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



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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IN A FEW POINTS

This study investigated the perceived exposure of both adults and minors to alcohol advertising and positive portrayals of alcohol across various media platforms, combining survey data and qualitative interviews. The findings raise significant concerns regarding the effectiveness of current regulations aimed at protecting minors from alcohol marketing.

- **Widespread Exposure, minimal age gap**: Even though most interviewees struggled to recall any audiovisual or digital alcohol advertising, the survey indicates a striking 90% level of exposure. Albeit young adults reported higher rates (92%), the gap with minors is smaller than expected: 86% of minors reported exposure to ADAM in the last 30 days. Even for exposure to positive portrayals of alcohol the adult-minor gap (82% vs 67%) is narrower than anticipated, despite existing protective regulations. Alcohol consumers and individuals with higher incomes are significantly more exposed to marketing, while gender does not appear to play a role.

- **Digital Media and the "Grey Area":** Exposure to explicit advertisements exceeds that to content portraying alcohol in a fun or attractive light. While this might suggest that limits imposed on advertising content are effective, it more likely points to regulatory gaps and the effectiveness of subtler marketing forms. This hypothesis is consistent with the fact that - despite widespread use of digital media, TV results the most recalled source of alcohol advertising, likely due to its clearly defined formats. Furthermore, qualitative interviews make evident that young people struggle to identify less conventional formats—such as influencer posts or event sponsorships—as advertising, confirming the effectiveness of industry strategy to exploit definitional loopholes.

- **Social Media as Primary Digital Channel:** Social media stands out as the primary channel of exposure to alcohol advertising via internet (54%). Influencers' posts (25%) and posts created by alcohol brands (23%) result the main vectors of online exposure to positive portrayals. Events promoted by discos and cocktail bars on the social networks were the most frequently type of digital alcohol marketing cited by interviewees, and were recognized as influencing, especially because including price promotions and prize games. User generated contents were considered effective too, but limited by social media rules.

- **Advertising Influence Underestimated:** While most respondents (74,2%) and interviewees claim not to be personally influenced by advertising, 81% thinks that it works on young people in general. The recurrent use of othering processes in interviewees' narratives, confirms that this topic is subject to norms of social desirability. Despite this, a notable 20% of survey respondents admitted that a recent ad made them want to try a product and 19% actually did.

- **Cultural Factors perceived as Dominating Consumption Choices:** Most of the interviewees speculated about the limited role of advertising in affecting their attitudes since peers and parents' influence, and more generally social and cultural norms, are considered much more powerful levers. With this regard, most interviewees reported being introduced to alcohol within the family context, as part of gradual socialization process which was widely seen as effective in preventing excessive and youth drinking and drunkenness.

- **Limited Awareness of Regulations but Wide Support:** Despite the fact that almost none of the interviewees and only about one in four survey respondents are aware that alcohol marketing is nationally regulated—and even then, with only a limited understanding of its scope or mechanisms – nearly all interviewees and a significant majority of respondents (72.8%) expressed strong support for a ban on alcohol advertising directed at minors. Interestingly, qualitative interviews revealed that participants are more familiar with the self-regulation policies of social media platforms than with national legislation. They also provided the main rationale behind this widespread support for the ban, which lies in a commonly shared awareness of the risks associated with alcohol consumption – particularly its harmful effects on physical health and the heightened vulnerability of adolescents, whose brain development is still incomplete.

- **Acceptance of market principles**. In contrast with the previous point, opinions regarding alcohol advertising in general appear more ambivalent: only 23% of respondents expressed strong disapproval, while 62% reported mixed feelings or no definite opinion. Insights from the qualitative interviews suggest that such positions are informed by the recognition that alcohol, as a legal consumer good, is subject to market dynamics in which marketing plays a legitimate and integral role. Within this framework, the right of adult consumers to access commercial information is commonly acknowledged.

- **Policy Implications:** Current regulations are insufficient to prevent minors' exposure to alcohol advertising, which remains high. Italian policy should enhance monitoring and sanctions, particularly for digital and "grey" or more ambiguous forms of advertising. The confusion over what qualifies as “real” advertising underscores a regulatory gap the industry exploits. Regulations should therefore go beyond formal definitions. Additionally, mandatory health warnings on all alcohol advertising are recommended, given the imbalance between commercial ads and health-oriented messages.

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 global level, the ban on the sale of alcohol to minors (generally aged under 18) and restrictions on alcohol advertising are essential levers, and the rigour with which these provisions are applied is a crucial issue. The health authorities recommend regulating marketing practices to protect minors, in particular limiting the use of certain media and the subjects that can be exploited in advertising (PAHO, 2017 ; WHO, 2018, 2019). In Europe, these measures can vary from country to country, as can the types of alcohol to which they apply. As 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), bodies independent of the alcohol industry should be entrusted with the task of monitoring compliance with the law in this area.

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 a Comparison of International of Alcohol Control Policies (CIPPAL), with a focus on Audiovisual and Digital Alcohol Marketing (ADAM). This study is referred here by the acronym ‘CIPPAL-ADAM 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 under OFDT coordination.

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

Alcohol consumption among Italian teenagers

In Italy, alcohol consumption among young people has shown a general decline across all age groups, with the sole exception of girls aged 18–24. Among 11–17-year-olds, the prevalence of drinking in the past year has decreased over the last decade, from 23.7% to 17.8% among males and from 17.2% to 13.3% among females. The decline in at-risk drinking—defined as including at least one alcoholic drink in the past year for individuals under 18, and the consumption of six or more drinks on a single occasion (binge drinking)—among 16–17-year-olds is both notable and encouraging, with reductions also observed among females (males: 46.9% in 2014 vs. 39.2% in 2023; females: 39.5% vs. 30.7%). This trend is particularly significant for an age group traditionally associated with experimentation and heavy drinking. In contrast, risky drinking has increased among girls aged 18–24 (from 8.7% to 11.1%), while it has slightly declined among males in the same age group (from 22% to 20.1%) (source: ISS, 2025). Similar trends are also observed in the ESPAD data.

METHOD

The general objective of CIPPAL-Alcohol Marketing 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.

Data collection has 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.ti or Nvivo 14-15).

For the web survey, 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 people 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 Italy.

Table 1. Sampling for interviews-Italy

		N
Total sample		**20**
Age	16-17	10
	18-19	10
Average age	/	17,4
Gender	Male	10
	Female	10
	Non binary	0
Area	Rural	1
	Urban	19
Last month use	Never	3
	1-2 times	8
	Once a week or so	9
	Everyday or so	0
Lifetime non drinker	/	3
First drink	With relatives	11
	With friends	9
	Never	0
	Alone	0
Average age (first drink)	/	14
Drunkenness	Yes	13
	Not	7
Economic situation	Not well-off	4
	Fairly well-off	16
	Very well-off	0

Table 2. Sampling for the web survey-Italy

		N	%
Total sample		**1028**	**100**
Age	15-17	330	32,1
	18-21	698	67,9
Average age	/	18,5	/
Gender	Male	506	49,2
	Female	511	49,7
	Non binary and other	11	1,1
Male	15-17	162	15,8
	18-21	343	33,4
Female	15-17	168	16,3
	18-21	343	33,4
Non binary and other	15-17	/	
	18-21	11	1,1
Drinking status	Non drinkers	231	22,4
	Drinkers	797	77,6
	Occasional drinkers	*140*	*13,7*
	Regular drinkers	*657*	*63,9*
Socio-economic categories	Superior category	417	40,6
	Intermediate category	537	52,2
	Lower category	74	7,2
Education	Higher education	133	24,9
	General secondary school	192	36
	Other secondary school	209	39,1
Activity	At school, university	534	52
	Employed	364	35,4
	Inactive	130	12,6

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REGULATION

Foundation and rationale of alcohol advertising regulations

Principles, targets and scope of restrictions

Italy has established a comprehensive legal framework comprising multiple regulations aimed at limiting the advertising of alcoholic beverages. Notably, Legislative Decree No. 208/2021, together with the Advertising Self-Regulation Code, delineates the standards and criteria governing the marketing of alcohol across a range of media platforms. The overarching rationale underpinning these regulatory efforts is the protection of minors from exposure to promotional messages that may encourage alcohol consumption. Consequently, alcohol advertising is explicitly prohibited from targeting underage audiences. The legal provisions impose specific constraints on the content of advertisements, the media through which they are disseminated, and the spatial and contextual settings in which such advertising is permitted. These measures extend to both traditional media and digital platforms, including user-generated content and influencer-driven communication. In the Italian regulatory landscape, statutory provisions operate in tandem with self-regulatory practices implemented by industry stakeholders, reflecting a hybrid governance model aimed at safeguarding public health, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Implementation story

The Italian regulatory framework governing alcohol advertising presents several critical weaknesses, particularly concerning enforcement, coordination among stakeholders, and alignment with overarching public health objectives.

Over the past century, alcohol-related issues have seldom occupied a prominent place on the political agenda or within broader societal debates in Italy. Only two historical periods stand out for their focused attention to this domain. The first occurred during the Fascist era (1921–1943), when most alcohol control measures were introduced, primarily framed within the context of public order and national discipline. The second emerged in the 1990s, which marked a significant shift toward a public health-oriented approach to alcohol policy.

The approval of the 2001 Framework Law on Alcohol and Alcohol-Related Problems – that includes also alcohol and marketing issue - represented a rare moment of political convergence. It resulted from a negotiated consensus among a diverse set of actors—including public health services, self-help groups, universities, scientific societies, national and international institutions, and representatives from the alcohol production sector. This broad coalition was instrumental in elevating alcohol-related harm to the political agenda.

In the two decades since that period of heightened engagement, however, public and political attention to alcohol issues has markedly declined. The stakeholder coalition that once advocated for reform now appears either disengaged or unable to generate the political momentum necessary to reopen a "policy window" for renewed action. A review of parliamentary activities—such as motions, interpellations, questions, and agendas—over the past ten years, spanning three legislative terms, reveals that alcohol-related topics, including marketing, have not been addressed as distinct policy issues.

Today the Italian Communications Authority (AGCOM) plays a central role in overseeing compliance with national legislation, having demonstrated its enforcement capacity by sanctioning broadcasters who breach advertising rules—especially those targeting minors. In addition, AGCOM promotes cross-sector collaboration and encourages self-regulatory practices among digital and social media platforms.

However, enforcement across the system remains inconsistent and is notably weak in digital media and influencer-driven marketing, where oversight is minimal and many practices fall into regulatory grey areas. Despite various legal instruments in place—including Law No. 125/2001 (the Alcohol Framework Law), audiovisual media regulations, and several guidelines and self-regulatory codes—these measures often lack coherence, effective intersectoral coordination, and sustained political support. Moreover, formal monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms exist, but their effectiveness, particularly in digital domains, is limited. Financial penalties for violations are typically minimal compared to alcohol producers' advertising budgets, thus diminishing their deterrent impact. The alcohol industry continues to wield significant influence, actively opposing stricter regulations while advocating for self-regulation and corporate ethical responsibility as alternatives to legal constraints.

Despite increasing public awareness of the health risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption, particularly in relation to new forms of digital marketing, political commitment to regulatory reform has weakened significantly since the 1990s. Finally, a substantial evidence gap persists: there is a lack of comprehensive research evaluating the actual effectiveness of alcohol advertising restrictions within the Italian context.

Regulations on alcohol advertising in force in 2024

Legal provisions

In Italy the **first legal regulation of alcohol advertising** was introduced in **2001** with the enactment of the **first alcohol framework law (Law n. 125/2001)**. According to the art. 13 the advertising of alcoholic beverages is prohibited under the following circumstances:

(a) when broadcast during programs aimed at minors or within fifteen minutes before and after such programs;
(b) when it attributes efficacy or therapeutic indications not expressly recognized by the Ministry of Health;
(c) when it depicts minors consuming alcohol or portrays alcohol consumption in a positive light.

In addition, the direct or indirect advertising of alcoholic beverages is prohibited in places predominantly frequented by individuals under 18. The broadcasting of spirits advertising on radio and television is banned between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m. Furthermore, advertising of spirits is strictly prohibited in any form in newspapers and magazines aimed at minors, as well as in cinema during the screening of films primarily intended for young audiences.

Since **1993 sponsorship of media programs** sponsored by natural or legal persons whose main activity is the manufacture or sale of spirits have been prohibited (**Ministerial Decree 9/12/1993 No. 581).** This provision was later reaffirmed by **Legislative decree No. 44 of 15/3/2010,** which implemented the European directive on television media services (Directive 2007/65/CE). The decree reiterates that audiovisual commercial communications for alcoholic beverages must not specifically target minors or encourage what is referred to - though not explicitly defined – as “immoderate” consumption.

As the media landscape has totally changed over recent decades, the European Parliament adopted a new Directive (2018/1808) on audiovisual media services, which was transposed into Italian law through Legislative **Decree No. 208 of 8 November 2021** (in force from 25/12/2021). In addition to the traditional media (radio and television), the directive also covers **user-generated** videos disseminated via social

media platforms. Specifically, the Article 43 (e) highlights the importance of the child protection, stating that audiovisual commercial communications for alcoholic beverages must not specifically target minors or encourage immoderate consumption.

According to Article 44 (9) television advertising and teleshopping of alcoholic beverages must comply with the following criteria:

(a) Must not expressly target minors, nor, in particular, present minors as intending to consume such beverages;

(b) Must not link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving motor vehicles;

(c) Must not create the impression that alcohol consumption contributes to social or sexual success;

(d) Must not suggest that alcoholic beverages have stimulating or calming properties, therapeutic benefits, or the ability resolve psychological conflicts;

(e) Must not promote excessive and uncontrolled consumption, nor present abstinence or sobriety in a negative light;

(f) Must not use the high alcohol content of beverages as a positive or desirable quality.

The same law also regulates **product placement,** although it does not include specific provisions regarding alcoholic beverages. However, Article 48, paragraph 5, calls for the adoption of a self-regulation framework for product placement. In this context, the general rules governing alcohol advertising are applicable.

In recent years, the influencer marketing industry has experienced remarkable growing.

According to Michaelsen and Collini (2022, p. 9) “consumers engage with influencers voluntarily but are at the same time exposed to advertising that relies on the relationship between the consumer and the influencer, which raises concerns about the protection of consumers”. The same authors define an influencer as “a content creator with a commercial intent, who builds trust and authenticity-based relationships with their audience (mainly on social media platforms) and engages online with commercial actors through different business models for monetisation purposes” (ibid., p. 15).

Recently, on 10 January 2024, in response to the lack of a clear legal definition of influencer marketing, the **Italian Competition Authority (AGCOM)** approved a set of the **Guidelines** – a form of **soft law** – intended to ensure that **influencers** comply with the provisions Legislative Decree No. 208 of 8 November 2021 n. 208. The guidelines aim to ensure consistent and uniform application of relevant rules, with particular focus on transparency and fairness of information, compliance with regulations protecting minors and fundamental rights, and adherence to rules on commercial communications and product placement, in order to clearly disclose the promotional nature of content to the public. It must be explicitly stated when a post or content constitutes advertising.

Self-regulation by economic stakeholders

In Italy, self-regulation in the field of alcohol advertising was introduced well before the enactment of the laws. The first **Advertising Self-Regulation Code** was established in **1966** by the National Advertising Self-Regulatory Authority. Article 22 of the Codes provides more in detailed guidelines, compared to the law, on what marketing communication should avoid. Specially, it prohibits the following:

- Encouraging excessive and uncontrolled, and therefore harmful, use of alcoholic beverages;
- Portraying situations of unhealthy attachment to the product or addiction to alcohol, or suggesting that alcohol can solve personal problems;

- Targeting or referring to minors, even indirectly, and depicting them or individuals who may be inclined to consume alcohol;
- Using signs, drawings, characters and individuals primarily associated with minors that may generate a direct interest in alcohol;
- Associating the consumption of alcoholic beverages with driving vehicles;
- Inducing the public to believe that alcohol consumption contributes to mental clarity, physical performance, or sexual efficiency, or suggesting that not consuming alcohol leads to physical, psychological or social inferiority;
- Portraying sobriety and abstaining from alcohol as negative values;
- Encouraging the public to disregard the different consumption patterns that must to be considered based on the characteristics of individual products and the consumer's personal condition;
- Using the high alcohol content of a beverage as a central marketing theme.

More in general, marketing communication related to alcoholic beverages "should not conflict with the need to promote consumption patterns based on moderation, fairness and responsibility. This approach is essential to protect the primary interest of individuals, in particular children and adolescents, ensuring a family, social and professional life safeguarded from the harmful consequences associated with the abuse of alcoholic beverages".

In 2019, the **Italian Code of Marketing Communication Self-Regulation** was updated with the introduction of the "**Digital Chart Guidelines**", making them mandatory for members of the advertising associations. The Guidelines define "endorsement" as a form of product or a brand accreditation carried out by "celebrities"-individuals who have gained public prominence and credibility in a specific field (referred to as "influencers", such as bloggers or vloggers), as well as ordinary users who share their opinion or judgement online (user-generated content).

In the context of these commercial communications methods, the Guidelines recommend including one of following statement in posts, as appropriate: "Advertising", "Promoted by [brand]", "Sponsored by [brand"], "In partnership with [brand]". When hashtags are used, the first three occurrences of hashtags should include: "#Advertising", #Sponsored by [brand]" or: "#ad" linked to: "# [brand].

By analogy, video contents should clearly indicate the commercial nature of the communication either at the beginning or end of the reel, with a notice such as: "[brand] presents", or: "In collaboration with [brand]".

In cases where there is no explicit agreement between the advertiser and the blogger/testimonial to promote a product -such as when a product mention is part of an invitation or a call to participate in an event- the message must include a disclaimer clarifying that the event has a commercial intent, promoted by the advertiser.

A similar approach should be adopted by advertisers "in-feed units" (paid news contents with a commercial aim) and "paid search units" (contents representing data and research outcomes related to the commercial promotion of a specific product).

In 2023, the **Federation of Wine Producers** (Federvini) introduced a **Self-Regulation Guideline for marketing communication and the promotion of alcoholic beverages**, aimed at its members**.** The goal of these guidelines is to reinforce principles of Article 22 of the Advertising self-regulation code. These guidelines apply to all forms of commercial communication across all media, included social media and other digital platforms.

Specifically, Paragraph 6 addresses the issue of minors and defines the contents of commercial and promotional communication of alcoholic beverages. It specifies that such communication:

- Must never be designed or constructed to target or attract minors, whether implicitly or indirectly;
- Must exclusively feature models, testimonials, celebrities, bloggers, influencers and actors who are at least 25 years of age, and must ensure that they do not appear or portray individuals under the age of 18;
- Must avoid using suggestive elements such as objects, images, symbols, gestures, language, slogans, expressions, messages, music, characters (real or fictional, including cartoons), celebrities, testimonials, models, actors, bloggers and influencers that could appeal to minors;
- Must not incorporate trademarks such as names, logos, games, play equipment, or other items that may primarily appeal to minors.
- Must never associate the consumption of alcoholic beverages with reaching the age of adulthood or with "rites of passage" to adulthood.

