framework also allowed for an inductive component based on country-specific findings. For this, we included additional codes to describe themes that had not been pre-defined in the original framework.

PR produced the first round of coding based on the initial framework using qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. VM double-checked coding and any disagreements were discussed to reach inter-coder agreement. We discussed all additional codes and decided on their inclusion based on mutual agreement.

The findings are presented thematically, reflecting the original codes. The main themes were attitudes towards alcohol consumption, exposure to and perceived effects of alcohol marketing, knowledge of and attitudes towards alcohol regulation, and drivers of alcohol consumption.

We also provide some descriptive statistics when appropriate for the presentation of results.

We provided all interviewees with information about the study and their rights. Participation was voluntary and all participants could withdraw from the process at any time. We also provided all participants with the contact information of the research team in case they would have any additional questions. Participants received a moderate compensation for their time (a €15 online giftcard).

All participants were asked for informed consent. Based on the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK), over 16-year-olds can give informed consent without permission of their parents and for this reason the interview study did not require an additional ethical evaluation. We followed guidelines of good research practice and conduct throughout the research process.

Digital culture and attitudes towards digital advertising

All interviewees used several social media platforms and spent more than two hours browsing social media daily. The minimum reported time of internet or social media usage was two hours and the maximum eight hours daily. The most used social media platform was Instagram; 19 out of 20 interviewees reported using it regularly. This finding may partly relate to our recruitment strategy that involved advertising the study on Instagram. In addition to Instagram, most used Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube. A minority of the interviewees reported also using other social media platforms such as X, WhatsApp, Facebook, Threads, Discord and Reddit.

Most interviewees used TikTok frequently. However, some interviewees brought up their conscious choice to not use TikTok, either because they felt the video streaming service is too addictive or because they were concerned about data privacy and security issues.

Most of the interviewees described themselves as passive social media users, meaning that they mostly follow other people's posts and do not create any content of their own. Only two interviewees reported posting content daily. A few interviewees noted that Instagram serves them as a way to keep and organise memories such as holiday pictures or other special occasions, rather than a means of communicating with others.

Regarding other internet use, following the news on websites like Helsingin Sanomat, Yle, MTV and Ilta-Sanomat was mentioned by five interviewees. Other reported websites included Wikipedia, second hand online marketplace tori.fi, Spotify and the online discussion forum vauva.fi. Some interviewees also used their school's website, gaming and online shopping websites, and e-book services. Half of the respondents did not mention using any websites regularly. In general, social media platforms seem to be by far the most utilised digital environments among the interviewees.

Nobody reported that their parents restricted their social media or internet use. Many felt that their usage is on an average level compared to peers, but that they would like to reduce their screen time. Some stated that social media is addictive and takes too much of their time, and that they try to control their own use for example by utilising applications to limit screen time.

Advertising and marketing: what comes most to mind?

Recalled alcohol advertisements, features and perceived effects

All interviewees were able to remember at least one alcohol advertisement that they had recently seen, and most of them recalled several advertisements. The recalled advertisements were seen in various contexts and surroundings, in digital and physical environments.

Long drink advertisements were by far the most common type of ads that participants recalled. Long drinks are a popular Finnish gin-based mixed beverage. Participants reported having seen long drink content on social media in the form of conventional advertisements as well as in influencers' paid promotion posts. In addition, participants had seen long drink advertisements on television and in stores. The interviewees described the advertisements as often conveying an image of a summery atmosphere and beach life or winter sports -related activities such as after ski parties. A few participants also remembered a campaign that focuses on the greyest day of the year in November (the original long drink mix is grey in colour). Some long drink advertisements were described as very simple, only portraying a picture of the can and the brand name on a digital poster. New long drink flavours are launched and marketed every year, and the very popular pineapple flavour from the summer of 2022 was mentioned in several interviews.

> *'By far the majority of the ads you see are those long drink ads.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'It had the picture and name of the can [Hartwall long drink], and then in the background a beach scene or something like that. -- I think that was a pretty effective ad. It was simple, the picture of the product was large in size, and it gave the impression that if you were hanging out in the summer, you would buy one and drink it.' (FI_13_M_18_non-drinker)*

Several interviewees also remembered advertisements by the beer brand Karhu ('bear' in Finnish). These advertisements had been seen on Instagram and Snapchat as well as on television. Some felt that Karhu's brand image has changed and that recent Karhu advertising campaigns were specifically targeted at young people. One interviewee described a Karhu advert on television:

> *'Karhu has those vintage ads, where there are people in their twenties. -- shot with a film camera, portraying a group of friends. And then they play some game, and then it turns out that these two friends like each other. Then there's a tagline like "Karhu encourages" or something like that. -- Of course, it's problematic to say to someone that Karhu encourages and only then you can talk about feelings. But yes, on the surface, it was very aesthetic and it kind of worked. I've actually been thinking about the image that Karhu has tried to change, from a rather old-school drunkard beer to a sort of youth hipster beer. They've been pushing a lot of those kind of more artistic ads, where there are young, different people. That's why that one stuck in my mind.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Apart from long drinks and Karhu beer, other advertised alcohol brands were mentioned in the interviews only as individual references. These include for example Baileys cream liqueur, the advertisement of which had created an attractive image of the product. After seeing this marketing video repeatedly on YouTube, the interviewee had googled Baileys, as he was not familiar with the product. When he found out that it was an alcoholic beverage, he concluded that he was not interested in tasting the product after all. Another example of confusion regarding a beverage's alcohol content was described by a participant, who had seen a poster advertising Aperol spritz in a bar. He was not familiar with the drink before, and at first, he thought it was a soft drink as it was depicted as a refreshing summer beverage.

> *'It just seemed like a soda commercial, the same way Jaffa [a Finnish orange soda brand] could have been advertised.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Some generic beer offers on grocery store newspaper advertisements were mentioned by two interviewees, but neither recalled the specific brands. Also, some billboards on the street outside bars or in shopping malls had been seen advertising alcoholic beverages. One interviewee remembered an Instagram advertisement by Alko, the Finnish alcohol monopoly distributor. Another respondent recalled seeing an advertisement for a newsletter by a wine importing company Viinimaa while browsing a news website.

One interviewee recalled advertisements by two beer brands, Guinness and Brooklyn Brewery. In both cases, the positive image created by these brands had stood out and made their marketing memorable. In the case of Guinness, our participant noted that he had been impressed by the company's Instagram profile. The participant further noted that interaction on social media accounts was an effective way to create a positive brand image.

> *'They often respond to the comments that people post on their content. And then they just throw in some new joke after someone has already posted something funny. And they want it to be shared. It's like they're building the brand, and it's really effective marketing.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*

The same interviewee also mentioned an advertisement by Brooklyn Brewery, in which a person is walking on the street and comes across a can of beer. Similarly to the social media presence by Guinness, the participant described how Brooklyn Brewery had been able to create a positive and memorable brand image:

> *"He stumbles upon a rainbow-colored beer can and grabs it, and then he meets some friends there. It's probably to show the company's positivity towards sexual and gender minorities. -- As I also have a positive perspective on these minorities and perhaps belong to them myself, it creates a better image and feeling." (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*

A unique environment for exposure to alcohol marketing is the tax-free shops on cruise ships sailing from Finland to Estonia or Sweden. Many interviewees recalled seeing alcohol advertisements in this context. Unlike alcohol resellers on the mainland, tax-free shops on ships can provide customers with tasting samples of alcoholic beverages, and there are often campaign offers for cheap alcohol. Many interviewees shared their experiences from student cruises, where they had come across marketing targeted specifically towards their age group. An example of this is Shaker, a ready to drink alcoholic beverage with caffeine. It was displayed during a high school senior cruise in a tax-free shop with large advertising posters and tasting samples. Two interviewees describe their experiences as follows:

> *'There were young people [on the poster] and then they had those drinks, and it gave the impression that with this you can party for longer, you know. -- Maybe the reason it stuck in my mind was that you were able to taste it there. And there were big ads. -- I bought it, all my friends bought it, everyone had it in their shopping basket.' (FI_14_F_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'A good example is Hartwall Shaker, a new product that came out at the beginning of this year. It's very rare to see completely new alcohol product groups like this succeed, but I think they were marketed a lot both in real life and on social media. For example, I remember that I was on a cruise at the time, and they gave out samples of this. And then nowadays in many bars, especially with a young clientele, you can get it and it has become such a well-known drink.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Main features and reasons for remembering

Several reasons contributed to remembering and liking specific recalled alcohol advertisements. The frequency of seeing an advertisement was mentioned by many interviewees. Sometimes high visibility was regarded as annoying, but it nevertheless made the advert memorable. Other factors that contributed to recall and positive image included music, the novelty of products, bright colours, and impressive visual effects and logos. Especially female participants highlighted the appearance of a beverage as a notable reason for liking it.

> *'I like the color yellow, so the pineapple long drink, the yellow can, has stuck in my mind. -- For me, if it's somehow brightly colored or nice-looking, the appearance has a lot of influence on buying it. Maybe in marketing, it can be something colorful or eye-catching, visually nice-looking. Because if people take pictures with, say, some alcohol, it's good that the can is already a nice color and pretty. It's cooler to pose with that yellow can than with, say, some blue Pirkka [low-cost brand] beer can, if you think about it.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'When you turn 18 and a new flavour comes out, you get a little interested in it. -- If I remember correctly, the ad said it was going to be the hit of the coming summer, which referred to the pineapple long drink.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I think both companies have really well-designed logos, Guinness having the musical instrument and Brooklyn with the big letter B. So they are really memorable logos, and the visual aspect of their marketing is really good. For example, a pint of Guinness, when it has their special foam on top, it is already a really memorable sight.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*

Simplicity and informative content were considered memorable by some participants, who had seen long drink advertisements on social media:

> *'It was a simple ad. It was all right. I've tried the products since then, both flavours, so in that sense the ad worked. There was nothing unnecessary about it, it just got straight to the point. (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'It's a pink long drink and its flavour is maybe some kind of pink grapefruit. It has a basic advertisement-style blue background, so that the pink contrast is really clear.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*

One interviewee found memorable a long drink advertisement featuring a song specially commissioned by the brewing company Hartwall. The song, entitled Harmaa rinne (Grey slope), was played on popular radio stations some years ago, and at the time of its release it was not made clear that it was a commercial collaboration between the artists and the brewery. Our interviewee described the song as catchy and helpful in remembering the advertised product.

> *'The last one I remember, I guess it's the Harmaa rinne commercial because it's always on the air, everywhere. That's the one that stuck in my mind. -- There's something about mountains in it. I don't remember the details, but they're singing the Grey Slope song in the background and they're advertising the long drink. I don't remember much more about it. -- That commercial is good in the sense that it sticks in your mind. And then you remember the product, since it also has the song, which I guess most people are familiar with; it's the kind of thing that might play in your head.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Some interviewees mentioned seeing marketing for alcohol-related services or products, such as cruise companies' offers or web shops that ship alcohol from abroad. While browsing a foreign website, a participant had come across an advert for a food box service that included wine. One interviewee had seen alcohol advertisements while downloading movies from an illegal streaming website. Another participant had been exposed to alcohol advertising while watching an American YouTuber's video, where the content creator had shared their computer screen and, on the website, there was an alcohol ad.

> *'For example, sometimes there are advertisements on the internet about how you can order [alcohol] from abroad at a cheaper price. And then there are advertisements from some cruise ship companies stating what kind of discounts they have. -- then I can decide that okay, I'll go on this ship next time, because there are such and such offers there.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*

Liking an advertisement did not directly cause the interviewees to want to taste or buy the product in question. Some interviewees stated that they do not like a certain type of alcoholic beverage, for example beer or long drinks, but nevertheless found the advertisements entertaining or interesting. A different reaction was described by a participant who said that he ignores beer advertising because he does not like beer. In his case, however, a product he is not yet familiar with might arouse his interest.

