

Now You See Me, Now You Don't: Do People Underestimate the amount of Alcohol they see in Videos?

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Introduction and Aims: Alcohol is omnipresent and is frequently depicted in films, advertisements, and popular media. Unfortunately, research has found that there is a link between seeing alcohol in popular media and alcohol use. What is less clear, is whether people are aware of the amount of alcohol they see in popular media. Thus, this study aimed to investigate whether people underestimate the amount of alcohol in a short video they just saw and who underestimates more.

Method: A sample of 102 participants watched a 10-minute compilation of five tourism advertisements that included 12 scenes of alcohol. Immediately after watching, participants provided their own estimates on alcohol frequency in the video and completed questions regarding their alcohol consumption.

Results: Participants significantly underestimated the number of alcohol scenes by about 50% (mean estimate = 6). There were no differences in recall amongst age, gender, and education level. However, heavy drinkers (top 10% of AUDIT scores; ($B=3.55$, $p = .03$)) and abstainers ($B = 3.05$, $p = .03$) recalled more scenes with alcohol than moderate drinkers.

Discussions and Conclusions: The present study indicates that a large proportion of alcohol exposure in videos remains unnoticed but still may influence alcohol consumption unconsciously. Making people aware of their actual alcohol exposure may be an important step towards decreasing consumption.

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