Paragraph 12 is dedicated to **digital communication**, outlining principles to consider in this context. It defines the scope of application, covering everything from the websites to SMS, MMS, social media, videogames, etc. It provides guidelines how to prevent minors from accessing content, sets limits on certain types of content, and addresses issues related to user-generated contents and influencer-generated contents.

Synopsis of the regulation on alcohol marketing in 2024



Control systems and enforcement in 2024

What is in place

Various stakeholders are involved in the arena of alcohol policy, including the regulation of alcohol marketing. These range from journalists to moral entrepreneurs (Becker, 1963), from influencers to different authorities.

Some **newspapers** have welcomed the approval the Guidelines on influencers issued by the Italian Competition Authority (AGCOM). For example, *La Repubblica*, the second most widely read newspaper in Italy, published an article on January 11, 2024, with the headline: "*Tightening up on influencers will be as publishers stop surreptitious advertising*". Previously, other media outlets – such as EURISPES, the online magazine of the research institute – had called for restrictions on alcohol marketing on social media to better protect minors. The key authorities most frequently cited in these discussions include the Italian Health Institute (ISS) and WHO.

In Italy, a key stakeholder in alcohol marketing regulation is the **Italian Competition Authority (AGCOM)** which has been actively addressing influencer marketing since 2017. Recognizing the risk of hidden advertising in influencer content, the Authority issued a "moral suasion" urging all operators to comply with the Consumer Code by clearly disclosing the promotional nature of their messages. The initial response to this intervention was largely positive: both influencers and companies began adopting more transparent practices, such as use of hashtags and labels that reveal the advertising intent of their communications. Social media platforms also introduced specific tools to help influencers visibly disclose sponsorship relationships. In the following year, AGCOM issued a second moral suasion, this time targeting influencers with smaller followings. The Authority emphasized that the ban on surreptitious advertising applies equally to social media communication. Influencers must not mislead audiences by appearing to act spontaneously or independently when, in fact, they are promoting a brand.

Another relevant stakeholder is the **Italian Child Protection Authority**, which, in its 2022 Annual Report to the Parliament, recommended extending the existing regulations on children's advertising and media content to include so-called "baby influencers" on social media platforms.

An analysis of legislative databases (Beccaria & Rolando, 2015) reveals that alcohol is a recurring topic in annual budget laws, though it is typically addressed in relation to taxation rather than public health or marketing. The specific issue of alcohol and marketing gained significant attention among **policymakers** during the XIII legislature (1996-2001), when seven parliamentary bills focused on alcohol problems prevention. All of these bills addressed marketing restrictions, with some also proposing limits on sponsorship and alcohol sales in specific locations. The legislative process culminated in a cross-party compromise that resulted in the adoption of the first Italian Alcohol Framework Law (n. 125/2001), which incorporated Article 13 on alcohol and advertising. This law was a synthesis of previously submitted proposals.

After this fruitful period for alcohol-related public health policy, no further bills specifically addressing this issue were submitted.

In fact, a review of **parliamentary acts**[1] - such as motions, interpellations, interrogations, agendas – over the past ten years (spanning three legislatures) reveals that alcohol and marketing has not been addressed as a standalone topic. About 20 acts were proposed by various ministers, focusing on prevention, regulation of availability, and the protection of young people. Others were primarily aimed at defending wine and beer production. Marketing-related aspects appeared in some acts introduced by

[1] https://aic.camera.it/aic/search.html

member of the Democratic Party and Five Stars Movement (center-left), while one prevention-focused act came from Forza Italia (right wing). Acts related to defending alcoholic products came mostly presented by right-wing parties.

Overall, it appears that the issue of alcohol and marketing does not hold a prominent place on the political agenda or within broader societal debates in Italy. Over the last century, only two historical periods gave notable attention to the alcohol-related issues: the first was during Fascism (1921-1943), when most alcohol control measures were introduced with a focus on public order; and the second during the 1990s, which marked a shift toward a public health-oriented approach.

Applying Wiener's (1981) theoretical framework on political agenda construction, Beccaria and Rolando (2015) examined the role of various stakeholder in elevating alcohol-related issues the publica arena, ultimately leading to the approval of the 2001 alcohol law. Their analysis revealed that a range of actors - health services and self-help groups, universities and scientific societies, national and international institutions, and alcohol production sectors – contributed to raising the issue the political agenda. Despite lacking a shared definition of alcohol problem, which left unresolved tensions between medical and social perspectives, many of these stakeholders benefitted from the new law. However, in the two decades since this active period, the debate has quieted significantly, and the same stakeholders now appear less engaged – or at least unable to reopen a 'policy window' for bring alcohol issues back onto the political agenda.

Collaboration between stakeholders

In Italy, there are no obligations or incentives for stakeholders to collaborate on alcohol communication restrictions. This lack of structured coordination can hinder the effectiveness of public health strategies aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm, especially among vulnerable groups such as minors. While various actors — including regulatory authorities, public health institutions, industry representatives, and civil society — have overlapping responsibilities, their efforts often remain fragmented. Introducing formal frameworks or incentives to foster intersectoral collaboration could enhance consistency in messaging, improve enforcement of existing regulations, and support more comprehensive prevention campaigns. This would align Italy with international best practices that emphasize multi-stakeholder approaches to alcohol policy.

The National Council on Alcohol and Alcohol-Related Problems was a coordinating and advisory body established in 2003 by ministerial decree. This decree created the Council with the aim of addressing alcoholism and its consequences in Italy. Its function was to coordinate prevention and treatment activities related to alcohol-related issues, serving as a point of reference for institutions, public and private bodies, associations, and citizens. The Council operated for several years, significantly contributing to raising awareness about alcoholism, implementing prevention policies, and disseminating useful information to tackle the problem. However, in 2010, the Council was closed after completing its mandate.

Measures and policies to support the legal ADAM restrictions

In Italy, the primary measures and policies supporting the legal ADAM restrictions are focused on protecting minors, rather than being specifically target at alcohol marketing. These measures focus on limiting the exposure of young people to harmful content, particularly when it comes to alcohol-related promotions.

The Italian Competition Authority (AGCOM) plays a key role in enforcing these regulations and ensuring that advertising practices align with legal and ethical standards. Recently, AGCOM has broadened its focus to include influencer marketing, a growing concern due to the rise of social media platforms as powerful marketing tools. Influencers, particularly those with significant followings among younger

audiences, have the potential to unintentionally (or intentionally) expose minors to marketing messages about alcohol.

To address these concerns, AGCOM has implemented guidelines urging influencers to make explicit disclosures when their content is sponsored or commercial in nature. This transparency is seen as crucial to protecting minors from deceptive marketing practices, ensuring that commercial messages are clear and distinct from regular, non-promotional content.

Compared to the general self-regulation of global social platforms, then, Italian influencers and companies have to adopt more restrictive rules in terms of transparency and consumer protection. For instance, influencers with more than one million followers have to use specific labels to clearly mark sponsored content or product placements, making the commercial nature of their posts evident to users. They must also avoid positive messages, even indirect ones, linked to alcohol consumption (not only excessive use).

This shift reflects a growing recognition of the need to balance commercial interests with ethical considerations in digital marketing, particularly when it comes to protecting vulnerable audiences such as minors. While this informal approach has yielded positive results, it is worth noting that more formalized and cross-sector collaboration could further enhance efforts to achieve the public health objectives related to alcohol advertising restrictions in Italy.

Cross-sector collaboration

On November 6, 2017, the Italian Communications Authority (AGCOM) established the *Working Group for the Guarantee of Pluralism and Accuracy of Information on Digital Platforms* with the aim of encouraging and promoting self-regulation by platforms and the sharing of best practices to identify and counter online disinformation resulting from targeted strategies. This initiative is part of AGCOM's institutional efforts that began in 2015, including the publication of reports and fact-finding investigations into the online information ecosystem.

This approach enabled AGCOM to collect information, data, and insights from key market players on the impact of online platforms—such as social networks, search engines, and digital encyclopedias—particularly in relation to electoral and referendum campaigns. The analysis revealed several interconnected critical issues, directly related to AGCOM's oversight responsibilities. These include the increasing use of digital platforms to spread targeted disinformation and the growing significance of big data within the Digital Single Market.

The *Pluralism and Platforms Working Group* represents one of the first global examples of institutionalized cooperation between independent regulatory authorities for media and information markets and online platforms. Based on the investigations and analyses conducted in recent years, AGCOM sought to establish a permanent body to monitor, study, and share possible solutions to the most serious forms of online disinformation. The initiative is open to participation from a wide range of stakeholders in the information ecosystem: online platforms, publishers, journalists, advertising associations, and consumer organizations.

More recently, the public consultation launched by AGCOM with Resolution No. 178/23/CONS on July 13, 2023, marked another significant step toward cross-sector collaboration in regulating **influencer** activity in Italy. The consultation aimed to define measures ensuring that influencers comply with the provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services Consolidated Act (Legislative Decree No. 208 of November 8, 2021). The initiative reflects the growing role of social media personalities in the media landscape and the need to promote transparency and safeguard users—particularly minors.

Following the consultation, on January 10, 2024, AGCOM adopted Resolution No. 7/24/CONS, which approved the final Guidelines and established a call for a **Technical Working Group**, to which more than 60 stakeholders applied.

These measures are intended to ensure that influencer activities comply with current regulations, while also protecting consumers and fostering a safer and more transparent digital environment.

The public consultation involved numerous stakeholders, including industry associations, consumer organizations, fixed and mobile network operators, and associations representing users with disabilities. The feedback received provided a wide range of perspectives, allowing AGCOM to develop more comprehensive and representative guidelines. The Technical Working Group was tasked with drafting a Code of Conduct for influencers.

According to the guidelines, influencers must also adhere to the *Digital Chart Guidelines* promoted by the Institute for Advertising Self-Regulation (IAP). In cases of product placement, influencers are required to include a statement—either in the accompanying text or overlaid within the content—clearly identifying the promotional nature of the content in a way that is immediately recognizable.

This development also highlighted that the private sector had, in some respects, moved ahead of the public sector in addressing transparency issues. The guidelines formally recognize the IAP's Digital Chart Regulation as a key reference for ensuring transparency and clear identification of advertising content online. The establishment of the Technical committee aims to define additional measures on digital commercial communication, with the involvement of over 60 stakeholders from the sector.

Supportive communication or social marketing campaigns, training

In Italy, any citizen can report violations of the Self-Regulation Code to the National Advertising Self-Regulatory Authority. The review process is fast, with decisions typically issued within 8 to 10 working days, and these rulings are binding for both the advertiser and the company involved. Over the past ten years, only six rulings have been issued concerning alcoholic beverage advertising, all of which concluded that the advertisements were not compliant with the Code. One of these cases involved a social media post. The primary violation cited was the promotion of excessive alcohol consumption. Since the first complaint in 1976, there have been a total of 71 rulings related to Article 22 of the Code, which addresses alcohol advertising. Of these, only one ruling—issued in 2017—specifically concerned ADAM (Alcohol Advertising and Marketing) issues.

The relatively low number of rulings, especially in the context of increasing digital alcohol advertising, highlights the need for greater public education, proactive monitoring, and potentially a strengthened institutional mandate to oversee compliance in digital environments. This is particularly relevant as marketing continues to shift toward platforms that are widely used by minors and young adults—groups especially vulnerable to alcohol-related harm. Citizens can also report violations to the AGCOM.

Over the past ten years, the Italian Communications Authority (AGCOM) has imposed sanctions in 14 cases against media service providers and broadcasters for violating legal provisions that protect minors from alcohol advertising. These violations primarily involved the broadcast of alcoholic beverage advertisements during programs intended for minors or within the legally designated "protected time slots", during which such advertising is explicitly prohibited.

The financial penalties applied ranged from €5 000 to €225 000, depending on the severity and recurrence of the infringement[2]. These sanctions reflect AGCOM's ongoing commitment to enforcing

[2] Source: AGCOM archives (https://www.agcom.it/archivio).

compliance with national and EU audiovisual regulations, particularly those safeguarding vulnerable audiences from potentially harmful marketing content.

These enforcement actions underscore the importance of robust oversight mechanisms and highlight the continued risk of regulatory breaches, especially in the complex landscape of multi-platform media distribution. They also serve as a reminder to broadcasters and advertisers of their legal and ethical responsibilities in shielding minors from inappropriate commercial messages.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Italian regulatory framework on alcohol advertising presents significant weaknesses, particularly in terms of enforcement, coordination among stakeholders, and strategic alignment with public health goals. While legal provisions exist—such as the alcohol framework law (Law 125/2001), audiovisual media regulations, guidelines, and self-regulatory codes—they often lack coherence, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term political commitment. Furthermore, monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms, though formally in place, appear limited in reach and impact, especially in the context of digital and influencer-driven marketing.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the Italian Communications Authority has been working to provide guidelines and codes of conduct for digital media advertising and social media influencers, with the active involvement of stakeholders in the field.

Strengths identified by investigators are:

- Italy has established a **legal framework** that includes multiple regulations aimed at restricting alcohol advertising. Laws such as the Legislative Decree 208/2021 and the Advertising Self-Regulation Code outline standards and rules for how alcohol can be marketed across different media channels. These regulations aim to limit its exposure, especially to minors.
- The Italian Competition Authority (AGCOM) plays a crucial role in ensuring that alcohol advertising complies with national regulations. AGCOM has been active in enforcing the law by sanctioning broadcasters that violate rules regarding alcohol ads, particularly when targeting minors.
- The National Advertising Self-Regulatory Authority offers a channel for citizens to report violations, contributing to consumer protection and helping maintain ethical standards in alcohol marketing.
- There is growing recognition of the negative health impacts associated with excessive alcohol consumption, leading to an increase in **public health awareness** about the risks of alcohol marketing, specially related to new media.

Weaknesses Strengths identified by investigators are:

- **En**forcement of alcohol advertising regulations is inconsistent and particularly weak in digital and influencer-driven contexts.
- The regulatory framework is fragmented, outdated, and poorly suited to address challenges posed by modern digital platforms.
- Coordination among stakeholders is limited, and cross-sector collaboration is insufficient for effective implementation.
- Existing laws focus mainly on content and audience restrictions, lacking a comprehensive and integrated regulatory approach.

- Political commitment to alcohol regulation has diminished since the 1990s, weakening policy momentum.
- The alcohol industry exerts strong political and economic influence, often shaping regulations in ways that favor commercial interests over public health.
- Financial penalties for violations are minimal relative to the advertising budgets of alcohol producers, reducing their deterrent effect.
- Oversight in digital marketing is minimal, with many practices falling into regulatory grey zones.
- Self-regulation mechanisms lack robust accountability and transparency, limiting their credibility and effectiveness.
- Comprehensive research on the effectiveness of alcohol advertising restrictions in Italy is currently lacking.

Opportunities

- **European Union sup**port for stronger regulations could play a significant role in shaping alcohol advertising policy across member states. Italy could benefit from further EU-level support to introduce comprehensive bans on alcohol advertising across all types of media, including social media and influencers.
- A European-wide approach would help avoid market substitution (e.g., shifting alcohol marketing from one beverage category to another) and regulatory loopholes such as sponsorships and events targeting young people.
- Public concern about youth exposure to harmful online content, supported by digital activism and youth-led movements, is building momentum for stricter alcohol advertising regulations.
- Advancements in social media transparency tools -as developing automatic violation monitoring tools- enable clearer identification of sponsored content, supporting both enforcement and voluntary compliance with alcohol marketing restrictions.

Threats

- **Cultural and societal norms** around alcohol consumption create a barrier to more stringent alcohol marketing regulations.
- Strong political influence of the alcohol industry lobby hinders the implementation of stricter advertising regulations.
- Industry interests often take precedence over public health concerns in policy-making processes.
- Absence of dedicated studies on the effectiveness of current alcohol advertising restrictions in Italy.
- Lack of political will and funding for research on alcohol marketing and its public health impacts.
- Influence of influencers and social media is becoming key tools for alcohol advertising. As the popularity of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube grows, youth-oriented alcohol marketing becomes harder to control, especially when influencers and users continue to promote alcoholic products in a way that targets young audiences.

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

Digital culture and attitudes towards digital advertising

With regard to the interviewees' use of the Internet and social networks - investigated at the beginning of the qualitative interview – the majority of interviewees declared a daily and rather frequent use of several channels. Even in the case of interviewees defining their use as somehow "limited" (11/20) referred about at least two hours per day spent on social networks. The three most cited social networks are Instagram, TikTok, and Whatsapp. The use of YouTube is very spread too, though it is not always considered a social network. Other less frequently quoted social are BeReal, Snapchat, and Pinterest. Most of interviewees also watch series and movies on internet platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney+. The platform DAZN was also cited with respect to sport programs.

Advertising and marketing: what comes most to mind?

The most remembered

When asked about the last advertising they have seen or heard, almost all Italian interviewees struggled to formulate an immediate response. After some thoughts, most (15) associated their last memories to **TV spots**, even though all emphasised that they rarely watch television. The main perceived reason is an even lower level of exposure to digital alcohol advertising (see chapter *Perceived level of alcohol marketing exposure via Digital or other channels*).

> *They are advertisements that usually run on television, and I don't watch it much so maybe that's why (I don't remember them well), they don't usually show up on my phone, or maybe before I watch a video on YouTube, so I don't know how to say, they are not advertisements that I pay much attention to.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)

The most frequently cited TV spots concerned beer, and especially Italian beer brands (7 out of 9 mentioned): Moretti, Ichnusa, and Nastro Azzurro are the most quoted.

> *On YouTube for example I never get ads for alcoholic beverages, maybe Nastro Azzurro might have been the last one I saw on TV, or Moretti (...) I don't really remember because it's not that I'm very fond of TV, I watch it with my parents at dinner usually and that's it.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *Maybe the beer commercials where there was that group of people on the ship, maybe Nastro Azzurro. (…). (But it's) old (memory), because I don't usually watch television.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

As about spirits four brands were linked to remembered TV spots, i.e. Amaro del Capo (Italian) (7 citations), Jägermeister (2), Amaro Montenegro (1), and Aperol (1), all Italians brands except one.

> *Alcoholic beverage advertisements.... I've only seen them on television I think... then maybe I didn't pay attention, that is, on social media... maybe on YouTube something (...) but in fact I only see them on television: Jägermeister, Amaro Del Capo...* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)

Only two respondents reported a **digital advertisement** as last seen or heard. One is a "story" clip, seen on both Instagram and TikTok, which the interviewee was not even sure how to categorise, since he was not sure it was a "real adv". The clip summarises the story of Charlie Morgan, who at the age of 20, as a ball boy, was kicked by a famous footballer (Hazard) and later created a millionaire company producing vodka (AU vodka).

> *I saw it on TikTok and Instagram, however it wasn't advertising but it was simply the story, I mean it wasn't really the brand doing this... it wasn't really an advert, it was a video filming the advert (...). Rather than focusing on the vodka, this was a video that showed the shift from when he was a little boy being kicked by Hazard to ten years later (when) he arrived at his multi-million-dollar company with him trying the super vodka. There was a story behind it, it wasn't really advertising, but he got to that through his vodka factory.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)

The second is the advertisement of a venue on TikTok, which promotes the sale of a particularly popular alcoholic aperitif consisting of prosecco white wine, bitter and sparkling water, named Spritz.