> *'So yeah, I think it might attract some people. I don't drink long drinks at all, so it didn't really stir anything up for me. But I think it's a pretty good ad anyway.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I'm more affected by ads that feature drinks that I've already found to be good or that are a completely new type of drink, but for example, I don't like beer at all. If I see a beer ad, I just skip it immediately, I'm not interested in it at all.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*

ADAM exposure: perceived effects and attitudes

All interviewees had come across some form of alcohol marketing. Most interviewees reported seeing alcohol marketing in various surroundings, such as television, newspaper advertisements, signboards outside stores or bars and on social media platforms. However, exposure was not uniform across the sample, with some having seen a lot of marketing content and others significantly less. This variation did not appear to depend on age or other background factors. The interviewees' perceptions on the definition of marketing also varied: one respondent regarded all social media posts with any kind of alcohol portrayal as advertisements, while another did not recall ever seeing alcohol marketing outside of social media.

Alcohol-related content on social media platforms

Apart from conventional advertisements, the interviewees were exposed to various types of other alcohol-related content. On social media, many described seeing alcohol in their friends' posts from parties or nights out. Alcohol-related content was used in interacting with friends and as a source of new and interesting ideas related to alcohol. Sharing alcohol-related content with friends on social media platforms was often related to humour and irony, but also included recommendations or informative content. Some interviewees explained that they share tips about new alcohol products worth trying, and bartending and craft beer content was also shared on social media among friends. Ideas for drinking games or challenges were perceived as interesting content. The sharing of alcohol-related content was also mentioned as a factor effecting the social media platform's algorithm, increasing the amount of similar content on the feed.

> *'I have a group of friends who we like to make cocktails with and we are interested in these things, so we share them and send them to each other. Then maybe we'll test them out the next time we see each other.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I had a lot of friends who had turned 18 before me, so that had an effect. When people send you links like "hey, when you turn 18, try this", then it [the algorithm] starts to suggest it even more.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Pineapple long drink was a big thing; I must have heard from over twenty people how good it tastes. That was crazy!' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*
>
> *'There has been a trend on YouTube called "answer or drink". Posts like these can create ideas like hey, let's try this ourselves. Let's play truth or dare or some other game like that, and then we play answer or drink. You can get ideas like that from social media.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'My good friend is a bartender, so I send them some related content, like brewing content that interests them since they're in that business. Many of my friends don't necessarily drink or have never drunk at all, so we also send each other sober content like that.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I think cocktail videos are nice to watch because I don't drink alcohol which doesn't look pretty. So generally speaking, when a cocktail video comes on and it's so pretty and pink and sparkly, I'm immediately like "Oh, that's alcohol," like I get this wow-feeling because it hasn't been that many years since I've been familiar with alcohol. There's something surprising and exciting about it for me. (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*

Alcohol-related influencer content was seen very commonly by our interviewees. There seems to be a significant grey area regarding content created by popular social media accounts, as it is not always easy to distinguish if these types of posts are about indirect alcohol marketing or commercial promotion, or just regular user-generated social media content. Interviewees had various experiences on ambiguous content that they were not sure whether it was advertisement or not: alcohol-related posts such as tasting videos, funny videos with drunk people goofing around and posts with instructions for making cocktails gain plenty of views. Some of these had hidden commercial content that was not clearly obvious to viewers:

> *'Yes, they should always clearly state if there is commercial cooperation or if there is any money involved, but it hasn't always been visible or at least it's so small or somehow at the very end it's mentioned that by the way, this is commercial cooperation.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*

Several interviewees reported seeing influencer videos where different alcoholic beverages are sampled and reviewed. Influencers receive PR boxes from alcohol producers and present the products in posts.

> *'I remember a tasting video from the Justimus [a popular Finnish YouTuber group] channel. They try out different beverages and of course they show the cans. First, all the products that are in the video are shown, and then they present them one by one, showing what it is like. Then they taste it. Then they give a review, and that's it.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Sometimes if someone [a social media influencer] organizes a party and they are given the drinks, then sometimes we can watch them together with my friends. And then they advertise that they got the drinks and taste them and make posts about it. We might watch things like that.' (FI_05_F_16_non-drinker)*

The pineapple long drink became so popular that some interviewees referred to it as a viral hit. It gained significant visibility in social media, both in paid collaborations and in other user-generated content.

> *'Well, last summer, when the pineapple long drink came out, it seemed like a lot of social media influencers were testing it even though it wasn't given to them for free. (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*

Another example of ambiguous social media content were humorous posts. Humour content, and especially alcohol-related memes, were very popular among our interviewees. Many participants characterised it as entertaining, but the content raised some speculation for possible hidden advertising. One interviewee suggested that this type of social media content is popular because it resonates with viewers, many of whom may have similar experiences with alcohol.

> *'Yes, we share some videos with each other. If we think a video is particularly funny, we just want to show it to everyone else. -- like someone just falls down some stairs or something.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'You see a lot of memes and jokes on social media. And you see a lot of videos where people are drunk and they try something stupid, they either succeed at it or they don't succeed at it.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Some of these humorous videos always seem to feature the same brands, so I sometimes wonder if there's some kind of hidden advertising going on. I would never have known about*

> *Jack Daniels as a whiskey brand if I hadn't seen those videos. I wouldn't have been able to recognize it by name, but it seems to be repeated very often.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I guess so many people drink and have bad experiences when they're drunk, too. Then in a way they [popular social media accounts] play on the fact that there's something these people can relate to and then get likes and shares through that.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Some noted a difference between Finnish and foreign content creators; one interviewee stated that they had only seen paid promotions in foreign social media influencers' posts. Information regarding alcohol harms had also reached this interviewee via foreign social media accounts. The majority of the influencer content was however published by Finnish content creators.

Another phenomenon occurring in the social media environment is the black-market alcohol sale, which is widely advertised via Snapchat. A 16-year-old interviewee stated that he had not seen alcohol marketing anywhere except for user-generated content on Snapchat. The black-market traders create Snapchat accounts, which are easily accessed and added by any Snapchat user regardless of age. The seller then announces the products for sale as well as the meeting place for delivering the orders. These posts only appear on the feed of Snapchat users who have added the seller's user ID, so people are not exposed to this type of content randomly.

> *'You just search for something like Helsinki alcohol and then you find 10 names and add them, and they sell strong liquor.' FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'There's just the information stated clearly, no pictures. Usually it's just a black picture, then a text for example that the product is 1/15, which means one of these is 15 [euros], and maybe two for 29 or something like that. They just state the information and then of course the percentages if there's alcohol. -- They just say the information and prices, there's no pictures or anything that would entice you. So they know that if you're seeing this story, you're already looking for something like this.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*

Social media content portraying a sober lifestyle was described in some interviewees' statements. It dealt with influencers' experiences from addiction recovery, and the respondents found the content interesting even though they themselves were active drinkers. Dry January challenge was mentioned by one respondent, who said that the social media trend had inspired his friends to participate in abstaining from alcohol for a month.

> *'Many of my friends took on the Dry January social media challenge. It spread pretty quickly in our circle, because December had been so crazy. So maybe that can be good, but in general I'm a little worried about the influence of social media.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'There have been content creators who have suffered from alcoholism, they have been addicted to it and have had to go through detoxification. -- that appeals to me much more than content that promotes alcohol. I am much more interested in the flip side, because it is seen so much less often.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I come across more content that's against alcohol. Things like why I stopped drinking and how my life has changed. I come across more of that than alcohol glorification. -- Maybe it's because the people I follow on Instagram are more of the type that have gone through some kind of struggle with alcoholism, people like skateboarders and tattoo artists. I think in general if you follow some left-wing content, then you'll probably see sober content too.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Exposure to other types of marketing

In addition to social media platforms, many interviewees reported seeing alcohol in other audiovisual media surroundings. Alcohol was portrayed in streaming service shows and movies, as well as on TV during commercial breaks. Watching conventional television was less common among our respondents, however some did report seeing alcohol commercials on late night TV.

> *'At night when I've watched [TV], there are a lot of annoying alcohol ads. Because isn't it after 8 or 9 when alcohol ads are allowed, and then there are a lot of them.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*

Some participants considered alcohol portrayal in movies or TV shows to be product placement and felt that alcohol or specific brands can be used to connote certain types of characteristics. Alcohol was portrayed both in a positive light, for example as an attribute of success, and as a sign of misfortune or hardship in a person's life. It was also seen as a part of the characters' everyday life. Reality shows were mentioned as a type of television programme in which alcohol is heavily featured.

> *'I've noticed in some movies or series that they try to create a brand image by what kind of people drink certain drinks. -- Like this is some kind of status symbol, and then this for underground and cool people, and then there's this for the tough guys. There's profiling that's associated with these drinks, of what's being placed there.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'Yes, I've noticed product placement, more so in TV series. You usually notice that they always drink the same beer and it's the same global brand.*
>
> *Interviewer: Which brand?*
>
> *Blanc, or something like that.' (FI_13_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'The image is really positive more or less everywhere. Like it's a part of life kind of thing. In series, there is always drinking pretty much without exception. And on TV, reality shows revolve around alcohol. (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Sponsorship as a means of marketing was recognised by some interviewees in the context of sports events and music festivals. One participant mentioned a student magazine sponsored by a Finnish beer brand Olvi. This magazine is published once a year before the First of May celebrations, and Olvi appeared in humorous comics and video clips in the release event.

> *'It's a May Day magazine published by university students, a kind of a humour magazine. There is a different theme pack every year. I remember when it was published, we were in a big hall and I remember that there were quite a lot of alcohol ads, beer and everything like that, because they sponsor it. – There's a comic entitled "Long live Olvi and democracy".' (FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Hartwall [a large Finnish brewery] sponsors some ice hockey match or something like that.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'In some sports context, some football story, even though I don't follow football, but I've seen it [sponsorship by alcohol brands]. Is it Heineken, and the other one was Budweiser, if I remember correctly. I've seen these in football. Maybe in Formula One too, when they're interviewed, there's a drink somewhere next to them. So, I've probably only seen it in these sports stories.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*
>
> *'And then at some festivals there are lots of areas or events sponsored by different alcohol brands.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Regarding alcohol marketing in physical environments, one interviewee noted that they had seen alcohol advertisements at a bus stop close to their home. They were certain of this even though alcohol marketing in public spaces has been banned in Finland since 2015. It may be possible, although unlikely, that they remember these advertisements from a time when they were under eight years of age. The same participant mentioned observing alcohol marketing while travelling in France, where their attention was drawn to the abundance of alcohol ads in the urban environment. Other physical surroundings where some interviewees reported seeing alcohol advertisements include bars, beer gardens, and grocery stores.

> *'In many stores, the alcohol sections have been laid out to look really attractive. There's all sorts of design and stuff. And then in restaurants and bars, different brands are very clearly displayed. Most of my friends who work in the [hospitality] business have some kind of key chains or something with [logos of] Jägermeister or some similar brand.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I remember when I went to France last year and there were alcohol ads everywhere, it was surprising. I mean, it was really surprising because in my everyday life I don't see much alcohol advertising.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

Attitudes towards alcohol advertising exposure

Overall views on alcohol advertising were split amongst our participants. Eight interviewees did not mind seeing alcohol advertisements while eight others did not care to see them. However, all participants except for one expressed some criticism towards alcohol advertisement. This reflects the interviewees' understanding of alcohol marketing as a complex issue. For those who did not mind seeing alcohol marketing content, the usual attitude was neutral or indifferent. Some participants who did not drink alcohol themselves still found alcohol-related social media content, such as taste tests or cocktail making videos, enjoyable or interesting to watch. Many felt that they are used to being exposed to alcohol marketing, and don't really pay any attention to it.

