

Using brand extensions from popular soft drinks can increase young people's intentions to drink alcohol

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Introduction: Alcoholic soft drinks, such as Hard Solo (a ready-to-drink product now re-branded Hard Rated), are alcoholic drinks featuring brands used primarily on non-alcoholic drinks. There are concerns that these drinks may hold strong appeal for young people given their use of brand extensions from products that young people typically like and consume. This study investigated whether brand attitudes and prior consumption of non-alcoholic Solo is associated with young people's intentions to consume Hard Solo.

Methods: An online cross-sectional survey of N=2008 15-25 year olds was conducted in May 2024 and included questions regarding soft drink consumption, appeal of alcoholic soft drinks, and brand attitudes and consumption intentions toward Solo products. Linear regression was used to examine associations between prior consumption alcoholic and non-alcoholic Solo consumption, brand attitudes toward Solo, and intentions to consume Hard Solo.

Results: About two-thirds (64%) of participants had previously seen or heard of Hard Solo and 44% had previously drunk Hard Solo. Most participants had previously drunk non-alcoholic Solo (86%) and held a positive brand attitude toward Solo (mean score: 5.4/7). Brand attitude toward Solo (B=0.27, p<.001), prior consumption of non-alcoholic Solo (B=0.24, p<.001), and prior consumption of Hard Solo (B=1.02, p<.001) were all significantly associated with future intentions to consume Hard Solo (test of overall model: F(3,2004) = 249.9, p<.001, R²=.27).

Discussions and Conclusions: These findings suggest that the use of brand extensions from non-alcoholic drinks that are popular with young people is likely to increase young people's – including minors' - intentions to consume alcoholic soft drinks.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Alcoholic soft drinks are likely to hold inherent appeal for young people. There is a need to consider regulation of these drinks as a product category, including potentially preventing alcoholic beverages that employ soft drink brands from being introduced to the market.

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