> *On TikTok. there is this venue in Turin, XXX, that makes €1.50 a spritz box. (...)*
> Int: OK, and do you also remember the brand...?
> *Spritz*
> Int: Of a particular brand?
> *I don't think so, I don't think it's top quality stuff.*
> Int: Can you describe this commercial a little bit more?
> *There were these guys who kind of had... like... what do you do, you're in Turin and you haven't come to the XXX yet? Because there's the spritz box for 1.50 euro. And then there's a whole queue of people.* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)

Other three interviewees cited as last viewed alcohol advertisings those seen **on the street**; one referred to traditional signals, advertising a wine whose brand name the interviewee could not remember. Two were stencils drawn on the pavement, both advertising the Jack Daniel's spirit.

> *It occurred to me, I don't know how to define them specifically, like those stencils that you find in the street, like on the pavements, (...), especially Jack Daniel's, that there were (…) several around Turin and I remember that on the way to school.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)

Finally, some first answers to the stimulus question about the last seen or heard advertisement, show how **this topic can be interpreted among young people ambiguously**. Two interviewees indicated an advertisement for a non-alcoholic beer (Heineken), sponsored by a Formula 1 driver. One girl mentioned the cocktails verbally advised by barmen and/or friends, another mentioned a social advertisement seen at school.

> *Is it valid (as an answer) what they showed us in school against alcohol?* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *It's come to me now, I can't remember what kind of beer it was, maybe it was the Heineken (advertising) that said the fact that it had zero alcohol in it, that's what I remember, and so there was the (car) pilot who could drink it because there was no alcohol in it anyway, so he drank it anyway.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Perhaps the most heard (advertising) which they (barmen/friends) are talking about, is the Coca-Cola Malibu mix, which, together with Midori Lemon, is the one most drunk.* (IT_04_F_17_monthly drinker)

Main features and motives for remembering

Only a few interviewees did remember the plot well, while most of them recalled only some features of the clips, which they usually identified as aspects they liked more and maintained to be effective in attracting attention. The most recurrent feature is the scene context, particularly the typical **landscapes** of some Italian regions where the alcoholic beverage is produced. This is the case of the Ichnusa and Amaro del Capo spots, emphasizing the beauty of the land and the sense of belonging.

> *(The adv shows) the landscapes of Sicily, Italian in short, as being an Italian brand they showed the Mediterranean landscapes that taste it and... (...) it "takes" you... it's the landscape that grabs you and stays in your mind the most.* (IT_08_M17)
>
> *I'm immediately reminded of the one (ad) of the Sardinian beer which is Ichnusa, so with all the images of the advertisement that tell an alternative way of life (...) there are several frames of a small village in Sardinia, so for example (they say): 'these are our social networks' - so they show people who are out drinking beer or surfing – 'these are our customs' - they show just the local customs - and so they sort of compare what could be common to other places, with what they have in the region, and then they show the beer as if to say 'this is our soul, this is ours. .. what holds us together'.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

With respect to contexts, also specific **settings** were recollected, corresponding to the most typical and acceptable drinking contexts of the traditional culture, i.e. the social/convivial context related to lunches/dinners with family and/or friends, holidays, and football matches. These contexts are also linked to personal experiences, to recollections of pleasant moments with own relatives and friends.

> *The Ichnusa (beer) came to my mind because it's a beer that (…) some of my family members like and so it's the one I know a bit more about, also the setting (of the spot) (…) which reminded me that when we were in Sardinia, there was that beer and the scene was similar.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I remember the adverts before (football) matches, (with people) drinking with friends, even that one stuck with me a lot because it also showed sociability as well as the drink itself.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

Music and jingles – often coinciding with the slogan - are another feature that came to the interviewees' mind more frequently and was described as attractive. When discussing the clips styles, most of them recognized the importance of aspects able to stir emotions; in addition to music, also images and colours, rather than words.

> *The jingle, the one that says something like 'spectacular icy', that's it, isn't it? I think so. Yeah, yeah, yeah.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think that (to attract) was the purpose of the music which was present both at the beginning and at the end of the commercial, the same clip, so maybe it also reminded you of the alcohol beverage when you hear the music.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *The music of Amaro del Capo sticks in the mind, it is very melodic. I do not remember exactly what the imagery was. Mostly I remember that the effect was purely visual, it did not describe the drink itself. (...) a lot of images were produced, it was not a message sent through the use of words.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *(it remained impressed) to me more for the Sardinian songs, because (...) the soundtrack underneath was these kind of songs (…), I think typical, which are very particular and have remained impressed, not so much for the alcoholic beverage itself.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)

Another recurring image is that of **ice**, which evokes a feeling of coolness and refreshment. With respect to one specific spot (Brancamenta), in which an ice cube slides down a woman's back, a male interviewee recognized the use of the female body as typical feature of Italian advertising. For a girl the "sexualisation of the female body" used in a billboard advertising a wine, was a reason to dislike the advertising, yet also to remember it.

> *(This adv) stuck in my head because I remember (…) they did a kind of concert and there was a lady who had a drop of ice fall on his back and then by mistake it went into the glass of ice (...) it is always*

> *represented a figure of a woman because in any case women are always more attractive in advertisements, even for example when they present cars there is always a woman driving.* (IT_08_M17)
>
> *(It stuck with me) because in addition to the promotion of alcohol it also carried another message which was that of the sexualization of the female body and therefore as a female it strikes me more as a theme. (…) It bothers me because I don't find much sense in it.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Among cited reasons to remember an alcohol advertising, in addition to frequency of exposure, there is the **technical quality** of the commercial, and particularly its originality, its ability to differentiate itself from the others and/or to amaze. One interviewee included among the original appreciated features the focus on the Italian culture and heritage, contrasted with a globalised culture. Another one identified as a strange - and therefore attention-grabbing element - the combination of wine and pizza, which is usually accompanied by beer.

> *I liked the way it was made, it was very original. (…) I remember the one about Icnusa because being a fairly artisanal beer, a little more Italian, the advertising was a little more catchy. So I remember for this, just the way the advertising was made, because it was in black and white.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *I definitely found it alternative because (…) unlike the average advertisement - where they focus on (…) on masculinity or on the need to be recognized, on beauty – there they focused a little more on culture, on something alternative, for example maybe it was all in black and white (…).I found it a little prettier, a little more refined, precisely because it looked at the habits and customs of an Italian region and not something too commercial, global.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *It's a bit of an ironic advert, (…), because it said that a glass of wine goes well with pizza.* (IT_04_F_17_monthly drinker)

Reasons for remembering and liking the remembered the quoted last advertising seen on the web, relates, on the one hand, to the capacity of clips published on Instagram and TikTok to tell **a story** capable of arousing **dreams and emotions**. On the other hand, refer to the attraction of alcoholic **promotions** offered by bars and clubs on young people with limited purchasing power.

> *It's just the fact that I knew the story of this ball boy, and seeing it is quite a motivation to see how far you've come from a little boy, what you can achieve starting from nothing because it certainly wasn't his dream since he was a little boy to open a vodka company, I guess. So it was a nice message beyond the fact that he was talking about alcohol.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *I said: tempting 1.50 euro for a box of spritz. (…) Because we are all poor and therefore the less it costs the better is.* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)

ADAM exposure: perceived effects and attitudes

Perceived level of alcohol marketing exposure via Digital or other channels

In general, Italian interviewees consider the level of exposure to advertisements for alcoholic beverages to be **low or very low**, especially with respect to social media and the web, to the point that they found it difficult to remember any digital forms of advertising. This position was often remarked by making comparisons with other types of products or types of advertising (TV).

> *In the end, there are not so many examples that could come up on alcohol advertising as opposed to food advertising. (...) Alcohol advertising is not something you see that much, in my opinion.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *On YouTube for example I never get advertisements for alcoholic beverages.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *There is a lot on TV but on the Internet.... not.* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *No, honestly no, I am not aware of having seen alcohol advertisements in general, and maybe if I did see it I didn't pay attention, but I don't remember seeing it (alcohol ads) on social media or on the internet.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)

The most frequently cited reason for low exposure is the **algorithmic function** used by social media to suggest to their users the products they are most interested in and have already searched about. Accordingly, many interviewees maintained not to be a target of alcohol-marketing, since alcohol beverages are not among their personal interests.

> *(Not about) alcohol, no, (…) because at the moment the algorithms of the various social networks, I mean they obviously notice that I am not interested and therefore I never get emails, SMS... about this type of product.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *No, very little, I think also for a fact of.... as far as Instagram is concerned, also because of an algorithm, I mean I don't look for these things so I don't get these things, it goes a lot according to what I'm looking for so... but I know of people who maybe get more because they're more interested, so I think it depends a little bit on that in my case.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)

However, more than half of interviewees (13) **searched on Internet for information** related to alcoholic beverages at least once in their life. Their searches concerned information about prices, alcohol content, or drink ingredients. Despite this, almost everyone believes that this research did not result in an increase in exposure, otherwise the increase was temporary. As they said, at least they did not notice it.

> *Yes, I searched (on Google) for recipes for drinks. And then magically yes, I came across an ad shortly after. (…) But overall very rarely.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *I had looked for it precisely because I was with some friends who were curious to know which beer had the least and the most alcohol content (…) also (…) we didn't know which beers to take because there were so many of us and therefore we didn't know who perhaps drank something lighter, heavier, and so we looked for this ranking (…). And so from there I didn't look for it anymore.*
> *Int. And from there, in your opinion, did you receive more messages than before?*
> *No, I don't even pay attention to the ads now, I often don't even watch them as soon as they start, I look at the wall and rather 15 seconds, they bother me.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

A different pattern is reported about search for **premises** like clubs or pubs, which often also include messages about alcoholic beverages. In these (few) cases interviewees declared to often receive promotional messages, and they related this to their previous search for information or to the fact to have "liked" the venue's social network.

> *I searched on Instagram for the page of a place in Sesto that was hosting parties that I wanted to attend, and since then (…) many more ads for these places (clubs and pubs) started to appear. (…) Even though I did it once and that was it, in fact this thing worried me quite a bit! I mean, it's not like I searched for the same place for several days in a row, I searched for it a couple of times, then from there onwards (…) every time I opened Instagram* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *Sometimes it happened to me to go and look for Instagram pages of bars even in the past, then there was a period that the algorithm suggested to me how to make cocktails of any kind, even if I had never*

> *been interested in that sense, and so I think that something has remained in this profiling, so every now and then (…) they propose to me (…) some (ads) of alcohol or bars, and so I think it's for this.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

Another reason given about the perceived low level of exposure to digital alcohol advertising are the **restrictions applied by social platforms**, which block profiles that propose contents that in some way promote risky behaviors or are considered inappropriate and counter-educational, especially for a young audience. According to interviewees, alcohol beverages are included in sensitive topics. We will come back to this argument in the next paragraphs.

> *The only thing I never found about alcohol was the ads on social media, because social media nowadays has a lot of restrictions and even if you're an adult if you show 'wow I'm smoking', or either use swear words or alcohol, you're banned right away. (…) if you show alcohol (…) you could be banned for three months (…). So people are very careful about what they post.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)

Attitudes towards alcohol advertising exposure

Since the most widespread perception among respondents is that they are little exposed to alcohol advertising, especially through social networks, they are **generally not interested nor bothered** by it, also because they pay little attention to advertising in general and are used to skip it.

> *I have never paid too much attention to it in general, I mean it is also quite normal. I mean it is the sale of a product that yes, (…) it is certainly something that is not good, but having never seen them (or) not seeing so many of them, usually, I have not given it too much importance.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *Like many other guys I'm totally used to ignore them (Ads), to almost not look at them (…). Only a few captures my attention because maybe they are a little more different from the others (…). I don't even look at them too much, precisely because 'unfortunately' I'm totally absorbed by something else in that moment.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I would say that it doesn't bother me, especially those (ads) on television like most of the television commercials that I'm not particularly interested in, they don't bother me or interest me.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)

It is worth mentioning that many interviewees, while expressing appreciation for the technical aspects of an advertisement, also specified that they did not like to see an advertisement – as they saw it as an annoying interruption in the enjoyment of some other media product.

> *I'm annoyed by all the commercials, so... I mean, I appreciate the fact that it works. I can say that I like it in that sense, but I don't like the commercial itself, seeing it. (...) I recognize that it's a good commercial because it works and it sticks in my mind, but I don't like it. It's (just) well done. (…) I see it (advertising) as an unwanted distraction or interlude, in a content that I am consuming.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)

Perceived impact of advertising and the channels with the greatest impact

Not surprisingly, when asked whether the last remembered advertisement had aroused in them the desire to try or drink the product, half of respondents resolutely denied it. Some had never produced or were not interested in alcohol in general, while others were already familiar with the product and liked it, yet they did not feel that advertising, even if well done, has the power to push them to consume.

> *No, no, no, no, no, no (the ad did not arouse) the desire to drink, because I almost don't connect it (the ad) to the product. It's strange, I don't know if it makes sense, but I see advertising as something separate. I even like bitter, but it doesn't make me think of bitter.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *Actually, no, I just looked at how the graphics were made and how they took the photos, because there are some crappy ads that really made you feel sick, some that were really well done that made an impression on me, but no, I never felt like trying an alcoholic drink after seeing the ad, in general.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)

Some respondents (6) admitted that the last advertisement they saw had aroused in them the desire to try or consume the advertised drink. Yet, they all described it as limited effect and justify it with explanations "acceptable" to some extent, for instance by high lightening the importance of their **personal tastes** or focusing on the **quality** of the specific beverage.

> *Actually yes (it happened), just once for the lemon Peroni because I don't like sour things, but lemon is something I adore, in fact I put it everywhere, I put it on meat, I put it in Coca Cola (…), I put it literally everywhere, so the only time I felt like it, I knew it also had a very low alcohol content, I took a sip, I liked it and that was it. Then I never tasted it again.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I was saying that I don't really like beer but, well, let's say that among all of them (beers), maybe the one that if I had to consume, I would probably prefer a beer like this (showed in the ad) that seems a little more artisanal to me, not a commercial beer.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)

Others maintained they felt the desire to have the portrayed social experience, rather than to try/consume the drink itself.

> *Maybe the beer commercials, the Heineken one comes to mind where all the friends get together and watch a football match in front of a beer, (…) it actually made me want to have a similar experience.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

However, according to the normal tendency to attribute behaviours deemed not entirely socially acceptable to "others", someone drew a distinction between him – to whom advertising may at most make him want to drink, but not necessarily alcoholic beverages - and other young people of his generation, who were generally considered potentially susceptible to the persuasive effect of alcohol-marketing.

> *I'm not one to be influenced by the things I see, (…) if I want something at that moment (...) it's because I feel like it (…) maybe with food sometimes it happens (…) maybe it makes me thirsty, but not thirsty for beer, maybe it makes me thirsty because it's a drink and therefore it only makes me a little thirsty (…). I think that there are people on whom it has a much greater effect, because it's a generation very... (...) susceptible to the idea and thoughts of others, so I think that (..). a boy maybe who doesn't even drink (…), seeing an advert like that, instead gets the urge to try that beer.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

Furthermore, did emerge differences with respect to channels and types of advertising, as we will explain in the next paragraph.

Experiences and attitudes towards different types of advertising

Before analysing perceptions of different media, it should be noted that most of narratives about alcohol digital advertising did not come spontaneously but had to be stimulated by the interviewer providing some examples. This can relate not only to the exposure level, but also to a difficulty to identify some forms of marketing as advertising. Questions about how they defined marketing actually aroused some confusions and showed a not clear knowledge about the differences between advertising and marketing.

Disco and premises events

Events/promotions promoted by premises, discos and cocktail bars, on the social networks, were the digital type of advertising most frequently recognized by Italian interviewees as effective on young people. About half of the interviewees reported to have been exposed to this type of marketing which they were not sure if can be considered advertising. The mentioned marketing strategies include alcohol price promotions – e.g. consumptions included in the entrance ticket – and information about the quality and prices of the drinks, and the possibility to book private rooms in discos.

> *I follow some venues (pages) that actually advertise the evenings with alcohol as well. (…) So I remember advertisements in which they advertised, rather than the alcohol itself, the way in which it was used, so I think it is an advertisement aimed at the quality of the cocktails they make in these places, or I remember the craft beers that they posted probably to advertise the product itself.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *I have come across advertising for clubs' events several times, where the artist performing, the type of music being danced, the timetable, the price, were advertised. Another thing that is coming to mind now, the price of cocktails or the list, the table, therefore the private room – (in) which (…) the alcohol is served to you and the quantity of alcohol (is larger). (…) when advertising for clubs, nightclubs appears, it is always associated with the price of the alcohol or the various services.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)

Some premises promote drinking by organizing games, for instance a treasure hunt with cocktails as prizes. Others launch "dangerous" challenges that consist exactly of drinking a lot, like "all you can drink" offers. As an interviewee underlined, differently from users' generated alcohol contents, this type of alcohol marketing is allowed on social networks, and it is effective.

> *Every Tuesday it (the venue) does a treasure hunt where he puts up objects as prizes, whoever finds the object wins a cocktail (…) 15 cocktails up for grabs, a fantastic marketing gimmick. (…) Also, because he does it on Tuesday evenings, which is an evening when in theory no one should go to the bar. And the bar is full, always full.* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I was with this friend of mine and she said to me: look these friends of mine are doing a challenge, and she shows their story where they said 'here we paid 12 euros for... - maybe it was... Well, a cocktail. Whenever you want you can order it, if you pay 12 euros and it's a stupid challenge, here there's the risk of alcoholic coma. It's dangerous. (...) they have the blue tick, and therefore they can post these things. Obviously with a limit, without showing them like they vomit after they've been sick and all that, but they can post the photo of the alcoholic drink there.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)

Posting stories on social networks like Instagram and TikTok allows the direct involvement of simple users or PRs (public relations workers) who act as multipliers of dissemination and are often effective in promoting an event to their friends.

> *I follow a guy on Instagram who sponsors a club, (…), (one of) those who are the pre-sales sellers, the PRs, who usually advertise an event and then after it they usually post a story. (…) often these people are in private rooms, so they are in more private areas of the club, where they show that there are alcoholic beverages and everything, and so in my mind if a friend of yours sent me a video with him first of all drinking and talking about the evening, maybe that's what most encourages you to drink another evening with your same friend.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)

Based on interviewees' accounts, in most of cases this type of marketing promote drinking in general or cocktails rather than specific brands. However, there are also brands that sponsor events in clubs. This is the case of an Italian gin brand, Roby Marton, which uses social media to promote events in venues

where its products will be served. The interviewee also told how this company helped his association to organize a local fair by giving advice on what drinks to offer and how.