> *'It's just an ad, so it's fine. It doesn't make you think anything more than the average ad, so you sort of internalise it, but you don't usually react to it that much.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'If you drink anyway, does it really matter whether what you take off the shelf is out of free will or the influence of marketing?' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'There could even be a little more of it (marketing) or it could be more creative. I find it really boring, it doesn't really affect me when there isn't any alcohol marketing to young people that would somehow be appealing to emotions or interesting.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Several interviewees expressed their understanding of the alcohol industry's commercial objectives as a justification to marketing. In their opinion, companies have a legitimate right to advertise their products. While targeting alcohol marketing at young consumers was perceived unethical, it was nevertheless considered justified by the majority of our participants. Some reflected the contradiction between the reasoning and the harmful effects of alcohol marketing.

> *'Well, it has to be marketed somehow so that those companies get money. They have to market it. Otherwise, they would go bankrupt.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Of course it's not a good thing. But it's how you get new users, so I understand why they do it.' (FI_18_F_16_non-drinker)*

'Well, of course they know who buys their products the most, so for them it's just effective advertising, but I don't know if it's so terribly ethical to advertise those drinks specifically to really young people. They're doing what they have to do, I don't think there's anything wrong with that in itself.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)

'Alcohol marketing in itself, I understand why it's done and especially in a capitalist world where profit is wanted, so I understand why they want to market and make the new generation drink so that it remains a profitable business. But then at the same time, in my opinion, it is kind of wrong towards people in a certain way, that its normalisation is continued for the sake of marketing and companies. I don't think it is okay; especially in social media, commercial collaborations are completely unnecessary in my opinion, because they target vulnerable people.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)

'It shows that they [the alcohol industry] understand that young people drink a lot and that it is of course good for their business if they advertise to the group that is most likely to buy. But then you can of course consider whether it is terribly ethical, knowing that lifelong alcoholism can very well start at a younger age. One can question how justified it is. But then on the other hand you can also consider whether it is more about the person's own will, which is stronger than some advertisement. There is group pressure and other things, which can somewhat negate one's own will, unfortunately. It is not just the advertising that is the problem, but many other more structural things like that also affect it.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)

According to several interviewees, vulnerable groups such as young people or people with alcohol problems should not be exposed to alcohol marketing. Participants were particularly critical of alcohol being portrayed in a casual or positive way without bringing to light its negative effects. Showing very heavy alcohol consumption, for example in social media stories, was also seen as detrimental.

'When I watch something with my little brother, I'd prefer there weren't any alcohol ads in it.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)

'And especially the really young people, 15–16-year-olds, they get a lot of that content too. And it has that idealising effect, which I don't think is terribly good. Like drinking because it's cool or because others do it too, maybe that's the really negative side of it.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)

'I'm actually a little worried about the impact of online content on young people's alcohol consumption. It doesn't really concern me, but I know that for quite a few people it significantly increases their consumption. If there's a big event in town and then a lot of guys have been there drinking and post some funny stories about it, I think it has a big impact. It spreads really easily to quite a few people. If a couple of people have posted something like that, it will clearly be seen in the coming days that many people will go drinking and then it becomes a chain reaction. I don't know what to do about it, but it's a bit dangerous how it spreads like that.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)

'I don't think it's fair to people who have, for example, stopped drinking alcohol and then see advertisements against their will, in a way.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)

'In my opinion, with all intoxicants, we shouldn't be promoting them, because the risks are usually not made clear at all when they are advertised. I think it's a pretty bad thing to advertise them.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)

Many interviewees stated that drinking, even to the extent of alcohol misuse, is presented as normal in alcohol marketing or other alcohol related content on social or audiovisual media. They felt that they see it so much that it becomes an everyday part of the imagery on their smartphones:

> *'It becomes more of a commonplace thing when you see it that often.' (FI_18_F_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I think for the most part it has an effect because it normalises it so much and it's completely normal, it's like a part of life. Maybe you get that image from social media. But then I personally wouldn't say that it has affected my own attitude. I'm quite self-aware and I have really strong opinions about things, so I don't see that it has affected my opinions at all. FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I would say that it at least normalises it on some level. Through this content, even though it is of course just humour, you get used to concepts like binge drinking and other things like that, and it may no longer shock you so much to think about the use or abuse of alcohol or drugs in general. Because it is so normalised.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*

The social media content to which the interviewees were exposed varied quite significantly, apparently depending on their interests and behaviour in the digital environment. None of the participants made a distinction between the social media accounts they follow and the posts that appear in their feed as content suggested by the algorithm. Thus, it seems that our interviewees are accustomed to seeing a mixture of content created by their peers or other acquaintances, influencers and recommended accounts. Perceived reasons for high or low exposure to alcohol-related content were associated with social media algorithms. Some interviewees stated that they are very aware of the algorithm and try to use it as a tool to customise their feed.

> *'Whenever I browse Instagram and come across something new, if I'm more in contact with it, I share it, like it, save it, then more of the same type [of content] starts to appear.' (FI_13_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I've been aware of these algorithms and maybe avoided them a bit. Not intentionally, but I haven't liked that kind of [alcohol-related] content. And with some content I've clicked the "Don't recommend this kind of content" option.' (FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I don't really follow people who drink a lot of alcohol because I have no sympathy for them, and I don't identify with that. Of course, some things are funny and I can't deny that, but frankly, I try to avoid watching those things as much as possible.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*
>
> *'All the social media content is nowadays based on what kind of content you have liked before. This means that if you watch a lot of Lego videos, you won't see any alcohol tasting videos. I don't think they [alcohol-related posts on social media] would attract or change people's opinions in any way. Although one might think so, but young people are not stupid at all, they do know. (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*

Perceived impact of alcohol advertising

The majority of respondents (N=13) stated that alcohol advertisements have had an effect on them and that they either have made or could make purchase decisions based on advertising. Many felt that alcohol marketing targeted at adolescents is definitely effective, as young people are interested in exploring alcoholic products. Still, many believed that others are more gullible and they themselves are not as affected by alcohol marketing as other young people.

> *'For example, when we were on a student cruise in my senior year, people knew about some new long drink flavour that had just come out. I don't know where they knew it from, but maybe from some advertisement "new flavour now" or something. And they bought a lot of it. So maybe it affects what they drink when they drink.' (FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'It kind of pushed us into the store and to taste it [pineapple long drink], because when you see it everywhere, and when it was such a viral hit, everyone around us was talking about it, so I had to try it too.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Yes, they [cocktail videos] are really interesting. It's always nice to hear about the background of some cocktails or the drinks, how they are made, and then maybe learn to make some cocktails myself. So yeah, I stop to watch them very often. -- If what they're drinking looks good, then I feel like I could order the same in a bar.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'Yes, I think if they advertise it in videos and speak highly of it, then I think it can increase the desire of young people to try it.' (FI_05_F_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I think it's completely normal, or it's so much a part of the social media environment that I don't even pay attention anymore. It's an advertisement or a collaboration or an event among others.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

A few respondents did not believe that alcohol marketing has any effect on young consumers. Some found the influence of peers, even to the extent of peer pressure, to be much more impactful on their drinking choices and habits.

> *'Well, not really, I don't think those [advertisements] would arouse any desire or anything like that. Because, well, half the pleasure of enjoying alcohol is that you do it with a friend. And those [advertisements] don't arouse anything. Sometimes you go to the store and see a juicy long drink, so fresh that it's basically soda, but then it also has that slightly intoxicating effect. But I don't want the long drink [in itself], I want to enjoy it with friends. For some people it might be different, but not for me.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I think people are able to decide for themselves. I guess they usually decide for themselves whether to drink or not. -- In my opinion, it doesn't make much difference that alcohol is advertised. Rather, the peer pressure that comes with it when others drink. So other people's drinking has more of an impact. (FI_03_M_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I don't think so [that marketing affects buying decisions]. Maybe some kind of product image, some long drink brand may have a strong hold on many young people who drink it because it's familiar and safe, and maybe a bit of a status symbol because it's more expensive. But I don't know anyone who would be affected by that. Maybe they just take the cheaper one which they can afford, and the brand doesn't affect them terribly.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Marketing or collaborations by social media influencers were perceived effective. Recommendations on favourite influencers' social media posts were considered as persuasive as those made by friends. Popular content creators, artists and athletes were considered quite the opinion leaders among their fans and followers. Sports sponsorships and brand visibility in e.g. football stars' interviews were mentioned as efficient means of marketing. Social media was considered a particularly effective platform for reaching young people. Some interviewees noted that exposure to

marketing may have a subliminal impact to one's decisions, so that one might not be aware of the influence.

> *'Just as they can increase the sales of a certain clothing brand or food, why not alcohol too. They can set an example, and especially young people admire and may look up to some influencers. So, if they advertise something, they could really promote the use of those alcohol products. They really have a big impact and it can happen without even realising it, so people don't necessarily think about how much they can really be affected. -- If an influencer collaborates with an alcohol brand, it will certainly appeal to young people in a different way than for example an alcohol commercial on the radio. So they would be [impactful] on platforms used by young people.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Some artist sponsorships would work pretty well for me, so if a music artist who I'm a fan of was sponsored by something or just posted with something, I'd probably be like "Oh, he or she likes that, so maybe I'll like it too since I like the music he or she makes."' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'Collaborations and sponsorships are also really good, as long as they know what they are sponsoring. Like gaming events, a lot of young people go to them, so you can easily get visibility and support from there too. There are many channels, as long as you get a lot of visibility and such.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'It definitely increases alcohol consumption, or at least the purchase of the brand in question. And especially when young people watch those [sports stars'] interviews, they certainly get the idea that this particular brand is much better than any other and then start buying it. (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*

When we asked the interviewees what kind of marketing they find particularly appealing to young consumers, they brought up various attributes. Repetitive advertising and brand recognition were considered to increase the likelihood to purchase a certain product. TikTok trends, which constantly appear on one's feed, were seen as very influential. Representations of young people in surroundings and situations particularly relatable to adolescents and young adults were regarded as persuasive. Some participants considered the portrayal of alcohol in a positive light for example on reality shows and teen movies as potentially impactful, as it can create a desire to enjoy a similar experience. It was also noted that young people may be particularly susceptible to this type of hidden advertising.

> *'I got a lot of them [long drink ads] at the beginning of the year, so when we went on a student cruise and I saw [it] there, I was just like, well, I'll buy it because I've seen it so much. (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'If the brand is familiar, it immediately adds to it [the effect of an ad]. And if I had never heard of that alcohol brand, I probably won't remember it. But then if it's a little more well-known, then it will leave an image in my mind.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Well, the first thing that comes to mind for me is this, which was a big thing last year, this pineapple [long drink]. Like on TikTok and stuff, the brand was an important thing. -- At least it drove me to taste it, I liked it and I bought it many times. And last year at some festival it was everywhere. So maybe it [the marketing] works, as I bought it many times.' (FI_14_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Apart from influencer and celebrity collaborations, physical advertisements in bars were regarded impactful. Once one has already made the decision to have a drink, an attractive advertisement seen at the right time may well have an effect on deciding which product one chooses. One participant stated that she had based her purchasing decisions on advertisements outside bars, but then again did not feel affected by digital marketing on social media.

> *'There are those billboards outside bars, I can say that I have more than once ended up buying the drink that is on that billboard because it looks good and it is displayed there and it is praised. Maybe in a situation like this. But based on the advertisement I come across on social media, for example, I don't think it has influenced the decision to buy or try it or anything.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Critical opinions towards the influence of alcohol marketing were also raised; some pointed out that there's no need to conform to the effects of marketing or social media content.