> *They have various products and then they really entice you, because for example there's one of their "presenter" who puts on Instagram stories: "today we're presenting the gin in this new bar". And you see him starting to prepare drinks, (…) you see that he puts on a bit of a show, there's also the trick with the bottles here and there, that's a bit… it's not that exciting, but it makes you more interested in the product, how it's created.* (IT_08_M17)

As stated above, according to the majority of respondents, this type of advertising is effective, both because often entails price promotions which are considered to be a decisive lever for young people, and because it contributes to strengthening the already culturally widespread association between alcohol and entertainment, i.e., as an interviewee noticed, to normalize alcohol use.

> *The fact is that almost all the advertisements for clubs is associated to alcohol consumption. One then makes the connection at first glance: I go dancing, equals I consume a drink. And so, let's say, this can influence the mentality of a young person.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *Very often there is a promotion that you get in with a free drink and you can't just go in and decide that you don't drink that night (…). Obviously once you get there and you have the free drink, unless you have a car, you say to yourself 'why not get some alcohol (instead of) getting a Coke or a fruit juice', and so in my opinion there is a bit of a push to drink because it is the only way to get in.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

Alcohol promotions can be offered directly by the companies on social networks, but only one interviewee reported this case, referred to TikTok, which is supposed to encourage the consumption of high quantities of alcohol.

> *Maybe sometimes companies that make offers also appear on TikTok, like 'we sell you this alcohol that would cost €100 for these 10 bottles', but for you there is an offer of €80. So they incite the buyer who consumes that alcohol on average to buy it in large quantities.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Interestingly, another quoted type of event which was deemed to exploit the attractive power of alcoholic beverages are organised trips. One interviewee brought the example of a company organizing youth travelling, which, in advertising trips on social networks, posts stories including also representations of alcohol consumption. Which, in the interviewee's opinion, makes the initiative more attractive.

> *When summer arrives, the advertisements of XXX and other associations that organize (…) leisure trips, for example (…) to Spain, and (…) in the (promotional) stories they show videos of young people partying (…) I saw some advertisements where the young people at these parties had alcohol in their hands (…) I mean practically there are these Instagram pages (…) that have specialized in these organized trips, they do events (…) (where alcohol) is not the central theme but if it wasn't there it probably wouldn't be so successful.* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)

Influencers

Narratives/memories about influencers promoting alcohol drinking were in general limited and often had to been stimulated by the interviewees. Even so, some interviewees were not sure that stories or pictures posted by influencers can be considered a form of marketing. Most frequently reported representations relate to influencers/streamers using alcohol for cooking or drinking wine or beer while eating, which is not considered a real advertisement, since you do not see a brand.

> *Maybe other influencers who are having a meal, anyway it's something that maybe is in their habits, it's not exactly the sponsorship where they put themselves there to advertise, but anyway you can see the beers.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)

The general perception of being little exposed to this type of advertising was related by the interviewees to the fact that influencers they follow have other interests, but also to restrictions imposed by the social platforms, where streamers can't show any brands nor promote drinking. However, since drinking alcoholic beverages is part of their lifestyles, they use tricks to avoid showing brands or pretend to drink non-alcoholic beverages.

> *Obviously every time these YouTubers (…) took a shot that was clearly alcoholic they said 'This is water!' . (…) It wasn't water for sure, but I think because there are policies on YouTube or other platforms that prohibit (…) these are the guys who go to parties, for example, in Ibiza or similar places, vloggers they are called, who film their own lives.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *There is a platform called Twitch, where (…) maybe you see someone (streamer) drinking a beer or maybe someone drinking a little wine, because maybe it is their daily use, but since they are live they do it live. Then often many also hide the brand because maybe they do not have collaborations and there are very narrow policies on these applications, or maybe they pour it directly into a glass or into something that you can't see the bottle with the label, and you can't see the brand or maybe they just cut the label or hide it, they censor it.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

According to one interviewee, there are some differences between different platforms, for instance TikTok's rules would be stricter then Instagram's. On the letter platform, restrictions apply only to sponsored "real" advertising.

> *On TikTok, for example, if there is a video where there is a lot of alcohol consumption, there is a red warning underneath that says 'this content might offend your sensibility' or 'if you are a weak person we do not recommend you watch it'. They warn you on TikTok, they are more advanced, even if it is a social network that came later. On Instagram, which is an older social network, if you are not paid by the alcoholic brand, they do not warn you (…) there is no block to say no, you cannot watch it, that is, you can watch it at any age.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Two interviewees cited the Boem brand, a so called "hard selter", i.e. a low-alcohol, flavoured, fizzy drink. This ready-to-drink beverage is produced and sponsorised by two Italian famous singers, Fedez, who is also a streamer, and Lazza. According to a girl, their advertising, which encourages people to stock up on the product, had a great impact.

> *Fedez who created the Boem drink, which is minimally alcoholic, like 2-3% alcohol, but even if a small part it still contains it. And when together with Lazza, the other singer, he launched it (…), there was a boom in people who went to get it, they did a lot of advertising, also showing that they buy it in large quantities, which is bad anyway, even if the amount of alcohol inside is small.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Another example is that of Hennessy cognac, which according to one interviewee often appears in rapper videos. Interestingly, he does not think this is an advertising sponsored by the producer but spontaneously chosen by some rappers to symbolize this world[3].

> *Often in the videos of Trap songs (…) they idolize a lot, I don't know why, Hennessy. I think it's a... some liquor, like a rum, a gin, but... a strong stuff, but it's never inspired me... I mean, you often see these people during videos with this bottle in their hand. (....) I think it's a symbolic thing, not that it was chosen by the brand or if it was chosen by the brand they did an incredible job because it's really often cited. (…) I don't know the story - but maybe it's something that people used to drink in some*

[3] As was explained in a recent article (https://districtmagazine.ie/dublins-food-and-drink-culture-explored/how-hennessy-became-raps-favourite-drink/) the reason why Hennessy is ubiquitous in rap songs stems from the company's long-standing retention of the African-American community.

> *ghetto from which a type of rap was born and then from there it became a symbol.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)

Three interviewees remembered clips posted on social networks (TikTok) by bartenders explaining and showing how to make cocktails. Sometimes these videos are linked to a club/venue, but they can also be personal pages, a way for this category of workers to promote their skills.

> *There was a period, towards the summer, (…), in which I would see videos of bartenders making cocktails and (…) they would tell you 'this is how you make this drink' and they would show you the various steps to make it. This had appeared on the home page several times.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *Scrolling through TikTok there is always Balcanico Gin, there is this guy who makes every drink with a Balcanico gin, every time, even if he makes a different cocktail, because this is a bartender, a barman.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)

Though the exposure to this type of alcohol marketing is considered as limited in general, **interviewees maintained that influencers' messages can be effective** in conditioning the imagination of young people, and thus in arousing the desire to drink alcohol. However, this effect is not attributed to oneself but to "others", younger or more influenceable people.

> *There could be the streamer that I follow, who is followed by young people who are 20 years old or more, and therefore are not easily influenced, but obviously there are those who are younger and maybe they just say, 'he's doing it, I'll do it', they start drinking and so on.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *(Influencers) have a role that is quite - that is not a role, a power perhaps, if you can say so - quite impactful on… I don't say people, but on young people more than anything else. Not all people, more on young people, because especially in this period that we are living, social media is a very used thing. Especially young people, so the message reaches us more.* (IT_11_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *If an influencer is 18-19 years old, he also has an underage audience, and therefore for me he brings young people much closer to alcohol consumption. Then it will be the strange person, perhaps the more decisive personality, to say no, I am far from it because I know it is harmful. (But) a more impressionable person (…) he does not even think about it and involuntarily gets influenced.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Users-generated-contents

Sometimes after been stimulated, slightly less than half of interviewees also mentioned users-generated contents posted on social network as a kind of alcohol marketing. According to someone, picture and clips posted by young people while they are drinking, for instance in discos, are quite frequent. This is interpreted as a way of showing off, of looking cooler. In most of cases, however, interviewees tended to distance themselves from this behaviour, and some speculated that it may actually hide a feeling of inadequacy and loneliness.

> *The Instagram stories of my peers and the videos on TikTok (…) when for example you go dancing or go out at night, many times it happens that peers post photos of the glass of alcohol, not specifically which (brand) obviously (…) Because it is something almost forbidden, so doing something against the rule, breaking the rule, makes you great, makes you cool, makes you beautiful, that is, it is to show yourself in some way to others, in my opinion. Through that photo they say: 'look, I'm having fun, look at the life I lead, what I do is fun'. And probably alcohol is one of the expedients, it is that substance that makes you have more fun than when you are normal, you are sober.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)

> *For example in the stories (…) you go to a disco, there are all those who show, for instance Don Perignon, you see everyone who has these 6-liter bottles of vodka or the 3-liter one, with all the little fountains (…) with the shield that lights up, and that thing encourages young people to buy them because they say, come on, how cool, now I'll buy it, I'll post a story - because they do it only to post a story - look how cool, I have a bottle, look at this, look at that.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *Many people go to discos and (…) they often post photos of themselves drinking, or jokes about the fact that maybe these people (…) like drinking, for example they often post and in the caption they write "I'm an alcoholic", just like that, because maybe they like drinking a lot, or the name of some friends - anyway yes, I know a few, I would say many, of my age, people who like drinking anyway and find pleasure in it. (…) because it's probably what (…) seems normal to do at our age, probably. Or maybe because they feel lonely, because often to be part of a group people feel the need to do this kind of activity (…) maybe you're in a disco, maybe you can't even have that much fun, to let yourself go, maybe substances like that can help you feel better, less out of place, well, that's a fairly normal thing in adolescent life.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

Others have emphasised the playful meaning of memes depicting drunk people being exchanged between friends or created by social networks users for fun, also inspired by the world of video games.

> *Sometimes this method is used in a comical way, that is, to laugh. Friends of those who are tipsy or drunk make videos or photos that make people laugh, then they post them to amuse. Because it shows that person who is tipsy or drunk who has done something funny.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *When people are drunk it's funny to use it as a meme, more than anything else. (…) Or there are the edits where... I don't know if you know, on Minecraft there's the bottle of water (…) In the first (slide) there was a bottle on Minecraft which is the game, the one with bricks. And in the next slide there was a bottle of… I don't know what it was, maybe always Jäger, where it meant the before and then the after, in an ironic way.* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *There is this trend, let's say, of going to drink and then arriving in terrible conditions. So maybe there are these memes on this topic here, but I always take it very lightly, but then I don't put it into action (this behaviour) you know.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker*)*

This type of unintentional alcohol marketing, according to someone, is the most powerful, because of the importance of the peers' role in influencing young peoples' choices. However, in this case also, rules applied by social platforms seem to limit somewhat the spread of this kind of advertising, at least among minors. One interviewee reported cases of users banned because of posting stories with alcohol.

> *The most influential form of advertising are friends, they are the people you hang out with, and (your are connected to) also in social media (...) for those who see this story, this post on social media, maybe in bed, they are studying, they are doing something else maybe be less fun, it makes you want to, that is, it makes you want to... how to say... yes, it makes you want to be in their place (at drinking with friends).* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *I also have ex-friends who make videos like this, stories on Instagram, or photos like this with the alcohol in their hand. (…) or they show the huge glass or post the little photo. (…) I used to see them, but it was quite rare, I mean I don't see them often enough anymore. (…). Many of them have been banned, they lost their accounts and (so) said 'no, I don't post these things anymore because I don't (want to) risk it anymore'. (…) there are those who try to censor the brand by putting stickers or something on it… and there are those who spin the bottle so the brand isn't seen because they risk copyright. So very often they don't show it.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)

Product placement

Most of interviewees did not thought spontaneously at product placement as a form of marketing. When stimulated or asked about, many were confused about differences between product placement and sponsorships. Most of reported examples, which on the whole are few, refer to TV and movies, rather than to social networks. Furthermore, they found it simpler to remember product placement examples with respect to products other than alcoholic beverages

> *I don't remember what the term is, but it's when they are advertised in a veiled way in products. Well, the most classic examples, in the Italian style, let's say, could be Moretti, for example, Ichnusa, the Sardinian beer. (...) especially (in) movies, not series, you can see the beer label, there will be hundreds of them.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)

With respect to movies and series, most of interviewees thought that the use of alcoholic beverages is very often represented, yet they were not sure if this was embedded marketing or not. Many agreed that these representations, many coming from foreign cultures, can promote youth alcohol consumption anyway, as they normalize it, and contribute to strengthen the association between alcohol and fun.

> *The one that immediately comes to mind when talking about beer is Homer Simpson, who is a big Duff drinker. Then hundreds of series are set in bars, cafes, an example is My Mother, which is a series set in New York, which takes place mostly in a pub so beer is almost always present. (…) there are really so many (…). So it's really impossible to remember every single film or series I've seen containing alcohol.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *Yes, especially in the very... how to say... The American movies, there's a lot… – alcohol is very present, like the classic party with the mega red glasses in the house, when the parents go away for two or three days and then someone decides to organize a big party.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *In the end, for better or for worse, if not in all, in 90% (of movies) there is a reference or you can see that they do the action of drinking and often maybe even exaggerating because they are seen... however our age is often associated with partying, drinking, (…) - so fun is often associated with partying strictly with alcohol and movies very often represent this thing.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *(in the series Scam) it seemed a bit like a hobby to go out at night and go for a drink, and this thing also struck me a bit. (…) it seems that it presents it to you as a positive thing, as a normal thing (…) and it seems like they only have fun when they go out at night.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

One interviewee, as example of product placement, referred to pictures used to promote premises where specific alcohol beverages can be put on the background.

> *Maybe, I don't know, in a picture of the nightclub they're promoting, maybe putting them in the background. So not depicting them as the main subject, but a person, if they have alcohol as their target, the eye still falls to see them.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Another one, although he was not sure, speculated that alcohol brands, or logos designed to recall them, also appear in certain video games, as is the case with other types of products. In any case, as the young interviewee pointed out, introducing alcohol products into video games that players can virtually buy, is a form of marketing that can encourage consumption. He also underlined that advertising inserted in videogames might be the most powerful, because young gamers are the most influential target as "they do not take their eyes off the screen".

> *Maybe in realistic games, for example a game where you are a character who lives in this city and (…) you go to buy beer and it (a logo) appears on the beer - it's an American logo I think, because I've never seen it - but the beer has a logo, that is, it's a beer with a name, and so maybe (this is) also*

> *marketing. (...) you see a brand of a beer, whether it's invented or not, in any case a form of advertising for an alcoholic beverage, because in any case the beer is always there.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

Sponsorship

Overall, the topic of sponsorship was not extensively explored in the interviews, as very few interviewees could recall any alcohol-sponsored online events. The most frequently mentioned alcohol-related sponsorships were in sports events, but interviewees were generally unable to recall the exact nature of the sponsorship. One interviewee speculated that differences in sponsorship regulations between the US and Europe might result in lower exposure in the latter. Another mentioned a well-known sports journalist promoting Heineken beer on his Instagram account.

> *In America, there are still sponsors of some sports series (…) that comes out every now and then, like Bud, an American beer -, or even in Italy, whether it's Moretti, Peroni, Ichnusa (…) Or on the shirts of some athletes of an American sports series, American football, there's the sponsor of Bud, which is an American beer. In Europe, I haven't seen this thing much (…). Or for example, even while watching a match on DAzN, it often happens that a short advert for beer comes out at the bottom (…) many brands do it, but it's precisely during the matches that they show beer.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> Int. Now you told me about sponsorships, have you seen them online or on TV?
> *The ads are always on TV, but this sports journalist (Fabrizio Romano), has this sponsor (Heineken) that he uses for example also in Instagram stories.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)

Most of the reported examples of sponsorship referred to football—where sponsors appear on the advertising boards around the pitch—and Formula 1. The most frequently mentioned brands associated with sponsorship were beer brands.

> *Well, in football, for example there is Heineken, or Becks, in F1 there is Martini, I think (…). There are various brands that sponsor various footballers, various sportsmen precisely, to make themselves better known.* (IT_08_M17)
>
> *Maybe, the UEFA Champions League, I'm not sure that had as a sponsor the world of alcohol, perhaps a beer.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

Knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol regulation

Acceptability of alcohol marketing regulation and alcohol control policies

Knowledge of alcohol control polices (ACP)

Practically none of the respondents were aware of the Law restricting alcohol advertising. Only one interviewee had a vague recollection of having heard about it during a law lesson at school, but had no clear idea of the contents. Nevertheless, the majority of interviewees assumed that some forms of limitation existed, not only from personal experience (low exposure) but also from 'logic', i.e. by associations with the (better known) tobacco regulation.

> *As far as I know, no (there are no norms), but I imagine and hope that there is something, but I don't know anything.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think there are some restrictions, because (…) I don't think that there is free rein in making an alcohol advertisement, that's it.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> Int: You told me you were sure about the norm, but then you basically said what the norm is, do you remember where you learned this information?

> *I went by logic and memories... and yes, even a minimum of common sense: I knew that cigarettes can't be advertised and I don't even remember why, but I went by logic about alcohol. I hoped (...) there was something that would at least protect kids.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, although the interviewees did not know the norm, most of them were fully aware about the rules regulating advertising and sensitive topics on the main social networks, which they generally agree with and consider effective, with respect to alcohol beverages.

> *On Instagram they don't let you put certain videos because if you put a clip of a drunk person - social media lately don't let you put certain content or in any case they write that it can harm the person - so it seems to me that TikTok does it.* (IT_04_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *Actually the only thing I've never found about alcohol was the ads on social media, because social media nowadays have a lot of restrictions and, even if you're an adult, if you show 'wow I'm smoking', or either swear words, or alcohol, you are banned immediately.* (IT_07_F_1)
>
> *No, I don't know a specific law regarding alcohol itself, rather I know more or less how the guidelines of the social networks I use work, which are often severe especially on the use of alcohol, and therefore it is difficult to include it in your content, due to bans or in any case sanctions that may exist.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)

Looking at other norms regulating alcohol, the interviewees generally knew both the law about underage drinking and drinking and driving. With respect to the first one, most of interviewees agreed with this restriction, especially because they are aware of the alcohol-related risks and of the fact that risks are greater for youngers (see chapter on Perceived risks). However, they generally maintained that the ban on serving alcohol to minors is often circumvented (see chapter on Accessibility to alcohol). Furthermore, although they agree that the State is required to place restrictions, some raised the doubt that banning may increase the desire to consume among minors, the temptation to break the rules.

> *Surely all the rules that exist for driving and so on are certainly very very very important. Maybe yes, the fact that (…) around alcohol and young people this atmosphere has been created, let's say, of "you can't", is something that pushes even more (…) to want to try. But it is right that the State sets limits, that it tries to limit as much as possible (although) clearly you can't totally prevent young people from... they will always find a way.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)

The norm regulating drinking and driving, was fully supported by all interviewees, the main argument being the responsibility to others. The majority also agreed with the absolute ban on drinking imposed on novice drivers (first 3 years from getting the license), as they are less able to drive. One interviewee was happy about the (recent) introduction of the same ban on the ski slopes too.