> *'All the young people think that you can't have fun without alcohol. Yes, you can; if an influencer makes a tasting video, for example, it doesn't mean that you must taste too.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*

Knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol regulation

Our participants were quite aware of the alcohol-related legislation. Although the law sometimes restricted their own behaviour, the restrictions were mainly seen as positive because they also protected others.

Knowledge

All interviewees were aware of at least a part of the regulative measures on alcohol marketing, but the level of knowledge varied. They had learned about the restrictions at school or from the news or other media. Some statements were also based on the interviewees' own observations. One respondent told us that she was interested in legislation and had therefore examined it by herself. Another participant had studied alcohol regulation in order to obtain an alcohol pass, which is required for working in licensed premises.

> *' At least I know they're allowed to be advertised, because online I see those ads all the time.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*

Restrictions on alcohol marketing on social media were less familiar to the interviewees. Some were quite surprised when they learned about the restrictions on alcohol marketing posts on social media platforms. Many participants stated that the regulations regarding alcohol marketing on social media platforms are not complied with. Also, minors had seen alcohol marketing on their social media feed; actual brand advertisements as well as influencer marketing such as brand collaborations.

> *'I've seen it [a Karhu beer ad] when I've watched Instagram or Snapchat stories, for example, there are these ads in between stories. I saw it there several times. It was really repetitive at the time of Pride. There was a rainbow-coloured Karhu can in it.*
> Interviewer: Was your age listed in your user account?
> *Yes, my age is there.*
> Interviewer: So you were 16 and you were targeted with alcohol advertising?
> *Yes.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

> *'I got the exact same [alcohol-related] content a couple of years ago when I wasn't allowed to drink alcohol yet. I noticed then that it would get through [to my social media feed].' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Attitudes towards alcohol control

Many opposed liberalisation, and the policymakers' role in harm reduction was widely accepted.

Many felt that there is no need for liberalising alcohol policy. A change in Finnish alcohol legislation, allowing the sale of alcoholic beverages of up to 8% alcohol by volume in grocery stores, came into effect during the time of the interviews and was commented on by many of our participants. Most of them did not feel the need to buy stronger alcohol in grocery stores, although some supported the increased availability of stronger alcohol.

> *'At least I myself, and I've also talked to my friends, think that now that the government raised the [alcohol percentage] limit on what you can buy at the grocery store, I don't think it was a good idea. I think the limit could have been clearer with what Alko can sell and what the grocery store can sell. (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I remember that some experts had criticized it because it could have bad effects on public health, so I don't know. Was it really necessary?' (FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I think the percentage limit could be raised directly to that, or gradually to something like 22% that you can buy at the age of 18. Like, for example, every two years or every four years, raise it, the next time to 11 and then 14 [percent], gradually raising it until you can buy all the mild beverages from the grocery store.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*

A few interviewees described the limits on alcohol sales hours as sometimes irritating, as they felt that at times it's difficult to get to the store before 9 p.m. Opinions both in favour and against these restrictions were expressed by those of our interviewees who had already turned 18; the minors did not comment on this issue.

> *'Maybe the time limit is sometimes annoying, that you can't buy anything after 9 p.m. I understand the purpose of it, but sometimes it's just annoying if you're going somewhere in the evening and you can't buy anything if it's too late. But otherwise I'm quite positive, I wouldn't change the legislation in this regard.' (FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Sometimes it's annoying that the sale of alcohol in the evening has already ended, I've thought why are there regulations like this, why can't I buy anything at half past nine anymore. But it's still good that it's regulated, because for some people alcohol is actually a problem, so it can almost be a relief that it's regulated a little. In an ideal world, no one would have a problem with alcohol and it could be sold at any time, but we don't live in that kind of world. So it's quite fair that there's something like this.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I think the time limit that after 9 p.m. you can't buy [alcohol] is actually pretty pointless. (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

The age limits for purchasing alcohol were also discussed, and opinions were expressed both for and against the application of different age limits for mild and strong beverages. Some participants supported lower age limits and others higher, while the majority considered the current practice appropriate. The rationale behind varying age limits between countries raised questions among the interviewees, as many had travelled to countries where different age limits are applied.

> *'It's good that young people don't get to drink really strong [alcohol] as soon as they turn 18. I think it's good that there are certain drinks that young people can't buy. It's like they are of legal age, but they're not old enough for that yet. – It can get reckless, you go out with your friends for the first time and drink really strong things, and that probably won't end well. (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Why is it allowed to [drink alcohol] at 16 in some [countries] and 20 in others; there is a 4 year age difference, so it's pretty wild to think that in some European country, being 4 years younger means you can drink but then for example in some Asian country you can't.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I think we could raise the drinking age to 21, like in the United States where the age limit is twenty-one. And then we could lower the alcohol limit [for driving] to zero, like in Estonia and these other countries. So that you can't drink at all.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*

The Finnish alcohol retailer Alko's monopoly sparked some critical opinions, but also support. The tax revenue from alcohol sales was appreciated, with one respondent stating that the tax on alcohol could even be increased if it brought more revenue to the state. However, he also told us that he buys most of his alcohol from Estonia because it is cheaper there.

> *'Finland has done those things [regarding alcohol policy] quite well. Taxation is quite high, which makes me go to Estonia too. Then I buy something there for over a hundred euros at a time and then it lasts for about six months. That way, I won't buy much of anything from Finland.*
> Interviewer: Do you think high taxation in Finland is a good thing or a bad thing?
> *Of course, one could experiment by raising the alcohol tax by 5% and then see if the tax revenue increases or not and then draw a conclusion based on that. I don't know the figures, so I can't say for sure. I would say that whatever generates more tax revenue for Finland is the better solution.' (FI_09_M_19_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I think it's good that Alko brings in tax money. I don't think there's any other reason for it anymore. As the 8% [alcoholic beverages] were introduced in stores, it [the percentage limit for grocery stores] is probably going to start rising higher and higher. -- Alko as an institution is a bit debatable.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'But then this Alko monopoly, it has benefits in the sense that it reduces harm by limiting use. But then again, it's a bit like, is it such a vital monopoly worth maintaining? It has its advantages, that's perhaps what I'm most critical about, but on the other hand I don't know if releasing the restrictions is such a smart decision either. It arouses the most scepticism, but I don't know the solution.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'The Finnish model of having a state monopoly, Alko, is a pretty good idea in my opinion, which could perhaps be adopted elsewhere too.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Cultural aspects affecting legislative measures were discussed by an interviewee, who perceived the Finnish context especially challenging. He found the alcohol culture in Finland particularly focused in binge drinking and reckoned that without strict control measures the situation would get out of hand. The current control measures were criticised for ineffectiveness by another respondent.

> *'I think the cultural aspect of this is really tricky for legislation. Because it seems to me that without these laws the whole country would be upside down pretty quickly. (FI__11_M_18)*

> *'One can clearly see that they [alcohol control measures] don't work even though it's restricted so much. Isn't there more alcoholism in Finland than in other countries even though that is restricted so much? So clearly it isn't doing terribly much, even though they are trying to restrain it. I don't know what the difference would be if all alcohol was in the grocery store or something like that.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Attitudes towards alcohol marketing regulation

Attitudes towards current legislation and alcohol control measures were positive with almost no exception. The interviewees supported restricting alcohol advertising, especially when it comes to children and young people. They agreed that it is the legitimate duty of the authorities to impose limits on alcohol marketing. However, no controversy was seen between the limitations and justifications of alcohol marketing, as the respondents were quite sympathetic to the alcohol companies' operating requirements.

> *'Considering the fact that alcohol causes a lot of problems, it is ethically right to have some kind of restriction to it. Everyone can certainly find the alcohol products without having them rubbed in their face. There are big alcohol shelves in stores, so everyone can find them there.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'Of course, when it comes to a company, they practically have to market their own product, but then it's good that there are certain rules about how they can market it.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*

Some called for stricter regulation and even suggested that alcohol is a product that would sell itself without advertising:

> *'It's a good thing that there are some kind of restrictions, but they could be even better, or stricter. Ads could be completely removed from radio and TV, and from sporting events, too.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*
>
> *'The less it's advertised, the better. But it's hard to say, in a way I feel that those [restrictions] may not be enough, but it's good that they exist.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I think there would be buyers for those products even if they weren't advertised.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Many interviewees stated that the rules regarding alcohol marketing in social media are not followed. In their experience it is possible to share and comment alcohol marketing content. In fact, many interviewees were surprised when they heard about existing legal restrictions regarding alcohol marketing on social media. Critique was expressed towards the monitoring of the control measures on social media platforms.

> *'Yes, you can turn off the comments, but very few people do that. And videos can be shared anytime, you can even screen record them and share them - or you can usually share them directly. It's possible to share them and they are shared quite a lot.' (FI_05_F_16_non-drinker)*
> *'But the fact that it [alcohol] can still be marketed, for example through commercial collaborations, is quite strange in my opinion, because if you do a commercial collaboration, it will definitely be seen by minors. You can't draw the line; if the idea [of the legislation] is that you can't market to under-18s, then by doing a commercial collaboration through a content creator, you can completely bypass it.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

> *'But then, how is the implementation monitored, at least from my own experience, it feels like it can be a bit lacking. Especially when it comes to social media. Of course, it's good to have rules, but it would also be good for them to be implemented.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

The alcohol companies' perspective was considered, as the importance of social media platforms as marketing channels was recognized by our interviewees. One respondent, who had found the interaction on Guinness' Instagram account entertaining, reckoned that if the social media advertising restrictions were strictly enforced, alcohol companies would lose incentive to operate on their social media accounts in Finland. Another interviewee expressed criticism for regulation being in favour of big corporations with large budgets for marketing.

> *'Those companies are certainly interested in the fact that this may not be so strictly regulated. These people [social media influencers] have a large audience; if we cooperate, then through this person we can introduce our product to really young people, we can present it much more widely than we can directly through advertising. So it will definitely be taken advantage of. -- There is content that really praises some products with no mention of it being a commercial collaboration. Of course, some of those videos may be about some user just sincerely liking a certain product, but then when it comes from many directions, you start to wonder if this is so honest. -- I find it somewhat problematic how social media is used to kind of circumvent these regulations and how they somehow manage to put their own products really deep into people's minds.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'The fact that sharing or commenting isn't allowed, that was kind of surprising to me. Yeah, I kind of see the point behind it, what it wants to limit. But I think that's impossible to keep in force, and then if it were really kept strictly in force, then it would remove all desire from those [social media] accounts to continue their activities in Finland because of the legislation. Then they would be practically just ads again, they would lose the very human touch that I was talking about earlier, so it would practically completely eliminate their possibility of doing something like that, when you can't particularly talk positively about it [the products] in the comments. (FI__17_M_18)*
>
> *'Yes, it's quite strict, it might hold back the whole alcohol market. Maybe some new brands won't be able to get in so easily since they can't play that well there. No wonder there are just those long drink ads, because it's quite easy [for the large brewing companies] to just throw some ad on TV. (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Attitudes towards drinking and main drivers for drinking

Personal habits and attitudes towards drinking

Among the interviewees, alcohol was strongly associated with parties, holidays, and social gatherings. It was described as something that can lift the mood or make events more fun. Certain celebrations, such as the first of May or the end of the school year, were described as events where alcohol is present. Discovering new taste experiences was also mentioned. For the active drinkers, alcohol was an important part of spending time together, and it was also discussed often in their friend groups. Some found it difficult to imagine that someone who does not drink would spend time with them.

> *'It's a significant part of my social life. All the get-togethers always involve alcohol.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*

The most common type of attitude towards alcohol included some kind of boundaries. All interviewees were aware of the risks and downsides to alcohol, and binge drinking was regarded as unfavourable, albeit common, behaviour. Many reflected the individual, social and cultural complexities of alcohol issues.