> *The ban on drinking and driving for me falls into another category, that is public safety, because then at that point you become a threat to others.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *On that (norm of drinking and driving) yes, 100% I totally agree, as a road driver I totally agree.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *In the case of driving obviously you become a danger especially for others. So in my opinion yes, these things (rules) are right and I would like them to be more controlled.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Now they've put controls and balloon tests also on the slopes, so we're a little safer.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

With respect to compliance of the norm, most think it is respected, especially by young people, also because of fear of incurring penalties that are considered severe.

> *Among the people I know and who are a little closer to me, the norm is usually respected, some, others I know do not respect it.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I have a few friends who are just starting to get their driving licence and they are all absolutely uncompromising about it, that is, they don't even think about drinking and driving.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *I am aware that if I have to go out and I have to go for a drink, ok I'll go for a drink but I'd rather walk home because now (...) these rules are being pushed even harder.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)

Positions towards alcohol marketing regulation

If in general Italian interviewees think that the alcohol marketing influence is limited compared to that of the (drinking) culture where drinking is normalized and associated to sociability and fun, this does not mean that they consider the norm limiting alcohol advertising inappropriate or completely unnecessary and ineffective. On the contrary, most interviewees considered it “ethically correct” and “necessary”.

> *I was not aware of them (norms), and I think that yes, they are measures that are ethically right to adopt. But… I am sorry to say that they are useless. Fundamentally, they do not lead a minor not to drink. The precaution is right—that is, ethically and personally, on a human level, it is right, right—but it does not prevent it. (…) I don’t know how things could go if these restrictions on advertising did not exist, but certainly minors consume alcohol anyway. In general, everyone drinks, even with these restrictions. Therefore I think it is necessary, but not effective.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

Almost everyone **agreed with the need to limit alcohol advertising**, as they recognised many risks related to using alcohol and considered it a moral duty of the State to protect minors, who are deemed to be an influential target group.

> *Yes, of course I agree, because (…) I'm sure that if there wasn't this law… I don't have the faintest idea of how many advertisements you'll see around on which channels. (…) because in any case it's well known (…) those who consume alcohol, have negative effects on the moment and in the future in particular, given that (drinking) damages in particular the synapses, in any case an area of our brain. It's very right that there are these rules then.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *It is recognised that alcohol can cause addiction and therefore in my opinion it is right that alcohol is not advertised in such a propaganda way.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)

Only a few interviewees expressed a more tolerant position, in that they recognised that marketing is necessary to industry and that alcohol is a legal product, after all. Arguments in favour of this position also include the perception that the actual regulation is already rather effective and that adults who want to drink have, to a certain degree, the right to be informed about products. However, they should be also informed about risks (see paragraph on Suggestions).

> *I think that alcohol is a product that, like many other legal products, needs advertising. Like all other advertising, I tend not to pay much attention to it because advertising is an incredible nuisance to me. (…). So I don't distinguish alcohol advertising from normal advertising, also because there are few. Also because, as you said, they are not broadcast during protected time slots.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *I say that it is right (to impose limits) (…) because in the end if a company or a beer brand wants to make itself known (…) and wants to make money, it is not that they (the company) are interested if people get drunk, or they feel bad about that (..) (But) it would be wrong in my opinion to put too many restrictions, because then it would no longer be an advertisement, but it would be something minimal in which you don't even know what product you are looking at, what product you are dealing with, what the quality of product is.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

> *Advertising is right because it is still marketing, it has to be done, there is nothing wrong with it at the end of the day, as it is done for cigarettes, it can be done for alcohol, everything is fine. The important thing is to know how to do it, so not to give a positive message about alcohol, to put it in black and white that it is a product to be consumed from a certain age onwards and that has effects, etc., that there is nothing wrong with not drinking, and that in particular some people should not drink alcohol - whether you are a driver, whether you are person who suffers from heart problems, kidney problems... - so as long as it is done like this - I don't think I have ever seen bad advertising, let's say, about alcohol - it's fine, I have no problem. If one day it resulted, for example, in bad advertising, I would go against it, obviously.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)

Perceived effectiveness of regulations

After having been informed about the existence and the provision of the alcohol-marketing norm, some interviewees related it to the perception of being little exposed to alcohol advertising, especially to digital marketing. Someone maintained that the norm is effective in limiting negative messages, so that actual alcohol advertising does not encourage the use of alcohol.

> *In fact, the law that was put in place, I don't know, by the State (works) because it's not the first thing that comes to mind, a spot of some alcohol advertising, (…), if you reflect on it, it's not that you see them that often.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *The ads that came to mind didn't have a negative message anyway, so the ads that come to mind don't make anyone want to buy that product for the alcohol itself.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)

However, many speculated about the **limited impact of the norm, for different reasons**. First, because it is impossible to totally avoid young people's exposure to alcohol advertising, both on TV and social media. Although there is an age limit for opening a social network account[4] or accessing certain content, many agree that these rules are often and easily circumvented, e.g. by creating false adult accounts.

> *(Ban on TV) It's not much use, since kids today don't use TV at all. (…) They should put them (bans) especially on social media. (…) They should put more restrictions and check if you're really the right age to be on social media, because maybe a person my age (…) is aware that alcohol is not good for you, while an 11-year-old boy thinks, 'Wow, how cool, I want to try it.'.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Well, yes, it is correct, (…), but in social media it is impossible for something like this (ban) to exist, because (…) all the emails of all the young people ('s accounts) are from adults. So, you cannot control advertising on social media.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *Norm like this are perhaps a bit useless because obviously… For example, an advertisement on TV, one cannot know if who is watching is a minor or not (…). Same thing for social media, I mean, it is difficult to know who is actually watching.* (IT_11_M_17_monthly drinker)

Another reason why the impact of alcohol advertising regulation is considered limited is that marketing is generally not seen as playing a major role in influencing alcohol consumption. This is not only because young people, having grown up in an environment saturated with advertising, tend to ignore it, but more importantly because it is **viewed as far less influential than other factors**—such as peer pressure, parental example, and the broader social and cultural context. Overall, most interviewees believe that advertising can at most reinforce an existing interest in consuming alcoholic beverages—an interest that is already deeply rooted and plays a significant role in a social and cultural context where drinking is

[4] The minimum age to register with a social network in Italy is actually 14 years.

normalized, if not encouraged, due to its association with positive meanings (see paragraph on Drivers for Drinking).

> *Even if there were no alcohol advertising, I think young people would still buy alcohol and look for it. I don't think it's completely useless, but I believe alcoholic beverages would probably enjoy the same level of success they have now.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

Suggestions to improve alcohol prevention

Several respondents suggested that it would be appropriate to include messages **informing about risks** and harmful effects in advertisements or warning labels on the products themselves. This position draws a parallel with tobacco, gambling and medicines, which are therefore considered to entail similar risks, first of all that of addiction.

> *There are also advertisements for gambling, but then you always have to be delicate in not doing it, so that it is an advice for everyone, but for example in gambling advertisements it is specified several times 'for adults' and that it can be addictive.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *They could also force the brand to include (…) warnings about alcohol, so I don't know: is the product exclusively for adults, or: excessive consumption could lead to such a consequence, to such consequences, just like for medicines.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *There are some advertisements where there are warnings at the bottom that remind you of something, in my opinion the same thing could be done (…) like for example on cigarettes, which anyway say smoking kills, but people buy them anyway.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)

Based on the same parallel with addictive substances[5], according to someone, alcohol advertising should be **totally banned**, while others maintained that it should at least be quantitatively reduced. Many, agreeing with the principle behind the norm, emphasized the need to protect minors in order to reduce the risk of developing addiction problems in adulthood. Interestingly, one interviewee claimed that a reduction in alcohol advertising would not impact on sales, as adults are not much conditioned by it.

> *My position remains the same as before, that is alcohol is a drug. (…) now it is a hyperbole, but I think it is a very harmful drug and among other things it is probably the most widespread in the world (…) so I think it would be better not to publicize it, that is, to let people be interested on their own, without being too influenced.* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *It would be right to reduce the number of advertisements for alcohol in general, because adults are free to buy alcohol, and I don't think that advertisements are what force them or what encourage them to buy, so I don't think that reducing advertisements could be to the detriment of companies that produce certain things. So, in general I would say to reduce advertisements (...) and to reduce to the minimum possible the advertisements that concern environments in which there are minors.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *I see it very much as an adult thing, and so in truth even if there was less pression on adults, less advertising, perhaps it would have positive effects, particularly on young people because obviously they will be adults in the future and the sooner you start drinking, the sooner you increase the risk of situations like alcoholism.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

Two interviewees suggested total ban of **spirits** advertising in particular, as – in line with the wet drinking culture - they consider beverages with a higher alcohol content more dangerous than beer or wine.

[5] Gambling and tobacco advertising is actually subject to more restrictive bans than for alcohol. A total ban was actually imposed on both cited products during the research period. This might indicate a not clear definition of advertising.

> *I'm sure there shouldn't be any ads for spirits because it would be like selling razor blades to cut your wrists. It doesn't seem very fair to me. (...). While beer, things like that, in my opinion that's not a problem.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *What comes to mind is tobacco advertising, which, if I remember correctly, obviously they don't show any tobacco advertising on television and they can't even sponsor events or things, and so maybe for spirits I would agree with introducing a law like that.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

Finally, a couple of interviewees suggested to increase **social advertising**, including in the school setting, to counterbalance and counteract the impact of alcohol advertising and drinking normalisation.

> *Social marketing, therefore educational advertising and less product sponsorship to replace and balance what people hear around (...) or maybe even at school these things could be done, (…) do some (social) marketing to make pupils understand the risks.* (IT_19_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *It must be more regulated and also focused on the good (positive prevention messages), not only on making people drink, (…) but also point at certain (negative) aspects because after years you will suffer from it.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)

Attitudes towards drinking and main drivers of drinking

Personal attitudes to alcohol and perceived risks

Most participants described their alcohol consumption as limited and somehow regulated. While explaining their attitudes towards drinking, almost all of them drew certain boundaries distinguishing what they consider acceptable and unacceptable drinking. These boundaries reflect the most important informal norms traditionally associated with Italian drinking culture, the main ones being (limited) drinking frequency and occasions, specific related motives for drinking, age differences, and the type and quality of beverages. The most appropriate settings for drinking are considered to be celebrations—including those within family contexts—and party settings. In these contexts, alcohol is seen as something that can enhance the fun and enjoyment of being together with friends. Conversely, drinking (to the point of drunkenness) is not considered a valid goal in itself.

> *Once in a while, on certain occasions, such as a party with friends or, for example, a toast on New Year's Eve, these occasions can be acceptable because, on the one hand, it also helps to have fun on a certain evening, but, in my opinion, it should not be a frequent activity and not to become addiction to it. (...). For me, for my age and the way I am, once a week, every week, is already too frequent.* (IT_01_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I like drinking anyway, and I think drinking with friends is a fun thing that helps the evening to be more fun, but going to a party (…) not for friends but to drink, to get drunk, it seems to me (…) that's not right because if your aim is to get drunk and that's all, I mean then it's just bad for you. Whereas if your goal is to have fun, and to have fun you have a drink with your friends, I don't think it's a problem then.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)

Many interviewees underlined the importance of their **personal taste** in their drinking choices; especially the younger ones, often declared not to like the taste of alcoholic beverages, while some of the older seemed to be proud for having **changed their attitudes** over years and developed a taste for quality drinks and a certain degree of knowledge and awareness about.

> *There are people who throw it (alcohol) down in shots, but it doesn't make sense. That is, if I have to drink, I'd rather spend 20 euro more (…) for something that is not petrol, (…) but there are people who are blinded by these things, because their drinks contain more ethanol than real, good-quality alcohol.*

> *It's like with distillates: the first and last parts should be thrown away, because they're pure ethanol — and people don't care, they just drink and drink, without knowing what they're doing, often unknowingly.* (IT_08_M17)
>
> *I had a short phase when I was a bit younger, even underage, and I consumed alcohol not frequently, but on Saturday nights when I went out, it was not uncommon. Then as I got older (...) (…) I don't go out with the intention of drinking. If I do, I do it much more responsibly. Therefore, I drink for the taste of alcohol, and that's all. It's just one beer, one cocktail or a bitter, whatever.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)

The importance of the quality and personal taste is often contrasted with **drinking to get drunk**, which is somewhat unanimously criticized and considered inappropriate, a not reasonable and acceptable motive to drink.

> *I personally drink only for the taste, I've never got to the level of the true intoxication of alcohol, so I don't look for the level of drunkenness, you could say, (…), so I search for the best drinks and the drinks that inspire me the most, or, for example, drinks that I don't know and I'm interested in knowing the taste because I'm curious.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *Of course, if I'm partying I'll have a few more cocktails, but it's not like I ever go crazy, in the sense that I don't really like to drink, so the only thing I like quite a bit is wine, but even then, I don't drink it without a reason.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

The Italian sample include only three interviewees who never drank in the last month. Two of them are not life-time abstainers, since they have "tried" sometimes to drink some beverages. Their position towards alcohol does not qualitatively differ from that of the majority, i.e. they do not criticize those who drink, as long as drinking does not entail drunkenness and it not a consequence of "wrong" reasons, like wanted to be like others. Their reported reasons not to drink are the personal taste in the first place and the aim to avoid related risks (see next paragraph).

> *I don't know, I just don't like them. I mean, it's not really about anything else... So I think it's just about the taste. In fact, I don't like them.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

Perceived risk for oneself or others

The attitudes concerning drinking are strictly related to perceived risks, as **alcohol-related risks are the main reported reason to self-regulate frequency and amounts** of own drinking (or not to drink). Interviewees mentioned a wide range of negative consequences derived from drinking, including both short-term and long-term risks, mental and physical problems, self-harms and harms to others.

> *There are (consequences) in the short and long term, long term are the classic diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver or even alcohol addiction (...) like many other addictions (…) and therefore addiction as such also creates health, physical and psychological problems.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *In my life I've never gotten drunk, I've never drunk anything—I mean, I've never even had a sip of beer. It's just not something I do, because I don't like the idea of drinking alcohol. It feels wrong to hurt myself like that. I know that drinking a glass of wine just to try it isn't really harmful, but to me it feels like something very adult.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

The most quoted type of risk is organ damage (13 citations), namely harm to liver and to brain, and addiction (12). Almost all of interviewees underlined that the risk of damage to health is greater in the case of adolescents and young people, when the development process is not yet complete.

> *Above all, there are physical risks (…) even permanent risks (...) I'm talking about the liver now, because I know that it's the main part that gets damaged, so in the long run you risk shortening your*

> *life, you risk living your life with limitations, maybe you can no longer run, you can no longer have fun, you can no longer do certain things. You risk from a mental point of view, because in the end I think that in addition to the liver, in addition to the parts of the body, the head, the brain is no longer able to connect or in any case to reason as before.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *After years you'll feel it: even all the people who now say 'I'm going to go and get black drunk', (...) I already know that in ten years' time these people will be drinking water, drinking coke and orangeade because their liver will be ruined.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *Especially when you are young, the effects of alcohol on the liver, stomach, blood, brain… I think they (risks) are so many, I can't speak specifically about them, but they will certainly be so many, especially at a young age.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)

Consistently with representations of drunkenness, **intoxication is seen as a risk itself**, especially with respect to the loss of control and unwanted hangovers like vomiting. Losing self-control and awareness is linked to the risk of doing or saying things that one might later be ashamed of, and to the risk of causing or being involved in accidents. **Learning to identify one's own limit** is considered important in order not to run into negative consequences, so it is seen by many as an essential step in the alcohol socialization process.

> *There are more cases of minors ending up in an alcoholic coma than adults. Perhaps precisely because one does not know one's limit, because they are the first times (...). But also any other risk deriving from drink-driving, getting hurt in a situation of altered consciousness where you are not yourself and where you cannot understand the risks.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I threw up once, but only once, and from there I realised that (drinking) so much is not good - it wasn't even so much, but for me too much. (…). I just didn't want to get to the point of throwing up.* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *There are lines you cannot cross, for example driving in a drunken state, reaching levels of drunkenness where you don't even control yourself, maybe even using it as an excuse to do actions that are reprehensible when sober (...) Maybe (the limit is up) to be more confident but at the same time to be perfectly in control of yourself, not to go into alcoholic coma and not to do things you wouldn't do sober. So for me control over yourself is something that always has to be kept.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

Role of peers and social environment

Perceived peers' attitudes

When questioned about their peers' (perceived) habits and attitudes towards alcohol, the interviewees often resorted to "othering processes" (Rolando, Törrönen, & Beccaria, 2020, Rolando & Beccaria 2021), pointing out the differences between young people who drink to get drunk and those who drink more consciously, to celebrate with friends, without going over the limit. They recognize that there are many *other* young people who seek drunkenness and associate alcohol with partying and fun. However, they tend to distance themselves—and their close friends—from this drinking pattern. This does not mean that drunkenness is entirely absent from their experiences; rather, it is a behaviour considered inappropriate to some extent, especially when it is deliberately and frequently sought.

> *I've heard (…) some of my classmates that (…) they couldn't wait to go to a certain party and get drunk. And this was always something that didn't really mean anything to me because, I mean, if you get drunk then you risk getting sick, you risk doing something stupid, so I've noticed that it's a bit like an escape route, but normally, (…) my friends see it (drinking) as an opportunity to get together and*

> *have fun without exaggerating. Then there have been times when I'm sure even some of my friends have gone too far, but it happens every now and then.* (IT_18_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I more or less hang out with people who think like me, (…), I generally don't want to be with people who just want to drink or smoke for fun (…). Obviously, there are those who drink more because they can stand more, it's their own business if they're sick (...) It depends from person to person, (…) there are those who can control themselves and those who can't.* (IT_17_F_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *There are people who say 'tonight I drink so I have fun', there are people who say 'tonight I don't drink so I have fun', so let's say it's really different as a group, as people too.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

This type of representation is spread above all among the older interviewees. Someone referred about the already mentioned change of attitudes - i.e. a shift between an experimental style of consumption entailing intoxication - to a more moderate style of consumption, characterised by increased taste, less amounts of drinking and more focus on the pleasure of being together.

> *If you had interviewed me four years ago, I would have told you that a party without alcohol doesn't go anywhere, while now (...) people are all calmer than in high school (...) (where) who organised the party bought a lot of alcohol just... poor quality and a lot of quantity and (…) you drank and danced, but now they're much quieter evenings, you go to the bar, you talk, you share things, and it's also more interesting.* (IT_09_M_19_weekly drinker)

The shift between alcohol use values is considered to some extent the result of a maturation process, since it is recognized that many adolescents drink to drunkenness because of peer pressure, to show off, feeling older and more confident. However, also "more adult" motives to drink are attributed to peers, like a way to achieve a sense of "time out" and coping with stressful emotions. While showing off is considered unappropriated, the celebratory use value makes sense to adolescents too.

> *Maybe it's a way for those who are shy, to come out of their shyness, to have fun during an evening and not have so many problems, and then a way to leave the week behind and for an evening to be (…) more sociable, to be better together (…). Making a toast with wine even for our age has a different value than making coke, precisely because of what it represents.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

The views of non-drinkers do not differ substantially from those of the other interviewees—that is, their representations are very similar; they do not condemn those who drink moderately, but they directly or indirectly criticize who do it to show off or to go along with the group. One of them underlined she has no problem not drinking even when she is in a group of peers who.

> *I don't think it's so out of the ordinary that some teenagers find comfort in that (drinking), then there are those who do and those who don't. (…) I can still feel at ease in a group of people all drinking around me, (…) but many do, and - as for posting it and documenting the fact that they're looking at or drinking (…) maybe to show others that they do it (…) to be cooler (…) - of course it depends on how you look at it, I don't think so, but maybe they do.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

Role of family and cultural traditions

Adults' and especially parents' example is considered one of the most important driver for drinking, which was discussed by the majority of interviewees. Someone criticized parents who allow their offspring to use alcohol in the family context, someone else believes that the best thing is to find a (difficult) balance between permissiveness and restraint, because outright prohibition can increase a young person's desire to drink.

> *I think that at a certain age anyway... either you want to go to alcohol or it comes to you, so... I mean, just at dinners with your parents they drink wine anyway, but that since you were little. So after a while*

> *you will necessarily try to drink something, even just to imitate adults, (...) so sooner or later you get close to alcohol by force of circumstances.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *If you grew up in a family that doesn't drink or in any case where it is said that it is bad for you, you still drink but (only) sometimes. (…) If they drink in the family, then they say, well, they (my parents) let me do, I can continue to drink.* (IT_04_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *(Parents) have to be extremely clever, because (…) there is a fine line between limiting, to make sure that the person understands why something is wrong, and giving too many limits and making them have both the desire for this thing that has always been forbidden to us, that we have never had, and also the curiosity to try it (…) and therefore they have to deal with these two sides of the coin to get to the message they want to give them, because unfortunately it is very easy to give a wrong and ineffective message.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)

Only one of the three respondents who had not consumed alcohol in the past month attributed their low interest in drinking to a family trait.

> *My mom—the most she drinks is after a meal, yeah, a small glass of white wine. My dad, very very rarely, I've seen him drink beer—like, maybe when we go out to eat, he'll get a bottle, in a pizzeria for instance. My brother drinks very little too, because like me, he's not really into drinking. (…) I don't like alcohol by itself. In general, we're a non-drinking family.* (IT_05_M_19_non-drinker)

Accessibility of alcohol

Family

In line with previous studies (Rolando et al. 2012; 2014; Rolando & Beccaria 2018) most interviewees reported that their **parents** did not enforce strict prohibitions regarding moderate drinking. Rather, parents focused on educating them about the associated risks and advising them on how to avoid these, primarily by steering clear of drunkenness. This reflects a generally permissive approach aimed at fostering awareness and encouraging responsible, moderate alcohol consumption instead of outright bans. The socialization process typically involved allowing them to sample alcoholic beverages in family settings, such as lunches or dinners during celebrations, always under parental supervision. It's worth mentioning that none of those who never drank in the last month (3) attributed their choice not to drink to a parental prohibition.

> *They never really imposed any specific rules on me. I mean, I remember when we were little, sometimes they'd let us taste a sip of wine, just like that. Then, at dinners with family friends, they'd put a glass at your place once you reached a certain age—though I couldn't even tell you exactly when. As for going out, they know I drink, and they've never set any specific rules. But at the same time, I've never come home in a state where... you know, they'd feel the need to.* (IT_02_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *They never made a big deal of it. (…) As early as 15-16 years old (...) it depends on the context; if we were at the (family) table, between us, no, absolutely. If it was a lot more people, it was an event like Christmas, Easter, New Year's Eve, and I was drinking from my father's glass a little bit of beer, a little bit of wine, they never forbade me, they never told me absolutely you can't touch beer until you're of age, they told me: don't get the habit! (laughs) don't get used to it.* (IT_15_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *They told me, 'Do whatever you want, just don't come home drunk. Do what you want.' But I'm not that kind of person—I don't like that stuff.* (IT_07_F_16_non-drinker)

For some of interviewees, permission to taste an alcoholic beverage – for example to participate in a toast – has recently evolved into permission to consume an entire drink with one's parents. Some

boundaries emerged with respect to different types of beverages, i.e. between beer and wine, on the one hand, and spirits on the other hand.

> *It happened a fortnight ago that we went to the beach one weekend (…) for carnival and we (brothers) had a Spritz[6] there with them, but it was the first time. Then sometimes when we're at dinner we taste from their glasses, but it's just lips smacking.* (IT_03_M_16_weekly drinker)
>
> *Until last year I had never seen alcohol from my parents, I've seen it now that I'm 17 years old that they give me the glass now and then, that I drink the glass of beer at the table while eating pizza, but I just drink a glass of beer and that's it.* (IT_08_M_17_weekly drinker)
>
> *The use of stronger alcohol is completely forbidden to me (...) but as for lighter alcohol, for example beer and... they (my parents) would prefer that I don't take any at all, but in their presence if I ask for a very small amount, just to try it out, they give me that.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)

Most of interviewees **attributed to this non-prohibitionist parental model effective results in terms of limiting excessive drinking** and promoting an attitude towards alcohol aware of risks.

> *(I've always been allowed) to taste, at (special) dinners, lunches, but I never had the freedom to drink at home. I have it now, but although I could (…), because of the way I was brought up, I know it doesn't make sense to abuse it. Then I go to parties too, I drink, I have fun, but - perhaps thanks to this freedom that they left me - I have learned more or less to understand the limit, which unfortunately I see that many of my peers do not have.* (IT_12_M_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *More than anything else, what kept me from ever having a problem with drinking too much or anything like that was the fact that my parents never made it a total prohibition. They never stopped me from having a little beer or wine now and then, so I grew up with the understanding that as long as you do it responsibly and try to limit it as much as possible (it's okay).* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *Maybe that's why I got used to regulating myself; I mean, as I said: the more you impose something, the more you want to do it, so my parents never imposed on me 'Don't drink, don't do that'. Obviously when I was younger (...) they would tell me 'No', or maybe they would make you dip your tongue out just to taste, to make you happy (…) then, maybe when you get a little older, when you're 16- 17, they let you try if you say 'come on, let me try a little glass of wine'.* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

Peers

Peers' influence – sometimes defined as pressure - and the desire to being like others is considered one important motive to drink among young people, so that frequenting companies who drink more or less is, according to interviewees, a good predictor of a person's consumption level.

> *I think one of the factors that makes the most difference is the group of friends/the company (…). Because (…) what your friends do is more or less what... I'm not saying you'll end up doing, but it's the example you see around you, so we absorb from other people, and inevitably we absorb both the good and the bad. So both the use and the abuse, and maybe often the non-use, not drinking alcohol, is perhaps derived from those around us. I see people of the same age who maybe have different circles of friends and have different behaviors.* (IT_06_F_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *If you hang out with people who drink more, you are more likely to drink too. If you hang out with people who don't drink or drink little, you too will be inclined not to drink or drink little.* (IT_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

[6] Popular alcoholic aperitif consisting of prosecco white wine, bitter and sparkling water.

Peers, or better older friends of minors, are also a mean to buy alcoholic beverages in venues when you are under age. As previously said, Italian interviewees generally maintained that the ban on serving/selling alcohol to minors is sometimes circumvented by **venues and markets**.

> *As for the respect of this law, I know that it is quite low, because I am a minor... for me it is not impossible to access alcohol, especially in places where it would be necessary to ask for a document - especially if a party is mostly (for) minors, it is not asked. But it is not always like this, sometimes they ask for documents even in shops where alcohol is sold they ask for documents, so there is a transgression but not total.* (IT_14_M_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *I think that on one hand it is right to impose it (the age limit), but not too much, it is yes and no, because if you impose something (…) people insist on wanting to do it (…), but if you don't impose it on them, in the end there is the risk that people really exaggerate. (…) maybe (the age limit) it is right but that not respected, because (…) anyway there is a friend who goes to buy it for them (minors).* (IT_20_M_18_weekly drinker)

Other drivers

Some interviewees identified in the specific youth age the main lever for drinking, including the desire to copy with transition and feel older and the desire to escape from the boredom of routine and school obligations.

> *School bothers us. You say "well, perfect, now that I've finished school, I'm going to get drunk, I'm going to get really drunk, because how nice it is to have freedom (…)". And there you no longer have the boredom that goes around you, (…) when you go out drinking you no longer have the concept of time, an hour passes like this, from 8 pm to midnight it's as if an hour had passed, instead four.* (IT_08_M17)
>
> *In general, the need to feel older, to let it go a little, then adolescence is a somewhat difficult age of transition, the process where a person grows, so activities of this kind can probably help to make this growth, not less heavy, but perhaps more fluid.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

More broadly, the majority of interviewees assert that alcohol consumption is not merely normalized within the social and **cultural context**, but actively encouraged, as it is imbued with positive connotations. Which exerts a significantly greater influence on drinking behaviours than advertising.

> *Let's say that advertising, in my opinion, has encouraged an ideology that was already common – which is that with alcohol people have more fun, feel better, laugh, joke, spend time with friends - but (…) it's something that is known and that is spread mostly inter-personally. A friend pushes you, 'come on, drink something' and in fact advertising, in my opinion, also plays on this thing.* (IT_10_F_16_monthly drinker)
>
> *It's something that seems practically normal that since you're growing up you start behaving like an adult and so the adults around us drink after all, people are constantly having aperitifs and all the rest, and so probably (…) a 14-15 year old starts to think and starts saying that it's normal for him to behave like that because he's growing up and because it's something that's done normally, that it's appropriate to do.* (IT_16_F_17_non-drinker)

EXPOSURE TO ADAM

Digital and TV exposure to positive portrayal of alcohol

In the entire country sample, 78% of respondents declared to have been exposed to positive portrayals of alcohol in the past 30 days via any media (78%); exposure resulted higher for online channels (64%) than for TV/cinema (56%), with percentages over the mean among adults, drinkers, those with high socioeconomic status, and digital users.

When examining age differences, **exposure percentages are relatively high among both minors and adults**. Despite the ban on advertising alcohol to minors, 67% of them report having seen alcohol portrayed in a positive way on any media – suggesting a notable exposure to alcohol-related content framed as fun or attractive through media.

Among over-18s, exposure to positive portrayals is even higher compared to under-18s, both with respect to any media (82% vs 67, χ^2=29.01) and online (69% vs 53% χ^2=27.11, p<0.001). By contrast, exposure rates across all media channels are not significantly different between males and females, with only minimal variations (e.g. 78% vs 77% on any media).

As expected, **drinking status results strongly associated with all portrayal types**. These results indicate that alcohol consumers perceive to be more frequently exposed than non-drinkers, with significant differences across all channels: any portrayal (81% vs 66%, χ^2=23.23, p<0.001), online (67% vs 53%, χ^2=14.48, p<0.001), and TV/cinema (59% vs 44%, χ^2=18.17, p<0.001). Nevertheless, media exposure among non-drinkers remains relatively high at 66% (via any media).

Respondents with a **superior economic status are overall more likely to be exposed** to alcohol-related content than those in the lower economic category. The gap is especially pronounced when considering online exposure (71% vs 59%, χ^2=16.68, p<0.001).

It is notable that awareness of the alcohol advertising ban targeting minors does not reduce exposure to overall and TV/cinema portrayals, while it results significantly associated with reduced exposure to online portrayals (χ^2=7.99, p=0.005). Conversely, agreement with the alcohol advertising ban targeting minors is linked to statistically significant lower exposure rates only for TV/cinema portrayals (χ^2=5.79, p<0.05) suggesting that avoiding marketing on digital channels is more difficult.

Which seems to be supported also by the (quite obvious) fact that respondents with heavy to intensive use of social networks report higher exposure than those with moderate use. These differences are statistically significant for any media (84% vs 74%, χ^2=13.99, p<0.001), and higher with regarding to online (72% vs 59%, χ^2=18.49, p<0.001) than on TV/cinema (61% vs 53%, χ^2=7.17, p=0.007).

To summarise, the Chi-Square tests reveal several statistically significant associations (p<0.05; p<0.001) between media portrayals and participants' characteristics. Variables such age, socioeconomic status, drinking behaviour, and media use intensity, are all linked to different level of alcohol exposure in media, with online portrayals consistently showing stronger and more frequent association than traditional portrayals.

Table 3. Effective exposure to positive portrayal in Italy (N=1028)

Have seen a positive portray of alcohol, in the last 30 days		On line			On TV or at cinema			On any media		
		n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
In the whole country sample		**656**	***64%***	***64%***	***574***	***56%***	***56%***	***798***	***78%***	***78%***
Age	Under 18	173	*17%*	*53%**	174	*17%*	*53%*	223	*22%*	*67%**
	More than 18	483	*47%*	*69%**	400	*39%*	*57%*	575	*56%*	*82%**
Gender	Male	326	*32%*	*64%*	289	*28%*	*57%*	397	*39%*	*78%*
	Female	323	*31%*	*63%*	283	*27%*	*55%*	392	*38%*	*77%*
	Non-binary	1	*0%*	*53%*	1	*0%*	*30%*	1	*0%*	*53%*
	Other	7	*1%*	*79%*	2	*0%*	*18%*	8	*1%*	*100%*
Drinking status	Drinkers-CL	533	*52%*	*67%**	474	*46%*	*59%**	646	*63%*	*81%**
	Non drinkers	123	*12%*	*53%**	100	*10%*	*44%**	152	*15%*	*66%**
Economic category	Superior	297	*29%*	71%*	244	*24%*	59%	345	*34%*	83%*
	Lower to intermediate	359	*35%*	59%*	330	*32%*	54%	453	*44%*	74%*
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol TO MINORS-IT	Yes	102	*10%*	*63%**	84	*8%*	*52%*	121	*12%*	*75%*
	No	554	*54%*	*64%**	490	*48%*	*56%*	677	*66%*	*78%*
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors-JR	Fully or somewhat agree	467	*45%*	*62%*	425	*41%*	*57%**	572	*56%*	*76%*
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	189	*18%*	*68%*	149	*14%*	*53%**	226	*22%*	*81%*
Internet or social network (ISN) use [ISN use PROFILE]	Heavy to intensive use	268	*26%*	*72%**	227	*22%*	*61%**	311	*30%*	*84%**
	Low to moderate use	388	*38%*	*59%**	347	*34%*	*53%**	487	*47%*	*74%**

* Chi^2 test with a significance level of 95%.

Vectors of online of exposure to positive portrayal

The table highlights the digital **sources through which individuals are exposed to alcohol-related content**. As shown, the main source is influencer's posts (25%), followed by alcohol brand content (23%) and posts created by friend, ordinary person, associations or event organisers (at 17% and 16%, respectively).

When comparing age of respondents, those over 18 appear more exposed than minors across all sources. However, the percentages among minors indicate that they also have access to promotional and positive alcohol-related content – approximately 1 in 5 through influencer's content and alcohol brand posts.

Obviously, those with higher ISN use, are much more exposed than moderate users to digital alcohol-related contents – for instance, 34% of ISN heavy users report exposure through influencers' content (vs 20%) and 32% through post created by alcohol brand (vs 18%).

Table 4. Digital contents conveying alcohol positive portray in Italy (N=1028)

Digital channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	In the whole country sample		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	256	25%	69	21%	187	27%	125	34%	131	20%
In a celebrity's post	123	12%	30	9%	93	13%	63	17%	60	9%
In a post created by a friend or an ordinary person	176	17%	46	14%	130	19%	93	25%	83	13%
In a post created by an association, an event organiser	160	16%	36	11%	124	18%	71	19%	89	13%
In a post created by an alcohol brand	239	23%	72	22%	167	24%	119	32%	120	18%
In other kinds of posts	100	10%	31	9%	70	10%	46	13%	54	8%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	28	3%	8	2%	20	3%	6	2%	22	3%

Vectors of TV exposure to positive portrayal

On the overall sample, the data reveal **persistent visibility of alcohol through mainstream channels**, especially related to the entertainment and marketing area with spots and commercials advertising as the most frequent source of positive portrayal of alcohol (27%), followed by movies or series episodes (20%) and music video clip (14%).

Interestingly, prevention campaign represents a very small share of exposure (7%), which highlights the **imbalance between warning messages about alcohol risks and those which kinds promote it**.

In contrast to the purpose of the regulations in force, minors report slightly higher exposure through commercials (32%) and fictional content (22%) compared to over-18 group (25% and 19%, respectively). When considering the frequency of social network use, there is no large difference between intensive users and moderate users, although heavy users report slightly higher exposure to TV formats such as commercials and fictional content (29% and 22% vs 26% and 19%).

Table 5. TV contents *conveying* alcohol positive portray *in Italy (N=1028)*

TV channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	**In the whole country sample**		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	**281**	27%	105	32%	176	25%	109	29%	172	26%
In a prevention campaign warning of the risks of alcohol use	**72**	7%	26	8%	46	7%	30	8%	41	6%
In a documentary report	**35**	3%	9	3%	26	4%	15	4%	20	3%

TV channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	In the whole country sample		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 a movie or a series episode	**206**	20%	73	22%	133	19%	81	22%	124	19%
In another TV show	**99**	10%	31	9%	68	10%	49	13%	51	8%
In a music video clip	**146**	14%	44	13%	102	15%	57	15%	89	14%
In another kind of TV broadcast	**61**	6%	17	5%	44	6%	29	8%	32	5%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	**17**	2%	4	1%	13	2%	3	1%	14	2%

Digital and TV exposure to alcohol advertising

In Table 6, the overall data indicate that **alcohol advertising remains highly visible across both digital and traditional media**. A striking 90% reports it on either digital or audiovisual media considering past 30 days– specifically, 74% on national TV, 72% on social networks, and 69% on the Internet.

When considering the age of respondents, it is notable that adults report higher exposure rates than minors, albeit not large as expected, with 92% vs 86% exposed on either digital or audiovisual media (χ^2=11.10, p<0.001), and 76% vs 63% on social network (χ^2=18.12, p<0.001). Gender, on the other hand, show no significant differences: men and women report nearly similar exposure levels, averaging around 72% across social networks and approximately 90% across all media channels.

A strong and statistically **significant association emerges between drinking status and exposure to alcohol-related content across all media types**. Drinkers are consistently more likely than non-drinkers to report exposure on the Internet (72% vs 59%, χ^2=12.916, p<0.001), social networks (75% vs 63%, χ^2=12.979, p<0.001), national TV (77% vs 63%, χ^2=18.763, p<0.001), and other media (93% vs 82%, χ^2=23.847, p<0.001). Similarly, respondents with a higher economic status are significantly more likely to be exposed to alcohol-related content, especially on the Internet (74% vs 66% χ^2=7.902, p = 0.005) and through other media (93% vs 88%, χ^2=5.123, p=0.024), compared to those with lower income.

Interestingly, awareness and acceptance of the alcohol advertising ban to minors appear to quite reduce exposure, although not to a statistically significant extent. In contrast, digital engagement seems to be a driver of greater exposure: unsurprisingly, heavy ISN users report the highest exposure rates across all channels – 82% vs 66% on social media (χ^2=27.409, p<0.001), 79% vs 64% on the Internet (χ^2=25.962, p<0.001), 79% vs 72% on national TV (χ^2=5.644, p=0.018), and 95% vs 87% on other media (χ^2=13.763, p=<0.001). However, the risk of exposure remains notable even among low to moderate ISN users, with 87% of this group reporting exposure on either digital or audiovisual media.