> *'You can use alcohol however you like. Of course it's good not to drink too much. A little tipsiness is probably the best option if you decide to drink. But then it's also true that you can have fun without alcohol, I myself am living proof of that.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'In appropriate amounts it is not harmful. But then in excessive amounts it causes many disadvantages.' (FI_05_F_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Alcohol is fun with friends as long as you use it in good quantities. In my opinion, it's no different from any other drug. Except that it's legal. And everyone knows that it also has its negative sides. But I don't have any deep thoughts about it otherwise. We often joke with friends that it's the drink of God or something like that, but then there's also irony involved.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*

A 17-year-old interviewee explained that they had had a glorifying attitude towards heavy drinking before but had now realised that it's more fun to just have one or two drinks and focus on enjoying their friends' company.

> *'It could be related to Finnish culture, but also to what we see in the media, when you think of parties, it usually involves pretty heavy drinking. Especially when you're a little younger and you've just started drinking, then you kind of look up to it.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

Money was a factor influencing the interviewees' drinking. Some stated that they do not want to spend their hard-earned money on alcohol. Many types of alcohol were also regarded too expensive, and cheap drinks or happy hour offers were in turn considered appealing.

> *'It's my friends and acquaintances who affect my drinking decisions. The more often I get invited to a night out, the more often I go. But then another thing is money, how expensive alcohol is and how much money I have available.' (FI_16_M_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'It probably depends on how much money I can afford to put into alcohol. Sure, it's nice to drink better drinks. And I know what the good drinks are on the shelf, but when I can't always take them, I just have to settle for a one-euro beer or something. That's probably it, how much money I have to spend.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Another potentially contributing factor to alcohol use among young individuals related to normalisation. Normalisation translated into curiosity and a desire to see why so many people consumed alcohol. For example, one 16-year-old interviewee contemplated her future decisions on alcohol consumption by reflecting on this normalisation aspect:

> *'I would probably prefer not to drink at all. But of course there's the fact that it is so common, so I would like to know why it is so common, and because of that I might want to try it. But I'll see what I think then.' (FI_18_F_16_non-drinker)*

Regardless of the interviewees' young age, many described a change in their own drinking habits or attitude towards alcohol. Many had gone through some introspection concerning their own relationship with alcohol. Some had had unpleasant or distressing experiences while drunk and wanted to cut down on drinking or had stopped altogether. One interviewee said that he finds it

difficult to stop drinking once he has started, so he tries to limit the occasions involving alcohol. Bad experiences with family members' or relatives' drinking were also quite common and had affected the interviewees' own attitudes towards alcohol.

> *'The decision not to drink is partly based on my own experiences in my close circle, what people have been like, even in my family. There have been some uncomfortable situations and I've noticed how unpleasant my relatives are when they're drunk.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I don't feel like drinking anything anymore, since there have been so many child welfare notifications about alcohol, I don't feel like drinking anymore.' (FI_03_M_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'I decided maybe six months ago that I wouldn't want to drink ever again. And so far it has been going quite well. -- it just came to me that there is no point in it. When you can be happy anyway, there is no use in drinking.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*

Buying strong spirits via Snapchat was mentioned in several interviews. The participants described this as a common practice utilized by underaged people who have no other means of obtaining alcohol. Since it is not practical for the alcohol sellers to stock large amounts of mild alcoholic beverages, they mostly offer strong spirits. Estimating the proper amount of hard liquor was considered difficult for adolescents, who may not have much experience in consuming alcohol. Our respondents would have preferred milder alcoholic beverages, and those who had older siblings relied on them to provide alcohol.

> *'You can always get alcohol and tobacco products through Snap. -- It's practically always strong spirits that are sold, sometimes you can get some six-packs. That's why, if you think about underage drinking in Finland, it's very much about hard liquor, unless there's an older sister or parent who buys. -- I've come across it many times, or heard stories from somewhere, that people have drunk alcohol for the first time and immediately bought hard liquor, because they haven't got access to anything else. It hasn't ended very well that way.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I only drank hard liquor when I was underage and haven't touched it since.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'It's a little harder for me to get milder drinks, so it's easy to overdo it. On the other hand, now that my friend's older sister is old enough, we can always give her money and then we can enjoy some beers with friends or something like that. So that's been a nice experience.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*

Non-drinkers

Reasons for choosing not to drink varied. Some stated that they had simply not felt like they wanted to, or that they are too young to have alcohol. Several interviewees expressed that alcohol is not necessary for having fun. Valuing one's own well-being was mentioned by one respondent as an incentive for abstinence. No one reported religion as a personal motive for sobriety, but two interviewees referred to religious reasons as factors affecting their peers' abstinence from alcohol. In peer groups, other motives included wanting to keep fit and focus on sports.

> *'Maybe it was just a personal decision that I wanted, I want to take care of my own well-being, so I've made choices that support my own lifestyle. How I want to look after myself and my own body and well-being.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Some non-drinkers had sometimes felt left out; they had for example not received invitations to parties or pub crawls. On the other hand, some preferred to spend time with other non-drinkers instead of exposing themselves to potentially unpleasant experiences in the company of drunk people. Thus, social bubbles consisting of drinkers or non-drinkers existed at least to some extent.

> *'Usually those people who don't want to drink or don't drink at all, or for some reason just don't feel like it, they're like "well, let's figure something out together". We quite often end up in two groups, where you choose either those who drink or those who don't. We're very rarely all in the same place.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Well, it's a bit like I'd rather stay away. It's just that if my good friends drink a lot, then I'll start to worry about them. Then I'd rather not go.' (FI_05_F_16_non-drinker)*

However, some interviewees described their friend groups as very inclusive. For them, it makes little difference if one drinks alcohol or not. These experiences apply to interviewees living in cities; peer pressure towards drinking was more commonly reported by respondents from rural areas.

> *'Some drink a lot and some don't drink at all during the same night. And both may be partying until the early hours of the morning. I don't think it makes any difference that some drink and some don't.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*
>
> *'I have really nice friends who I think are very positive about it. People mostly see it as a good thing and really respect it that I don't want to drink. People are cool about it and that's a really nice thing, I think it implies a healthy circle of friends.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*

Family rules and suggestions

All interviewees stated that their parents drink alcohol. Many interviewees' parents had bought alcohol for them when they were under 18, either to give them the opportunity to get acquainted with alcohol in a safe environment or to avoid them resorting to black market alcohol sales. It was commonly reported in the interviews that parents would let children have a little taste of alcohol, but consuming larger quantities of alcohol with parents was mentioned less often. One interviewee said that she had spent a night out at the bar with her mother, while another reported having drunk a large multi-pack of alcopops in her father's company. Raising a toast at a celebration was a typical occasion of consuming alcohol with one's parents. Family members were also referred to as role models for moderate drinking.

> *'When I was a minor, I was told that if you want to try alcohol, if you really have to, you'd better do it here at home than go downtown or to a park somewhere. I've been told that if you absolutely have to, then you'd better do it safely at home.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
> *'I was interested in alcohol when I was young and I wanted to try it, so we got to try it - illegal in itself because a minor can't drink alcohol, but a positive thing in the sense that both my parents bought all my alcohol when I was underage. And I have a much more positive experience of alcohol than a lot of people because I was trusted, I was able to do it safely at home - not everyone has that opportunity to have it in a safe environment, so they have to chug strong liquor in some car park.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*
>
> *'My parents do use alcohol, but it's moderate. So perhaps they have set a kind of example of moderation.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'My mother has always been the one who is sober and drives others around, so maybe that has made me feel like I can be like that too. That has probably also contributed to the fact that I don't feel the need for it.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Most interviewees' parents had not set strict rules regarding alcohol use. Many highlighted that it is their own responsibility to act sensibly. Some parents had given concrete advice on how to avoid the downsides of alcohol, for example to limit the intake to three portions per occasion or to stick to mild alcoholic beverages. In the case of three respondents, their parents had strongly advised them not to drink any alcohol before they turn 18. A 19-year-old interviewee's parents required that he keeps them informed of his whereabouts whenever he is out drinking, so that they can be sure that he's okay.

> *'I've been given some advice that you shouldn't drink spirits because it's easy to drink too much of them. Because the intoxication doesn't come right away, it's better to start with mild ones. I've been given that kind of little safety advice. There have been no proper restrictions.' (FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'I can think for myself. There are no limits set for me.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*

In some families, relatives who had suffered from alcohol-related problems were referred to as somewhat cautionary examples. Some interviewees had heard warnings from family members to not use alcohol as a means of escaping difficult emotions or other hardships in life. In one interviewee's family, alcohol was not discussed at all:

> *'It's been a bit of a taboo; we don't really talk about alcohol. No one really touches on other people's drinking. We've never actually talked about it.' (FI_08_F_18_weekly drinker)*

Many respondents' parents had advised them to call if they had some kind of problematic situation while drinking; this usually referred to having too much to drink. Despite their parents' guidance, several interviewees stated that they had not followed the advice or that they would feel embarrassed if their parents found out about their drunkenness.

> *'If your parents find out, or especially if your parents find out after you've drunk too much. It's very embarrassing.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*

Peers' attitudes and influence

The respondents described their peer groups' drinking habits and attitudes towards alcohol as quite diverse. Many noted that their closest friends have similar habits as themselves, but that there is more variety regarding their wider peer group or for example classmates.

> *'Among my classmates there are a few who don't want to drink at all. Then when we've gathered in a park or on the beach, some drink quite a lot of alcohol. But most of them drink maybe 1, 2 or 3 cans of long drink (a popular Finnish alcopop) or something; a little bit, but still in a neutral way. So they're happy to take it, but it's not cool in any way if you drink a lot. If someone drinks too much, others don't really like it.' (FI_01_M_19_monthly drinker)*
> *'Well, in general, in my friends group, there's a pretty positive attitude. Alcohol is used quite much, or I'd rather say very much. I don't think getting drunk three times every weekend is terribly healthy anymore. And then unfortunately, with quite a lot of people, if you're going out with someone, it turns out that you can't have fun without drinking. So there's also a kind of a pressuring atmosphere. But then in my closest group of friends you drink if you drink, do if you do, it's maybe a bit freer. Kind of neutral. Sometimes it's nice (to drink), but sometimes we just go to a bar and sing karaoke, we don't need anything more than water. So there's not as much emphasis on heavy drinking, you know.' (FI_12_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Drinking culture among students was discussed in several interviews. High school seniors' cruises were portrayed almost as a rite of passage into drinking. For some respondents, the cruise had been the first time they drank alcohol. Purchasing alcohol in the cruise ship's tax-free shop or in Tallinn's alcohol outlets, as well as partying in nightclubs during these trips, had served as an introduction to alcohol consumption among peers. School's out -parties and celebrations on the first of May were important occasions for many interviewees and were strongly associated with drinking, as was student culture in general. These types of events were also commonly represented on social media. Some interviewees described a feeling of missing out when they did not attend these celebrations.

> *'Generally speaking, when I see alcohol on social media, it's associated with having fun. For example, May Day or something like that, when you watch first of May videos on TikTok, they're full of people wearing student overalls and stuff like that, it looks fun. -- May Day content is fun because when you want to experience that student May Day yourself, it's like, "oh wow, that's what it's like."' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'[In peers' social media posts) there's definitely this "ha-ha I'm having so much fun and wow I'm so drunk and look what funny thing happened last time we were drinking". Yes, people post a lot – it's a pretty good thing among young people, or at least it's portrayed really positively.' (FI_11_M_18_weekly drinker)*

Many interviewees shared experiences of occasions when their friends had had too much to drink. Although none of the respondents described themselves as binge drinkers, heavy alcohol consumption and its glorification occurred in their peer groups. Some respondents had experienced peer pressure towards drinking, which appears to be more common among interviewees living in the countryside. Experiences of peer pressure were mentioned both by minors and those over 18 years of age.