Table 6. Effective exposure to audiovisual or digital alcohol advertising in Italy (N=1028)

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.*
In the whole country sample		**711**	***69%***	***69%***	**739**	***72%***	***72%***	**763**	***74%***	***74%***	**926**	***90%***	***90%***
Age	Under 18	217	*21%*	*66%*	209	*20%*	***63%****	251	*24%*	*76%*	283	*27%*	***86%****
	More than 18	494	*48%*	*71%*	530	*52%*	***76%****	512	*50%*	*73%*	643	*63%*	***92%****
Gender	Male	350	*34%*	*69%*	359	*35%*	*71%*	373	*36%*	*74%*	463	*45%*	*92%*
	Female	355	*35%*	*69%*	374	*36%*	*73%*	383	*37%*	*75%*	451	*44%*	*88%*
	Non-binary	1	*0%*	*30%*	3	*0%*	*100%*	1	*0%*	*23%*	3	*0%*	*100%*
	Other	4	*0%*	*54%*	3	*0%*	*41%*	6	*1%*	*74%*	8	*1%*	*100%*
Drinking status	Drinkers-CL	574	*56%*	***72%****	595	*58%*	***75%****	617	*60%*	***77%****	738	*72%*	***93%****
	Non drinkers	136	*13%*	***59%****	144	*14%*	***63%****	146	*14%*	***63%****	188	*18%*	***82%****
Economic category	Superior	309	*30%*	**74%***	312	*30%*	75%	317	*31%*	76%	386	*38%*	***93%****
	Lower to intermediate	402	*39%*	**66%***	427	*42%*	70%	446	*43%*	73%	540	*52%*	***88%****
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	107	*10%*	*67%*	110	*11%*	*69%*	111	*11%*	*69%*	142	*14%*	*88%*
	No	603	*59%*	*70%*	629	*61%*	*73%*	652	*63%*	*75%*	784	*76%*	*90%*
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	525	*51%*	*70%*	538	*52%*	*72%*	569	*55%*	*76%*	670	*65%*	*90%*
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	186	*18%*	*66%*	201	*20%*	*72%*	194	*19%*	*69%*	255	*25%*	*91%*
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	292	*28%*	***79%****	302	*29%*	***82%****	291	*28%*	***79%****	351	*34%*	***95%****
	Low to moderate use	418	*41%*	***64%****	437	*42%*	***66%****	472	*46%*	***72%****	575	*56%*	***87%****

** Chi² test with a significance level of 95%*

Vectors of online of exposure to alcohol advertising

As shown on Table, social networks, music and video streaming, and search engine – are reported as major sources of exposure to ADAM.

Social media stands out as the primary channel of exposure via internet: the most frequent exposure occurred while browsing stories on social networks (54%). The same rate rises to 60% among adults and 59% among heavy ISN users that appeared particularly exposed as they show higher rates in every category compared to moderate users.

Alcohol advertising through music or video content affects both adults and minors at similar levels (36% and 37%), while a smaller group report exposure when posting on their own accounts or making purchases (8% and 9% respectively).

Interestingly, minors report higher exposure than adults when searching for information (26% vs 20%), possibly indicating higher interest for information about alcohol beverages and too weak control over general search engines.

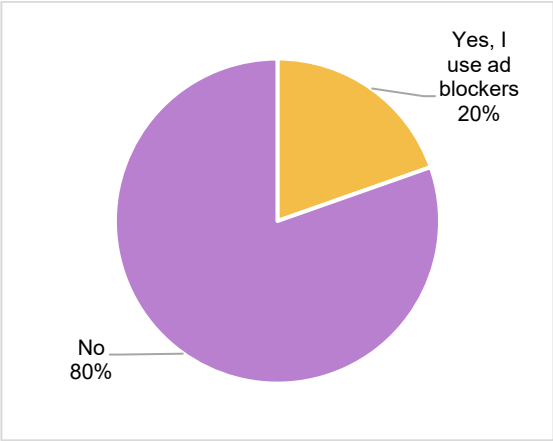
*Table 7. D*igital activities *conveying* alcohol advertising *in Italy (N=1028)*

Internet channels of alcohol advertising	In the whole country sample		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	550	54%	133	40%	417	60%	220	59%	330	50%
When posting on your account	81	8%	18	5%	64	9%	43	12%	38	6%
When accessing music or videos	369	36%	121	37%	248	36%	160	43%	209	32%
When playing games online or via an App	134	13%	42	13%	92	13%	60	16%	74	11%
When searching for information or news	228	22%	86	26%	142	20%	106	29%	122	18%
When making purchases (clothes, books, games, sporting equipment etc.)	91	9%	29	9%	63	9%	42	11%	49	7%

Attitudes towards digital alcohol advertising

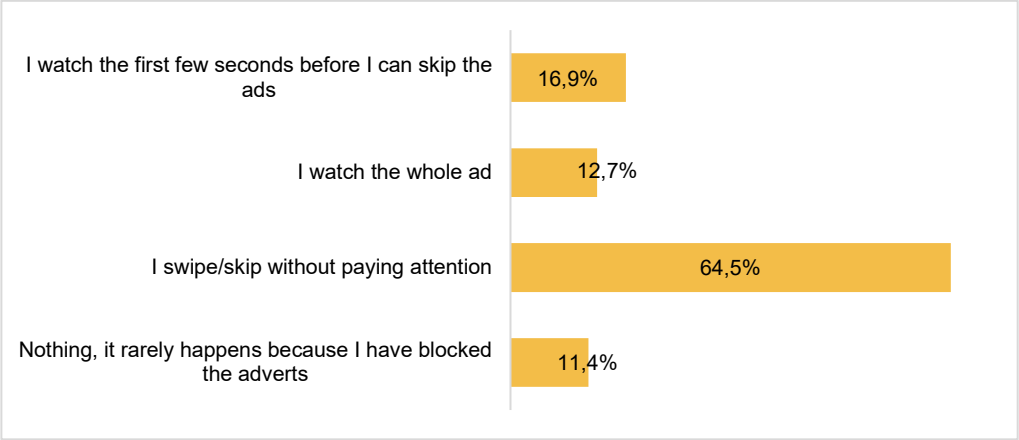
Among the quarter of the general sample who report not seeing see any alcohol advertising the majority of respondents (80.5%), stated that they do not use ad blockers (Figure 1). This suggests that the **lack of exposure to ads content seems not to be related to this specific avoidance measure** – which was reported approximately by only 1 in 5 respondents - but may instead be linked to inattentiveness to advertising or to other mechanisms that limit the display of alcohol-related content (algorithm).

Figure 1. Do you use any ad blockers? (N=259)



When asked what respondents do when they come across alcohol advertising on the Internet, the vast majority of them (64.5%) indicate that they either skip or swipe past alcohol advertisements without paying attention to them. A secondary group of users (16.9%) watches only the first few seconds before skipping, while relatively few participants (12.7%) report watching the entire ad. Only a small minority (11.4%) of those who were exposed to alcohol advertising reports actively avoiding such ads through the use of ad-blocking tools.

Figure 2. What do you do when you come across alcohol advertising on the internet? (N=830)



Impact of the last remembered alcohol advertising

TV and the Internet/Social networks remain the primary channels through which people are exposed to alcohol advertising (37.6% and 36.6%). Streaming services account for a smaller share (10.9%), while the remaining categories (at the cinema, elsewhere) show lower rates, suggesting a marginal role and possibly more limited exposure opportunities.

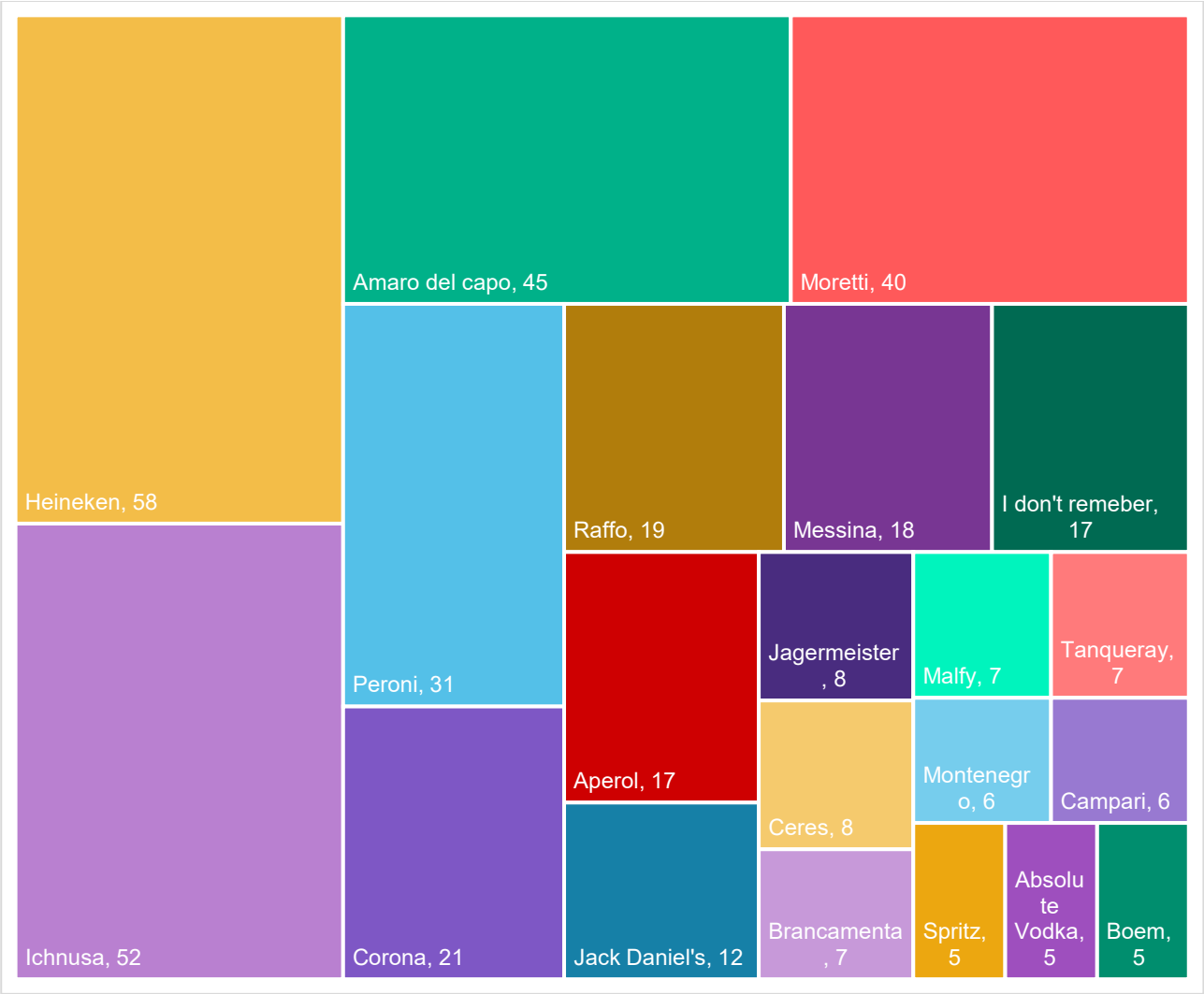
Memorising advertised alcohol brand

When asked to remember the name of the alcohol brand advertised, the majority of respondents (60.3%) reported **not remembering it**. This could reflect low engagement or unintentional exposure to alcohol advertising, although a substantial 39.7% do recall a specific brand.

Among those who did remember the advertised brand, 31.1% reported having tried the product, while 50.6% said they had not, suggesting that brand recognition could be linked to familiarity or personal experience with the product rather than to promotional content.

Respondents who remembered a specific brand were also asked to specify the name of the alcoholic beverage in order to identify the most frequently mentioned products. The responses reveal that beer brands - such as Heineken, Ichnusa, Moretti, Peroni, Corona, Raffo, and Messina – were the most frequently mentioned, along with Amaro del Capo (an herbal liqueur), all of which with exception for Heineken are typically Italian branded-products. Less frequently recalled brands included Aperol - widely associated to the Aperol Spritz cocktail - and Jack Daniel's.

Figure 3. Remembered alcohol brands (N=408)



Desire to drink generated

Amon respondents, 71% claim the last remembered advertising did not make them to want to try that specific beverage, 74.2% that they did not try it since then. Despite the great majority of respondents declare not to be personally influenced by advertising - mainly stating that they generally choose to drink alcohol for the taste (the most prevalent response) – it is notable that around **1 in 5 people actually report that they either wanted to try or actually tried the advertised alcohol.**

Age differences show that 24% of adults were tempted (χ^2=17.760, p<0.001) or actually tried the advertised product (χ^2=33.797, p<0.001), while among minors the rates are lower - 13% felt the desire to try, and 9% actually did it. Which is consistent with differences between drinkers and non-drinkers (though not statistically significant): while 23% of drinkers reported both wanting to try and actually trying the advertised product, the percentages among non-drinkers were considerably lower (12% and 7%).

Men and women show similar responses, as with other variables analysed above, suggesting there is no significant gender gap in the impact of ads.

Table 8. Reaction prompted by the last remembered alcohol advertising in Italy (N=1028)

What the last advert you remember **triggered** in you?		*Wanted to try this specific type of alcohol*			*Tried the advertised alcohol brand since then*		
		n	*%total*	*%cat.*	n	*%total*	*%cat.*
In the whole country sample		**209**	***20%***	***20%***	**196**	***19%***	***19%***
Age	Under 18	42	*4%*	*13%**	29	*3%*	*9%**
	More than 18	167	*16%*	*24%**	167	*16%*	*24%**
Gender	Male	104	*10%*	*21%*	101	*10%*	*20%*
	Female	103	*10%*	*20%*	96	*9%*	*19%*
	Non-binary	1	*0%*	*30%*	0	*0%*	*0%*
	Other	0	*0%*	*5%*	0	*0%*	*0%*
Drinking status	Drinkers-CL	182	*18%*	*23%*	179	*17%*	*23%*
	Non drinkers	27	*3%*	*12%*	17	*2%*	*7%*

** Chi² test with a significance level of 95%.*

When asked why respondents generally choose to drink alcohol, it is notable that only a small portion cited advertising as a direct reason. Specifically, just 3,8% said they drank because they saw an advert they liked, and 2,3% indicated that brand endorsement by a celebrity or an influencer actually affected their choice, indicating that these factors play a minor role in the actual decision to consume alcohol compared to other possible factors, or that people are reluctant to admit - and likely not fully aware - that their behaviours are influenced by advertising.

Perceived impact of alcohol advertising on young people

Comment answers to: [Q34. Do you think alcohol advertising on the INTERNET works on young people?]

Table 9. General opinion on the impact of alcohol advertising in Italy (N=1028)

Do you think alcohol advertising on the Internet **works** on young people?		***It works***			***It does not work***		
		n	% total	*%cat.*	n	% total	*%cat.*
In the whole country sample		**828**	**81%**	***81%***	**200**	***19%***	**19%**
Age	Under 18	255	25%	*77%*	75	*7%*	*23%*
	More than 18	573	56%	*82%*	125	*12%*	*18%*
Gender	Male	405	39%	*80%*	19	*2%*	*4%*
	Female	415	40%	*81%*	96	*9%*	*19%*

Do you think alcohol advertising on the Internet **works** on young people?		*It works*			*It does not work*		
		n	% total	*%cat.*	n	% total	*%cat.*
	Non-binary	3	0%	*100%*	0	*0%*	*0%*
	Other	5	0%	*61%*	3	*0%*	*39%*
Drinking Status	Drinkers	659	64%	*83%*	138	*13%*	*17%*
	Non drinkers	169	16%	*73%*	62	*6%*	*27%*
Economic category	Superior	341	33%	82%	*76*	7%	*18%*
	Lower and Intermediate	487	47%	80%	*124*	12%	*20%*
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	128	12%	79%	*33*	3%	*21%*
	No	701	68%	81%	*167*	16%	*19%*
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	616	60%	82%	*132*	13%	*18%*
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	212	21%	76%	*68*	7%	*24%*
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	308	30%	83%	*62*	6%	*17%*
	Low to moderate use	520	51%	79%	*138*	13%	*21%*

** Chi^2 test with a significance level of 95%.*

General opinion and acceptance of alcohol control policies

General opinion on alcohol advertising

The data reveal varying perceptions within the sample about the impact of alcohol advertising on young people. While **the large majority of respondents (81%) believe that online alcohol ads work on young people**, a minority seems to not recognize such influence (19%). Despite the fact that the Chi-Square test did not reveal any statistical significance, a closer breakdown highlights some slight differences within subgroups: adults, drinkers, supporters of regulatory bans, and heavy ISN users are more likely to consider the ads as effective on young people.

In terms of **age**, respondents over 18 (82%) are slightly more likely than those under 18 (77%) to believe that such advertising is effective.

When looking at gender, both males and females show similar level of agreement (80% vs 81%).

Drinking status reveals one of the most notable differences: drinkers tend to perceive greater influence than non-drinkers (83% vs 73%). Economic background does not show significant variation, with both superior and lower/intermediate groups displaying similar perceptions -around 80% agreeing that it works and 20% disagreeing.

Awareness of the ban on advertising alcohol to minors does not lead to a large difference in opinion – 79% of those aware and 81% of those unaware largely agree it is effective. However, not surprisingly, those who support the ban (82%) are more likely to think advertising works than those who oppose or are unsure (76%). Lastly, 83% of heavy Internet and social media users are more likely to believe that advertising impacts on young people (vs 79% of lower-intensity users).

Table 10. General opinion on alcohol advertising in Italy (N=1028)

How would you summarize your **opinion** on alcohol marketing?		Full disapproval			Full approval			Mixed or no opinion		
		n	% total	*%line*	n	% total	*%line*	n	% total	*%line*
In the whole country sample		**239**	**23%**	***23%***	**146**	***14%***	**14%**	**642**	***62%***	**62%**
Age	Under 18	71	7%	*21%*	43	*4%*	*13%*	216	*21%*	*65%*
	More than 18	168	16%	*24%*	103	*10%*	*15%*	426	*41%*	*61%*
Gender	Male	120	12%	*24%*	69	*7%*	*14%*	317	*31%*	*63%*
	Female	113	11%	*22%*	76	*7%*	*15%*	322	*31%*	*63%*
	Non-binary	1	0%	*30%*	2	*0%*	*70%*	0	*0%*	*0%*
	Other	5	0%	*61%*	0	*0%*	*0%*	3	*0%*	*39%*
Drinking status	Drinkers	183	18%	*23%*	136	*13%*	*17%**	479	*47%*	*60%**
	Non drinkers	57	5%	*25%*	10	*1%*	*4%**	164	*16%*	*71%**
Economic category	Superior	117	11%	28%*	57	*6%*	14%	243	*24%*	58%*
	Lower and Intermediate	122	12%	20%	89	*9%*	15%	399	*39%*	65%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	38	4%	*24%**	17	*2%*	*11%**	105	*10%*	*66%*
	No	201	20%	*23%*	129	*13%*	*15%*	537	*52%*	*62%*
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	188	18%	*25%**	102	*10%*	*14%**	458	*45%*	*61%*
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	51	5%	*18%*	45	*4%*	*16%*	184	*18%*	*66%*
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	87	8%	*24%*	57	*6%*	*15%*	226	*22%*	*61%*
	Low to moderate use	152	15%	*23%*	89	*9%*	*14%*	416	*41%*	*63%*

** Chi^2 test with a significance level of 95%.*

Opinions on alcohol marketing are mostly neutral or uncertain, with a majority of respondents (62%) reporting mixed feelings or no clear opinion, while a smaller group express strong disapproval (23%) or approval (14%).