> *'There are several times when I have held my friend's hair and been there for them when they vomit. I have noticed that people compare how much they have drunk, like "I drank a whole bottle of liquor once" and then brag about how much they have drunk. You can see it at parties, where the one who drinks a lot is somehow the tough guy.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*
> *'In general, it's not really OK if you don't drink, I must say. But then if there's a reason for not drinking, like if I'm driving and can't drink, then it's OK. But there has to be a reason for not drinking. So it's a bit of a pressuring atmosphere there, or quite a pressuring atmosphere.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*
>
> *'When I was younger and I didn't drink and all my friends drank, I was often asked why you don't drink. And not like OK, don't drink, but more like "you're so boring when you don't drink". That kind of attitude.' (FI_14_F_18_monthly drinker)*

Friends' habits were most often mentioned as incentives for individual drinking decisions. None of the interviewees stated that they would drink alone; alcohol was strongly linked to social gatherings among friends. Seeing peers' alcohol-related social media posts was regarded as having an effect on young people, encouraging them to drink. However, it was considered the responsibility of the individual to behave and refrain from excessive drinking.

> *'Well, I'd say it's my friends that have the biggest influence. I never drink alone -- If my friends suddenly decided to just have soda all night at the bar, I wouldn't start drinking alone. So it's nicer if we drink, we drink together, but of course I don't force anyone to drink. If no one else*

drank, I wouldn't feel the need to drink either. It's the friends who influence my alcohol consumption.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)

'Another thing is the [social media] stories of teenagers themselves. Someone says they got to drink alcohol today, it was fun and it tasted really good. -- Someone begins to tell this story, another gets excited, then they both say that they've been drinking alcohol. Then a third one gets excited, then they drink together and so on, and then it becomes a big circle. This happened in my school, especially in the ninth grade. People started sharing that they drink alcohol and that it's not a bad thing.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)

'It's your own responsibility not to do anything stupid while drinking. – There's no use in blaming others, for example, if someone has said "hey, come on and drink now, there are extra drinks, you can have them", of course it's your own responsibility whether you go and drink or not.' (FI_02_M_18_monthly drinker)

Perceived risks

All interviewees were well aware of risks attributable to alcohol consumption. They listed alcohol-related harms extensively and reflected their significance on individual and societal levels. The most commonly mentioned risk was addiction, which was mentioned by 16 respondents in our dataset. Many had a personal connection to alcohol use disorder through family members or relatives. Intoxication and the challenges in estimating a suitable amount of alcohol were often mentioned, and for example alcohol poisoning, accidents and dangerous behavior were associated with inebriation.

'Well, if it becomes a way of life, if its use becomes daily. It's basically alcoholism. I know because there have been issues related to it in my family, which is why I think if it becomes a way of coping with some life situation, then it's really bad for your health. The situation doesn't get any better, it just gets worse because the problem doesn't go away with alcohol, but it just creates more problems with it, if you try to use it in this way.' (FI_10_M_19_monthly drinker)

'First of all, a lot of people have alcoholism, it takes away their lives. And then it's bad for the economy because some people lose their ability to work or their whole life is nothing but alcohol. It causes a lot of illnesses and then also violence, many people become violent or angry or aggressive with alcohol and there can be drug abuse or things like that. And then of course drunk driving, people getting behind the wheel. There can be drownings and accidents and mental health problems, which can get worse even though some people try to medicate them with alcohol. So it has a pretty broad impact on people's lives. And it can be quite negative. For some people it can be a good weekend thing, not daily, but for others it can be every day and that is not good for anyone's health, for their loved ones or for anything.' (FI_07_F_19_monthly drinker)

Many respondents made quite specific remarks about alcohol's detrimental effects to physical and mental health. Some emphasised the harmful effects on young people's developing brains. The risk of organ damage and cancer were pointed out as well.

'If you use alcohol as a child and young person, I guess your brain stops developing at some point too early, if you use it at a very young age. You don't grow taller; you don't get the hormones right. And then the short-term effects are at least that you may have problems sleeping or the quality of sleep is worse. You can't get a good night's rest when the quality of sleep is worse. You also get overweight because there's quite a lot of energy in alcohol. And then of course addiction, that's pretty bad too. And then somewhere in between you get

> *depression, if you drink long enough you'll get depression for sure. Your loved ones leave you, because who would want to be around an alcoholic.' (FI_06_M_17_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Alcohol can stop a young person's puberty, or have bad effects on a young person's puberty.' (FI_03_M_16_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Alcohol is a proven carcinogen; it is in the same class of carcinogens as tobacco. And then it is harmful to the liver, as far as I know, it contributes to the development of fatty liver.' (FI_17_M_18_non-drinker)*

Some interviewees brought up the risks in mixing alcohol with other substances or medication. The spiking of drinks in bars and sexual abuse while intoxicated were mentioned, and minors were considered particularly vulnerable to being drawn into potentially dangerous situations.

> *'Of course, another risk with alcohol is alcohol mixed with something else. One of my friends, he's on an antidepressant, and then when he takes that and then alcohol, it's not a nice mix. And then nowadays when there are all kinds of other drugs, mixing them can actually be dangerous.' (FI_15_M_16_monthly drinker)*
>
> *'When you drink alcohol and you don't understand things that well anymore, then for example in bars it's easy for people to put some pills in your drink and then you drink it. But then you don't necessarily even realise it at first because alcohol can make your head spin anyway. Or you might black out without any drugs. I think there's a risk that you don't necessarily even know that you've been drugged.' (FI_04_F_18_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Especially if you want [alcohol] as a minor, in addition to it being sold on Snapchat, there's also the risk that someone will offer it to you for free and then when you don't know the risks, you go to some stranger's place and then anything can happen there. These are unfortunately common things, the risks are much more serious than just "oh no, I drank too much" and then you vomit.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

Cultural influence on alcohol consumption

Cultural factors and norms were discussed in a few interviews. Some respondents had lived in other European countries and experienced the differences in alcohol culture, which gave them perspective to evaluate the national characteristics. Heavy drinking was considered typical in the Finnish context: in Finland, the motive for drinking alcohol to become intoxicated was regarded normal. However, these interviewees didn't express the need to conform to a stereotypical drinking pattern.

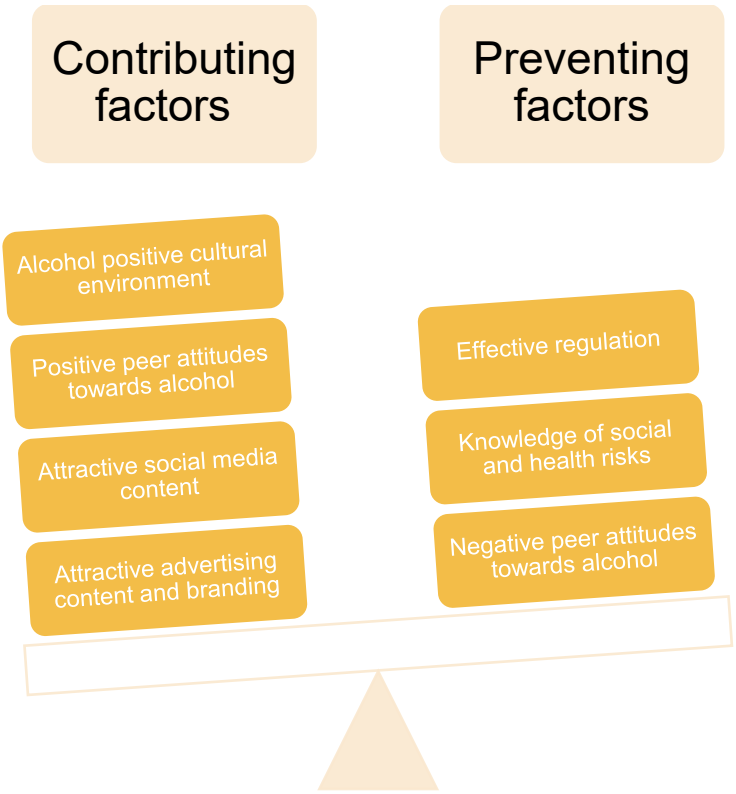
> *'(In our group of friends) there are several people with a Spanish background, so we have a slightly different attitude towards alcohol consumption than Finnish youth. That has probably helped with the fact that our alcohol consumption is probably lower than average, at least for people our age. -- In Spain, it's common for adults to drink alcohol around young people too. Children are taken to a bar and the child gets a juice, and we drink beer, so it's somehow normalised. And because adults and young people are usually in the same environment, it's seen really badly if you're drunk, like clearly drunk. It's considered that you don't know how to drink properly, like you don't know how to control yourself, so that's what's conveyed to young people. That it's really embarrassing to be drunk, it's really embarrassing to fall over and scream and all that while drunk. I think the culture is just different, that it's not acceptable on any level to be drunk in any context.' (FI__11_M_18)*
>
> *'German and French people basically drink more alcohol than Finns. But they might drink a can or two every dinner compared to Finns who down a whole bottle of wine every weekend.*

> *It's like a completely different alcohol culture, in Central Europe it's more about enjoyment. You can also basically see alcohol as a thirst quencher with food. And then in the Nordic countries it's like that, or well in Finland maybe, it's completely different. You consider the alcohol percentage and the price and nothing else.' (FI_15M_16)*
>
> *'It's kind of crazy how big of a deal alcohol is made to be, especially in Finland where there are so many alcoholics.' (FI_20_F_19_non-drinker)*
>
> *'Social media and especially TV series normalise the use of alcohol as a means to escape [unpleasant emotions], but it is also part of Finnish culture.' (FI_19_NB_17_monthly drinker)*

Concluding the main drivers of alcohol consumption

This qualitative investigation has analysed the experiences and attitudes of young people (N=20) towards alcohol and alcohol marketing in Finland. Throughout the analysis, we have identified several factors that can drive alcohol consumption within this context. In this final chapter, we summarise the main identified contributing and deterring factors to alcohol consumption among Finnish youth. The main drivers are presented in figure 4.

Figure 4. Factors influencing alcohol consumption amongst Finnish youth



We identified two types of contributing factors to alcohol consumption: social and commercial. Social factors related to peer attitudes as well as prevailing cultural context. Our interviewees described the Finnish cultural context as being very encouraging of alcohol consumption. This cultural driver was also transmitted via peer attitudes towards drinking.

In terms of commercial drivers, our participants highlighted the importance of good promotional visibility. Participants had a wide understanding of marketing, spanning from product branding to social media visibility and more traditional commercial communications. Examples of particularly attractive branding included different long drink campaigns and flavours. Long drink advertising was also amongst the most memorable type of alcohol advertising across the interview dataset. Social media influencers contributed to increasing the visibility of alcohol products and made marketing more visible to young audiences. Our interviewees highlighted how attractive commercial collaboration videos made them want to try out new cocktails or drinks as a lifestyle choice.

We also identified factors that may prevent young people from wanting to consume alcohol. Five of our interviewees did not drink at all. Major reasons for choosing not to drink – or drink only little – included negative peer attitudes as well as knowledge or experience of the risks of alcohol consumption. Our interviewees were knowledgeable about potential health and social harms of alcohol. These risks deterred some from consuming alcohol excessively, sometimes despite peer pressure.