Cross-referencing the data with variables such as age, gender, and intensity of Internet/Social network use does not reveal statistically significant associations with opinions, although some minor differences do emerge: for instance, minors are slightly less likely to disapprove alcohol marketing (21%) than adults (24%), while approval rates are relatively similar among men and women (14-15%), and ISN use profiles (15% in both heavy and moderate users).

In contrast, results suggest that drinking behaviour, socioeconomic status, and attitudes towards regulation play a more prominent role in shaping opinions on alcohol advertising.

Notably, **drinking behaviour appears to strongly influence opinion**: drinkers are more supportive of alcohol advertising than non-drinkers (17% vs 4%, χ^2=23.490, p<0.001), and less likely to express mixed or unclear opinion (60% vs 71%, χ^2=9.327, p=0.002).

Similarly, **socioeconomic status is significantly associated with two opinion categories**: respondents with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to express disapproval (28% vs 20%, χ^2=8.788, p=0.003), and less likely to fall into the mixed/no opinion group (58% vs 65%, χ^2=5.204, p=0.023). Approval levels, however, remain similar across the two groups (around 15% in both).

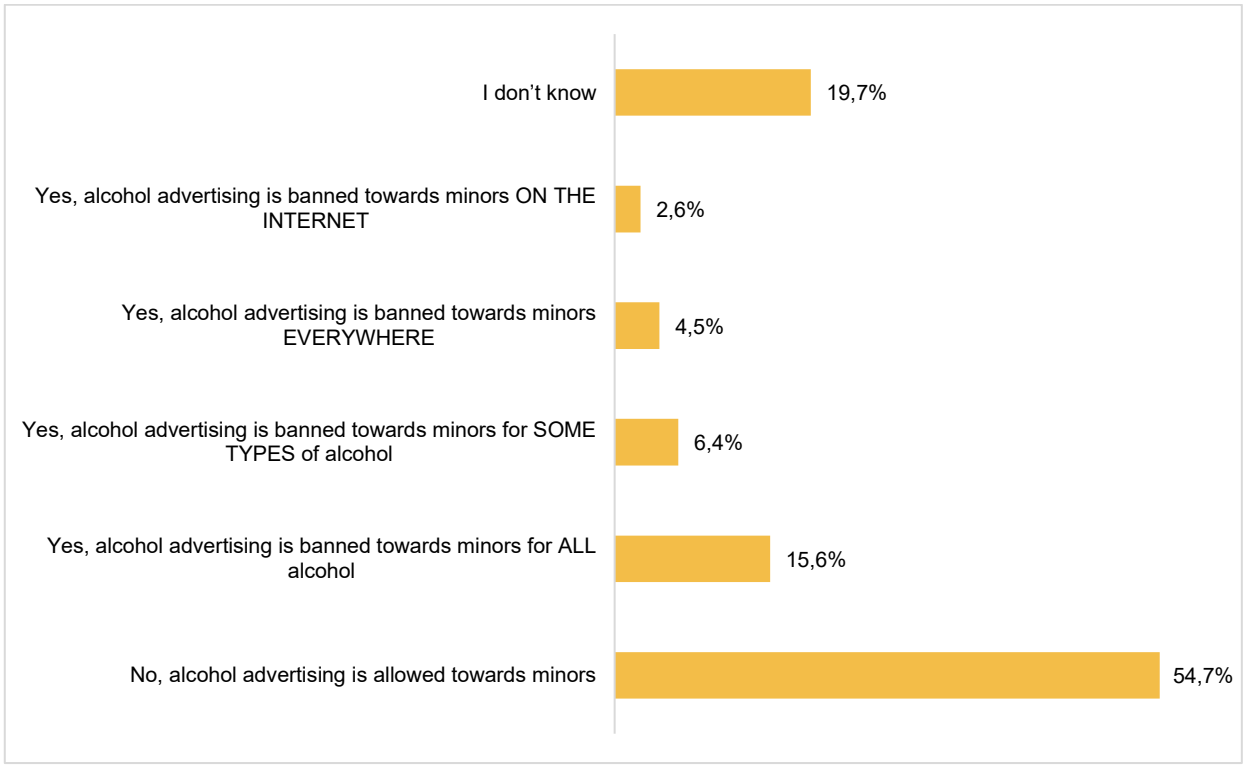
Knowledge of regulations correlates with stronger opinions: those aware of the advertising ban are more likely to disapprove (24% vs 23%) and less likely to approve (11% vs 15%), compared to those unaware of the regulation. These differences are supported by statistically significant associations for both approval (χ^2=9.121, p=0.003) and disapproval (χ^2=15.444 p<0.001).

Finally, **acceptance of the advertising ban is also significant**: individuals who support the regulation are more likely to disapprove (25% vs 18%) and less likely to approve (14% vs 16%), with significant association for both disapproval (χ^2=18.152, p<0.001) and approval (χ^2=6.310, p=0.012).

Knowledge of regulation on alcohol advertising towards minors

The findings on the awareness about national regulations on alcohol advertising directed to minors reveal a notable information gap (Figure 4). The fact that over half of the respondents (54,7%) think advertising is allowed, and nearly 20% are unsure, suggests a **significant level of misinformation about existing protections** for young people. The other responses are fragmented with only 15.6% of respondents who correctly answer that alcohol advertising is banned for all types of alcohol and 4.5% that is banned everywhere. While 6.4 believes that ban only applies to some type of alcohol – which might be related to cultural norms emphasizing wine/beer from spirits - or in certain contexts. Only 2.6% of respondents think that alcohol advertising is banned on the internet.

Figure 4. Awareness on national regulations on alcohol advertising towards minors (N=1028)

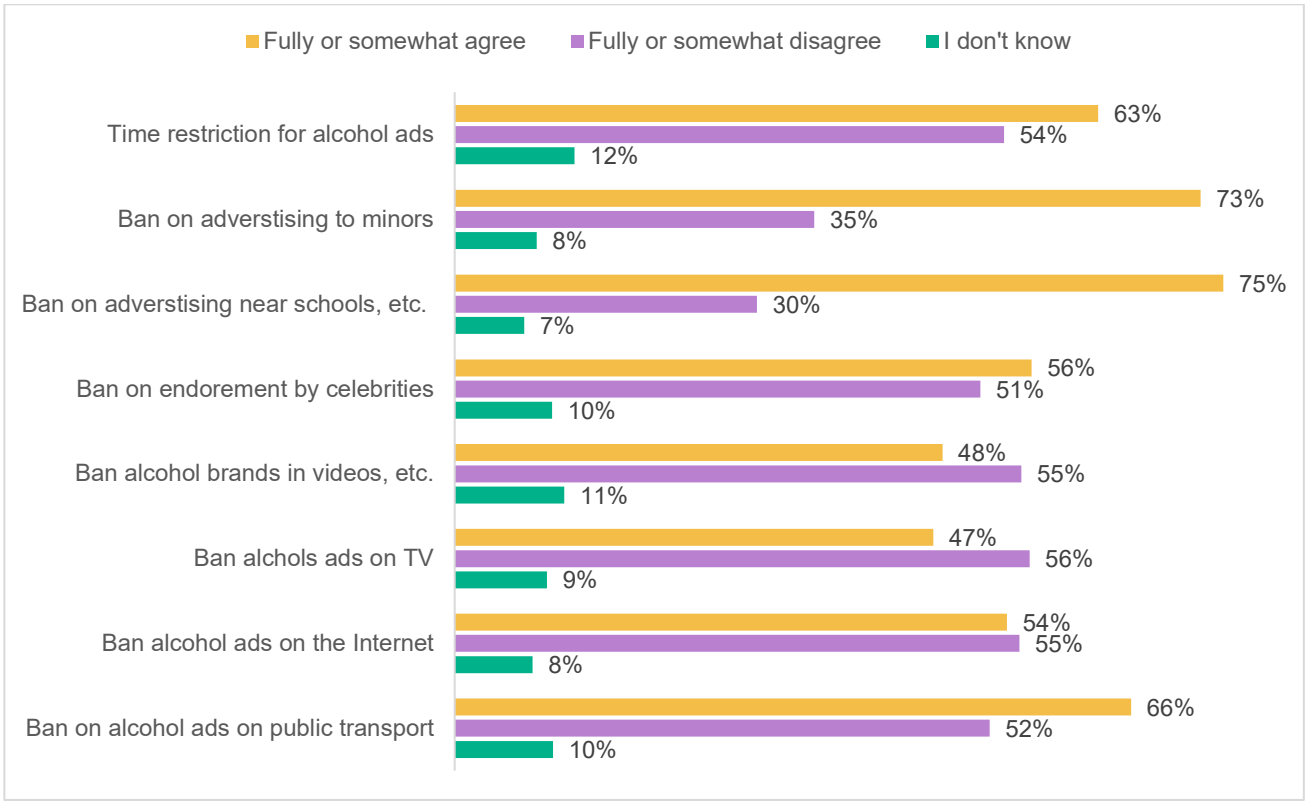


Acceptance of advertising regulation

The data show how attitude towards restrictions on alcohol advertising differ depending on platform, target, or context. There is a broad consensus for banning alcohol advertising addressed to minors (72.8%) -and consistently in sensitive contexts, such as near schools (75%), on public transport (66%), and in specific times (62.8%). To some extent, there is also notable support for limiting celebrity endorsement in alcohol marketing and online ads (56.3% and 53.9% respectively).

But **support to stricter regulation decreases when referred to more common media exposure**: opinion on restrictions on TV and videos are quite balanced, reflecting a kind of normalization of alcohol promotion through entertainment channels (around 45% for both agreeing and disagreeing). Across all categories, a small portion still remains uncertain or undecided.

Figure 5. Acceptance of alcohol advertising restrictions



CONCLUSION

Awareness of the exposure to alcohol advertising

The survey reveals widespread perceived exposure to positive portrayals and advertising of alcohol across all media types (78%), with statistically significant higher rates among young adults (82%). However, the gap between young adults and minor's exposure – which is the main of the regulation, is not as large as expected since the 67% of minors reported having seen alcohol-related content framed as fun or attractive through media in the past 30 days.

One unexpected result is that exposure to TV and ADAM advertising is higher than exposure to positive portrayals, with 90% of respondents[7] reporting exposure through any media in the past 30 days. While this might suggest that limits imposed on advertising content are effective, it more likely points to regulatory gaps and the effectiveness of subtler marketing forms, which is reflected in the difficulty young people had in recalling specific memories, as clearly emerged from the qualitative interviews, leading to approximate responses. Also, in the case of exposure to advertising on either digital or audiovisual media, the gap between the perceived exposure of young adults and minors (92% vs 86%), albeit significant ($p<0.00$), is smaller than one would expect, given that current regulations are supposed to prevent minors from being exposed.

Another unexpected finding is that exposure to alcohol advertisements on TV is higher than on digital media. While the percentage difference in the survey responses is small (74% on TV, 72% on social networks, and 69% on the Internet), this emerged more evidently from the qualitative interviews, where almost all participants recalled a TV commercial as their most recent memory, despite claiming not to watch TV and using digital media very frequently. Two interpretative hypotheses can be proposed: first, the lower recall of digital advertising may stem from the difficulty in identifying less conventional formats as advertising compared to traditional TV commercials. This may also help explain the interviewees' initial perception of minimal exposure to digital alcohol advertising. It was only after further reflection—prompted by follow-up questions from the interviewer—that they began to recognize forms such as product placement and the sponsorship of digital events as instances of advertising. Second, the higher recall of TV ads may be explained by the context in which they are viewed—often passively, during or after meals with family—whereas online advertising is more easily and quickly skipped, making them less likely to be remembered. Skipping the ad is actually the main strategy reported by both interviewees and respondents to the survey to avoid ad contents.

In line with what is well-settled in marketing research, drinkers were more exposed to alcohol advertising than not-drinkers across all media types, likewise those with a higher economic, while gender differences did not emerge. Awareness and acceptance of the alcohol advertising ban to minors appear to quite reduce exposure, although not to a statistically significant extent: this is not so surprising in the view that independently from the drinking status the great majority of both respondents and interviewees did not know the regulation but supported its main aim, i.e. the necessity to prevent the minors' exposure.

Social media stands out as the primary channel of exposure via internet: the most frequent exposure occurred while browsing stories on social networks (54%), which is consistent with narratives emerged from the qualitative study. Events promoted by discos and cocktail bars on the social networks were the most frequently type of digital alcohol marketing cited by interviewees, and were recognized as influencing, especially if including price promotions and prize games.

[7] Participants to the survey are indicated as "respondents" while participants to the qualitative interviewees are indicated as "interviewees".

The role of ADAM in motivations to drink alcohol

Unsurprisingly, the majority of both survey respondents (74.2%) and interview participants reported their behaviours not being influenced by advertising, while 81% of respondents thinks that advertising is in general effective on young people (with no significant difference between those who are aware of the ban on advertising alcohol to minors). This can be interpreted in light of the notion that advertising effects often operate through implicit influence—outside individuals' conscious awareness. Additionally, Goffman's (1959) theories on social desirability and impression management suggest that people, when observed, tend to present themselves in a favorable manner, aligning their responses with socially accepted norms. This is also evident in the frequent use of symbolic boundaries in interviewees' narratives, where they draw a distinction between themselves and 'others' who are seen as more easily influenced—typically younger individuals. Interestingly, this pattern is also employed by underage interviewees.

Notwithstanding, a notable 20% of respondents admitted that the most recent alcohol advertisement they recalled made them want to try the advertised beverage, and 19% reported having actually done so after seeing it. Unsurprisingly, these rates were significantly higher among older respondents, which is consistent with marketing research suggesting that advertising primarily influences consumers by shifting preferences among products rather than creating new demand.

Nevertheless, when asked why they generally choose to drink alcohol, only 3.8% cited having seen an appealing advertisement, indicating that other factors are perceived as more influential. These were clearly articulated by interviewees, who identified peer and family habits and attitudes as the primary sources of influence, alongside broader sociocultural factors. In this regard, it is worth noting that most interviewees reported being introduced to alcohol within the family context, as part of a gradual socialization process. This process, which has long characterized Italian drinking culture, was widely seen by participants to the qualitative study as effective in preventing excessive youth drinking and drunkenness.

The frequent references to personal taste and the quality of alcoholic beverages as key reasons for drinking or abstaining, as emerged from the qualitative interviews, can also be interpreted as evidence that the core characteristics of Italian drinking culture persist despite the broader globalization of youth drinking patterns (see e.g. Beccaria & Rolando, 2016).

Attitude towards norms and impact of regulations

Although there is a general perception that alcohol advertising does not constitute a major driver of alcohol consumption, and despite the fact that almost none of the interviewees—and only approximately one in four survey respondents—are aware that alcohol marketing is subject to regulation (albeit without clear knowledge of its scope or mechanisms), nearly all interviewees and a substantial majority of respondents (72.8%) expressed support for a ban on alcohol advertising targeting minors.

The analysis of qualitative interviews offers several explanations for this position, the main being a widespread awareness of both short-term and long-term risks related to alcohol consumption among young people, emphasizing especially organic damages with common acknowledgment that they are greater in the case of adolescents, as the brain development process is not yet complete.

In contrast, opinions regarding alcohol advertising in general appear more ambivalent: only 23% of respondents expressed strong disapproval, while 62% reported mixed feelings or no definite opinion. Obviously, drinkers are more supportive of alcohol advertising than non-drinkers. Insights from the qualitative interviews suggest that such positions are informed by the recognition that alcohol, as a legal consumer good, is subject to market dynamics in which marketing plays a legitimate and integral role.

Within this framework, the right of adult consumers to access commercial information is commonly acknowledged and upheld.

Interestingly, support for stricter regulation decreases when referred to TV and videos compared to “physical” exposure to advertising in public places (such as near school and on public transports), reflecting a kind of normalization of alcohol promotion through entertainment channels.

Overall, we can therefore conclude that current regulation and enforcement are not sufficient to reach the main aim of preventing minors from alcohol advertising exposure, which remains quite high. Notably, from the individual interviews it also came out that self-regulation rules imposed by social media platforms – which were not investigated in the survey - are more known by young people and considered to be effective at least to some extent, as they are worried that their accounts will be closed.

Policy makers should therefore consider implementing more effective monitoring tools and sanctioning measures, especially with respect to digital and “grey” forms of advertising, such as users’ and influencers’ posted contents. As interviewees pointed out, contents not showing specific brands can be even more effective forms of marketing, because while not being considered advertising they contribute to normalizing drinking among young people harnessing the amplifying power of social media and social norms to influence actual behaviors. The interviewees’ confusion about what constitutes “real” advertising highlights precisely the grey area that the industry is exploiting. Therefore, regulation too should extend beyond the formal definition of advertising in order to be more effective.

Finally, given the significant imbalance between exposure to television social marketing and commercial advertising revealed by the survey—and in light of suggestions from qualitative interviews drawing a common-sense parallel between alcohol and other legally available addictive substances— an obligation to include warnings about the risks associated with alcohol consumption should be introduced for all alcohol advertising.

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Legal framework

Ministerial Decree No. 581 of 9 December 1993, Regulation on the criteria for the dissemination of messages aimed at preventing alcohol-related harm (Decreto Ministeriale 9 dicembre 1993, n. 581 – Regolamento sui criteri per la diffusione dei messaggi diretti a prevenire i danni correlati all'uso di bevande alcoliche).

Law No. 125 of March 30, 2001, Framework Law on Alcohol and Alcohol-Related Problems (Legge quadro in materia di alcol e di problemi alcolcorrelati).

Legislative Decree No. 44 of 15 March 2010, Implementation of Directive 2006/114/EC concerning misleading and comparative advertising (Decreto Legislativo 15 marzo 2010, n. 44, attuazione della direttiva 2006/114/CE relativa alla pubblicità ingannevole e comparativa).

Legislative Decree No. 208 of 8 November 2021, Implementation of Directive (EU) 2018/1808 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on audiovisual media services with regard to audiovisual commercial communications, sponsorship and telemarketing (Decreto Legislativo 8 novembre 2021, n. 208, recepimento della direttiva (UE) 2018/1808 relativa ai servizi media audiovisivi, modificando la direttiva 2010/13/UE in materia di comunicazioni commerciali audiovisive, sponsorizzazione e telemarketing).