In addition, we identified effective regulation as a potential deterring factor. Our participants were aware of many restrictions on alcohol availability – including higher age limits for stronger alcohol, strictly regulated resale, and opening hours. Whilst many had found some of these restrictions inconvenient, many also noted that restrictions are needed to protect those who cannot otherwise control their own alcohol use. The restrictive environment also made young people reflect on the harms of alcohol and why it needs to be restricted – potentially contributing to denormalise harmful alcohol use.

EXPOSURE TO ADAM

This part presents the results of a quantitative web survey of 544 young Finnish individuals regarding their exposure to audiovisual alcohol marketing. In this section, we present the main results focusing on overall exposure to and impacts of alcohol marketing, alcohol consumption and perceptions of alcohol control policies.

Digital and TV exposure to positive portrayal of alcohol

A vast majority of our respondents have seen positive alcohol portrayal on some media channel during the last 30 days prior to answering the survey (see table 5). This includes depictions of alcohol as fun, cool or sexy, as a source of pleasure, relaxation or success or as something that can strengthen friendships or romantic relations. Table 5 shows the prevalence of exposure to positive alcohol portrayal among different groups of participants. 86% of all the respondents had seen such depictions. 75% had seen such positive content online. The share of those exposed to positive portrayals of alcohol was higher among girls. There were no significant differences between groups of drinkers and non-drinkers, economic categories or internet and social media use profiles.

Table 5: Effective exposure to positive alcohol portrayal in Finland (n=544)

Finland		**Online**			**On TV or at cinema**			**On any media**		
		n	**%total**	**%cat.**	**n**	**%total**	**%cat.**	**n**	**%total**	**%cat.**
All		408	75%	75%	312	57%	57%	466	86%	86%
Age	Under 18	90	17%	58%	76	14%	48%	125	23%	80%
	More than 18	318	58%	82%	236	43%	61%	341	63%	88%
Gender	Male	173	32%	67%	144	27%	56%	203	37%	79%
	Female	210	39%	82%	149	27%	58%	236	43%	92%
	Non-binary	17	3%	92%	10	2%	58%	17	3%	92%
	Other	8	2%	84%	9	2%	89%	10	2%	100%
Drinking status	Drinkers	322	59%	76%	242	45%	57%	360	66%	84%
	Non drinkers	86	16%	73%	70	13%	59%	107	20%	90%
Economic category	Superior	156	29%	76%	124	23%	61%	180	33%	88%
	Lower to intermediate	252	46%	74%	188	35%	55%	286	53%	84%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	134	25%	78%	105	19%	61%	148	27%	85%
	No	274	50%	74%	208	38%	56%	319	59%	86%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	304	56%	75%	233	43%	57%	355	65%	87%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	104	19%	76%	79	15%	58%	111	20%	81%
Internet or social network use	Heavy to intensive use	140	26%	81%	103	19%	59%	153	28%	88%
	Low to moderate use	268	49%	72%	209	39%	56%	313	58%	84%

Vectors of online of exposure to positive portrayal

We found important variations in the type of social media posts in which our respondents reported seeing positive alcohol portrayal. As displayed on table 6, positive alcohol portrayal was most commonly seen by the most frequent social media users and in posts created by peers. Despite age-gating regulations, under 18-year-old social media users also come across positive alcohol portrayal in their feed: roughly one third of the underaged respondents reported seeing it in their friends' posts and one fourth in content posted by alcohol brands. It is worth noting that 41% of the web survey respondents did not answer this question.

Table 6: Digital contents conveying positive alcohol portrayal in Finland (n=340)

Finland	All		Under 18		More than 18		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
In an influencer's post	186	34%	35	22%	151	39%	62	36%	124	33%
In a celebrity's post	152	28%	33	21%	120	31%	51	29%	101	27%
In a post created by a friend or an ordinary person	199	37%	51	33%	148	38%	78	45%	121	33%
In a post created by an association, an event organiser	91	17%	25	16%	66	17%	42	24%	49	13%
In a post created by an alcohol brand	175	32%	38	24%	137	35%	64	37%	111	30%
In other kinds of posts	60	11%	16	11%	43	11%	21	12%	39	10%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	17	3%	6	4%	11	3%	3	2%	13	4%

Vectors of TV exposure to positive portrayal

Table 7 summarises results on exposure to positive alcohol portrayal in different types of audiovisual content broadcast on television. According to the respondents, alcohol was most commonly portrayed in a positive light in films or television series. Approximately one third of the participants reported this type of exposure. Exposure was as common among minors and those over 18 years of age. Music videos were also a relatively common type of content that respondents reported as portraying alcohol in a positive way.

Table 7: TV contents conveying positive alcohol portrayal in Finland (n=210)

Finland	All		Under 18		More than 18		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
In advertising spots/commercials	115	21%	33	21%	82	21%	34	20%	81	22%
In a prevention campaign warning of the risks of alcohol use	35	6%	13	8%	22	6%	21	12%	14	4%
In a documentary report	35	7%	15	10%	20	5%	15	9%	20,287	5%
In a movie or a series episode	174	32%	49	31%	126	32%	65	37%	110	30%
In another TV show	44	8%	17	11%	27	7%	16	9%	28	8%
In a music video clip	106	19%	27	17%	79	20%	45	26%	61	16%
In another kind of TV broadcast	15	3%	8	5%	7	2%	9	5%	6	2%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	10	2%	4	2%	6	2%	3	1%	8	2%

Digital and TV exposure to alcohol advertising

Table 8 shows our respondents' exposure to alcohol advertising on different digital and audiovisual media environments. The participants were asked to state whether they had seen alcohol advertisement on the internet, on social media channels, on television or on any digital or audiovisual media. The responses are cross-referenced with the respondents' age, gender, drinking status, economic status, internet and social media use status and their knowledge and acceptance of alcohol marketing restrictions.

Exposure to alcohol advertisement seems to be very common among young people, as 90% of all respondents – both underaged and over 18-year-olds – had seen it on some kind of digital or audiovisual media channel. Exposure was significantly higher with regard to online and social media advertising than more traditional television advertising. 73% reported exposure to alcohol advertising on the internet and 80% on social networks, compared with only 48% on national television. Overall exposure was higher amongst female and over 18-year-old respondents. Amongst those under 18 years of age, a significantly larger proportion of female respondents had seen alcohol advertising on social media. Those who agreed with a ban on advertising targeting minors also reported more exposure than those who disagreed with such a ban.

Table 8: Effective exposure to audiovisual or digital alcohol advertising in Finland (n=544)

Have seen alcohol advertising in the last 30 days		On Internet			On social networks			On national TV			On either digital or audiovisual media		
		n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
All		398	73%	73%	436	80%	80%	260	48%	48%	488	90%	90%
Age	Under 18	114	21%	73%	120	22%	77%	57	11%	37%	137	25%	88%
	More than 18	285	52%	73%	317	58%	82%	203	37%	52%	351	64%	90%
Gender	Male	174	32%	67%	196	36%	76%	127	23%	49%	222	41%	86%
	Female	199	37%	78%	219	40%	85%	120	22%	46%	238	44%	93%
	Non-binary	17	3%	94%	16	3%	87%	12	2%	66%	18	3%	100%
	Other	8	2%	84%	6	1%	57%	2	0%	17%	10	2%	100%
Drinking status	Drinkers	314	58%	74%	341	63%	80%	201	37%	47%	381	70%	89%
	Non drinkers	85	16%	72%	95	18%	80%	59	11%	50%	107	20%	91%
Economic category	Superior	157	29%	77%	169	31%	82%	111	20%	54%	195	36%	95%
	Lower to intermediate	241	44%	71%	268	49%	79%	149	27%	44%	293	54%	86%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	127	23%	73%	147	27%	85%	82	15%	47%	158	29%	91%
	No	271	50%	73%	289	53%	78%	179	33%	48%	330	61%	89%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	316	58%	78%	348	64%	85%	196	36%	48%	377	69%	93%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	82	15%	60%	89	16%	65%	64	12%	47%	111	20%	81%
Internet or social network use	Heavy to intensive use	124	23%	72%	128	24%	74%	76	14%	44%	155	29%	90%
	Low to moderate use	274	50%	74%	308	57%	83%	184	34%	50%	333	61%	90%

Vectors of online of exposure to alcohol advertising

Regarding exposure to alcohol advertising on social media, we asked our respondents what they were doing on the social media channel when they saw the advertisement. Table 9 illustrates the different digital activities associated with exposure to alcohol marketing cross-referenced with participants' age and internet and social media use status. 64% of the respondents reported coming across an alcohol advertisement while browsing stories on social media and 28% when accessing music or videos. Only a minority of respondents reported exposure during other online activities.

Table 9: Digital activities conveying alcohol advertising in Finland (n=457)

Finland	All		Under 18		More than 18		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
When browsing stories on social networks	347	64%	83	53%	264	68%	96	56%	250	68%
When posting on your account	22	4%	3	2%	19	5%	8	4%	14	4%
When accessing music or videos	155	28%	39	25%	116	30%	59	34%	96	26%
When playing games online or via an App	89	16%	29	19%	60	15%	41	24%	48	13%
When searching for information or news	85	16%	24	16%	60	16%	34	20%	50	14%
When making purchases (clothes, books, games, sporting equipment etc.)	87	16%	34	22%	54	14%	26	15%	61	17%

Attitudes towards digital alcohol advertising

We asked our participants how they usually react when they see an alcohol advertisement on social media. Only 7% of the 457 respondents who answered this question stated that they watch the whole ad, while 25% said that they watch the first couple of seconds before skipping the advertisement. The most common approach was to skip the ads without paying any attention to them, which was reported by 68% of the respondents. 11% stated that they rarely see alcohol advertising content on social media, and 7% reported using specific ad blocking settings to avoid seeing advertising content.

Physical exposure to alcohol advertising

Regarding physical exposure during the previous 30 days, half of our participants reported seeing alcohol advertising in grocery stores and on e.g. posters or screens on the street. 28% had seen it on public transportation, including bus stops and train stations. One-fourth of the respondents remembered seeing alcohol advertisements at a sports event and 37% at a concert or a festival.

89 participants (16%) had not been exposed to any physical alcohol advertisements. Compared to the total sample, approximately the same proportions apply to our underaged respondents.

The significant amount of respondents who have seen alcohol advertising in public places leads to a consideration of how the regulatory measures manage to achieve the objective of limiting exposure.

Impact of the last remembered alcohol advertising

Memorising advertised alcohol brand

We asked our participants to try and recall the last alcohol advertisement they saw. The last recalled alcohol ad was most commonly seen on the internet or social media (45% of respondents). Many were able to recall the specific alcohol brand. In the case of 79 participants, the last recalled alcohol advertisement was for a beer brand, and in 71 responses a long drink or an alcopop. Hartwall was the most frequently recalled brand with 40 mentions.

The most recalled alcoholic beverages were typically already familiar to respondents. 28% of the respondents remembered having tried the product before last seeing the ad.

Desire to drink generated

Table 10 details results on the effects of viewed advertising. Overall, results showed that exposure to advertising produced some intentions to try the advertised product. 21% of respondents reported having wanted to try a specific alcoholic product after viewing an advertisement. 16% of respondents reported having tried a product after viewing an advertisement. Those over the age of 18 and those who consumed alcohol overall, were more likely to report both intentions and consumption. However, we also found that some underaged and non-drinkers reported impacts.

Table 10: Reaction prompted by the last remembered alcohol advertising in Finland (n=544)

		Wanted to try this specific type of alcohol			Tried the advertised alcohol brand since then		
		N	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
All		114	21%	21%	87	16%	16%
Age	Under 18	16	3%	10%	21	4%	13%
	More than 18	98	18%	25%	66	12%	17%
Gender	Male	54	10%	21%	50	9%	19%
	Female	59	11%	23%	36	7%	14%
	Non-binary	0	0%	0%	1	0%	4%
	Other	1	0%	6%	0	0%	0%
Drinking status	Drinkers	105	19%	25%	80	15%	19%
	Non drinkers	9	2%	8%	7	1%	6%

Perceived impact of alcohol advertising on young people

Table 11 shows participant perceptions on the effectiveness of alcohol marketing overall. Approximately one-third of respondents thought that alcohol advertising can have an impact on young people in general or personally to them. Those over 18, those who consumed alcohol, and those who accepted the ban on alcohol marketing aimed at young individuals were more likely to report feeling like alcohol marketing has an impact.

Table 11: General opinion on the impact of alcohol advertising in Finland (n=544)

Have seen alcohol advertising in the last 30 days		Alcohol marketing has an impact			Alcohol marketing has no impact		
		n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.
All		184	34%	34%	360	66%	66%
Age	Under 18	50	9%	32%	106	20%	68%
	More than 18	134	25%	35%	254	47%	65%
Gender	Male	77	14%	30%	157	29%	61%
	Female	98	18%	38%	159	29%	62%
	Non-binary	4	1%	23%	14	3%	77%
	Other	4	1%	45%	5	1%	55%
Drinking status	Drinkers	146	27%	34%	280	51%	66%
	Non drinkers	38	7%	32%	80	15%	68%
Economic category	Superior	82	15%	40%	123	23%	60%
	Lower and Intermediate	102	19%	30%	238	44%	70%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	47	9%	27%	125	23%	73%
	No	136	25%	37%	235	43%	63%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	139	26%	34%	268	49%	66%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	45	8%	33%	92	17%	67%
Internet or social network use	Heavy to intensive use	63	12%	36%	111	20%	64%
	Low to moderate use	121	22%	33%	250	46%	67%

Reason for drinking alcohol or not

We asked our survey respondents why they generally choose to drink alcohol. In this question, participants were able to select up to four reasons for drinking that were most relevant to them. 408 respondents (75% of the total sample) were categorised as drinkers, meaning that they had drunk alcohol at least once in the past year, and therefore answered this question. The most common response (n=191, 47% of those who answered) was to make social or family gatherings more fun.

Drinking alcohol to get drunk was the answer of 182 (45%) respondents. Liking the feeling (44%) or the taste (40%) were also popular answers. On the other hand, very few respondents said that they had decided to drink alcohol because of seeing an advertisement or an endorsement by an influencer or celebrity.

Respondents who drink alcohol were also asked if there had been occasions in the past year when they had not drunk alcohol, even though they had had the opportunity to do so. 159 (39%) of them stated that they had refrained from drinking because they had felt no need to for it in order to fit in the group. 149 (37%) said that they had wanted to keep a clear head for studying, work or sports. One-third of the participants had been in a situation where they had stopped drinking because they had already had enough to drink and 20% because they were intoxicated. Previous bad experiences with alcohol were a reason for not drinking for 85 respondents (21%).

For the 136 non-drinker respondents, who had not had any alcohol during the past year, the most popular reason for not drinking was that they did not need alcohol to enjoy a party (n=77, 57%). Almost as many (54%) abstained from alcohol to keep healthy. For half of the respondents, personal lifestyle was a reason for not drinking alcohol. 30% stated that they do not drink because their parents do not approve. 24 respondents (18%) said that they did not want to drink because of their family history of problematic alcohol use. Not having access to (n=12) or not affording alcohol (n=10) was the reason for not drinking for a few respondents.

Acceptance of advertising and alcohol control policies

Table 12 shows the results focusing on approval or disapproval of alcohol marketing practices. Only a small minority or respondents (5%) reported fully approving alcohol advertising. 36% disapproved of alcohol marketing. Over 18-year-olds and those drinking alcohol were somewhat more likely to approve alcohol marketing, but numbers remained low. A significant number of respondents reported mixed or no opinion.

Table 12: General opinion on alcohol advertising in Finland (n=544)

		Full disapproval			Full approval			Mixed or no opinion		
		n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.
All		198	36%	36%	28	5%	5%	318	58%	58%
Age	Under 18	54	10%	34%	2	0%	1%	100	18%	64%
	More than 18	144	26%	37%	26	5%	7%	217	40%	56%
Gender	Male	64	12%	25%	12	2%	5%	183	34%	71%
	Female	111	20%	43%	16	3%	6%	130	24%	51%
	Non-binary	14	3%	81%	0	0%	0%	3	1%	19%
	Other	8	2%	83%	1	0%	6%	1	0%	12%
Drinking status	Drinkers	159	29%	37%	28	5%	6%	239	44%	56%
	Non drinkers	38	7%	32%	1	0%	1%	79	15%	67%
Economic category	Superior	87	16%	43%	15	3%	7%	103	19%	50%
	Lower and Intermediate	111	20%	33%	14	3%	4%	215	39%	63%

		Full disapproval			Full approval			Mixed or no opinion		
		n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	69	13%	40%	2	0%	1%	102	19%	59%
	No	129	24%	35%	26	5%	7%	216	40%	58%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	159	29%	39%	17	3%	4%	231	42%	57%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	39	7%	29%	11	2%	8%	87	16%	63%
Internet or social network use	Heavy to intensive use	60	11%	35%	7	1%	4%	106	19%	61%
	Low to moderate use	138	25%	37%	21	4%	6%	212	39%	57%

Regarding acceptance of alcohol marketing restrictions, 61% of respondents supported banning alcohol advertisements in public transport and 76% near schools, kindergartens and playgrounds. They mostly agreed with setting a watershed for alcohol advertisements on television and radio (63%) and 43% of respondents supported a ban on alcohol advertising on the internet and on social media, while the same percentage of respondents fully or somewhat disagreed with said ban. Finally,48% of our participants agreed with banning positive alcohol portrayal by social media influencers or celebrities.

Awareness of alcohol control policies

When asked whether advertising alcohol to minors is prohibited in Finland, 221 participants (40%) did not know the answer. To the question regarding limitations on where alcohol advertisement is allowed or prohibited, 289 (53%) responded "I don't know". An even larger number of the participants (350 or 63%) were not aware of any limitations concerning topics presented in alcohol marketing.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This report has outlined the main results of a Finnish study into factors and patterns of young people's exposure to audiovisual and digital alcohol marketing in Finland. We have used three distinct data sources to map out the experiences of young individuals: a systematic literature review into alcohol marketing regulations and research in the Finnish context; a qualitative interview dataset consisting of 20 interviews with young individuals focusing on their experiences with alcohol marketing; and a quantitative survey with 544 young Finnish individuals, focusing on alcohol consumption, use of audiovisual media, and alcohol marketing exposure.

Youth's awareness of the exposure to alcohol advertising

Overall, our results have shown that Finnish youth are widely exposed to alcohol marketing across audiovisual media. 86% of young individuals in the survey sample reported having seen positive portrayals of alcohol in media in the past 30 days. 90% reported exposure to audiovisual alcohol marketing. The most prevalent channels of exposure consisted of online environments and social networks, including posts by influencers, peers and alcohol brands. Qualitative findings furthermore showed that the lines between advertising content and other social media content were blurry. Young individuals reported widespread exposure to all types of alcohol content.

Our results on the prevalence of alcohol marketing exposure amongst youth are somewhat higher than those found previously in a Finnish Youth Health Habits Survey (Kinnunen et al., 2019), in which 61% of respondents had reported seeing alcohol advertising in the past month. The difference may be explained by the higher overall exposure to online and social media marketing amongst youth in 2024.

Our survey results also showed that females were more exposed to alcohol marketing in online environments than men. We also found that under 18-year-old girls were significantly more likely to have seen alcohol marketing in online environments than underage boys. Girls were also somewhat more likely to report that alcohol advertising had effects on consumption. According to our results, young females in Finland may therefore be at a particular risk of harm from audiovisual alcohol marketing practices.

The qualitative interviews provided additional insight into the types of marketing content that young individuals are exposed to. We found that young individuals reported encountering a wide range of alcohol-related content in online environments. These included direct messages by alcohol companies, but also alcohol content by influencers, celebrities and peers. In many cases, content was created by international accounts that were not governed by Finnish regulations.

Many interviewees highlighted the difficulty in identifying what kind of social media content was marketing and what was not. Content such as tasting videos and other commercial collaborations were reported to blur the lines between marketing and other content. This made it also difficult for respondents to define what constitutes advertising. For some respondents, any depiction of alcohol could be considered marketing. Some other respondents had not identified any alcohol-related content or advertising. The result is in line with prior research showing that the line between advertising content and other social media content has been blurry in Finland (Anderson-Luxford et al., 2021; Purves et al., 2022).

The role of alcohol marketing in drinking alcohol

Alcohol marketing had some effects in terms of consumption intentions. Survey results showed that 21% of respondents wanted to try a specific alcoholic product after viewing an advertisement. 16% of respondents had tried a product after viewing an advertisement. 34% of respondents also believed that alcohol marketing could have an overall effect on young people in Finland. This result suggests that while the effects of marketing may be difficult to identify for oneself, they may be easier to identify more generally.

Our qualitative findings similarly showed that young people consider alcohol marketing and other alcohol content on social media to have an impact on consumption. Overall, the most effective forms of alcohol marketing included content shared by peers or influencers. Personalisation of online advertising, and campaigns that spoke to individual interests were considered particularly effective. These included for example campaigns focusing on LGBTQ+ rights or other features related to one's own interests.

The interview data revealed that commercial factors, including attractive social media and advertising content or branding were key drivers of alcohol consumption amongst young individuals. Other drivers included social factors such as peer attitudes and a positive cultural environment. Individual responsibility for alcohol consumption was also highlighted in the interviews. As most interviewees were aware of the harms caused by alcohol, the choice to consume alcohol nevertheless was also considered a personal responsibility.

Impact of regulations in the national framework

The participants in both the survey and the qualitative interviews supported restrictions on alcohol marketing, particularly with regard to any content targeting young individuals. Our quantitative findings showed that only 5% of respondents fully approved of alcohol marketing. In contrast, 69% of respondents who had seen any alcohol marketing in the past 30 days reported accepting the ban on alcohol advertising targeting minors.

Our qualitative findings showed that part of this acceptance of regulations stemmed from overall critical attitudes towards alcohol and drinking. Most interviewed individuals supported overall strict regulatory measures on alcohol availability, visibility and accessibility. With regard to alcohol advertising, the interviewed young individuals supported restrictions on social media advertising, in particular. However, as many had been exposed to alcohol-focused social media content despite legal restrictions, enforcement was considered lacking. This result is in line with prior Finnish research literature showing that regulations on social media alcohol advertising are undermined by lacking monitoring resources (e.g., Katainen et al., 2018; 2020).

With regard to further regulations, many participants were receptive to stricter control measures. The actions and practices of the alcohol industry were considered unethical, and young people considered it necessary to limit these commercial practices with statutory regulations to limit negative impacts on public health. While a few respondents highlighted understanding that advertising is an integral part of the functioning of a market economy, they still highlighted that these practices would need to take place within a welfare society.

Limitations and strengths

The main limitations of this study are related to a selection bias in the recruitment of participants for both the quantitative and qualitative data collection. As the study was advertised as an alcohol-focused project, it is likely that respondents were already interested in the topic. Another limitation relates to the quantitative survey. Although we were able to capture a representative sample of respondents, a large number of respondents reported not knowing the answers to a significant number of questions.

The main strengths of this study are in the mixed-methods approach, with quantitative and qualitative datasets supporting the conclusions on overall experiences of alcohol marketing amongst young Finnish individuals. The next steps of the research would consist of contrasting these Finnish findings with those obtained from the other CIPPAL-ADAM participating countries to draw cross-comparative results on the impact of different regulatory frameworks on youth exposure to alcohol advertising.

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