

Drink the Rainbow: Exploring drinking challenge content on TikTok

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Introduction: Alcohol use and alcohol-associated illnesses remain a burden on public health infrastructure globally, especially in populations where alcohol consumption and binge drinking behaviours are synonymous with societal norms. Portrayals of high-risk alcohol consumption, such as that in alcohol-related challenges, on social media may influence the norms perceptions of youth viewers regarding drinking. This study assesses how alcohol-related challenge content is portrayed on the TikTok platform.

Methods: Data were collected from TikTok using hashtag-based keywords on alcohol-related challenge videos ($n = 869$) in December 2022. Three researchers documented the video metrics (i.e., the number of views, likes, comments) and independently coded videos for sentiment and theme of each video.

Results: After removing duplicates and non-alcohol-related content, the final sample contained 438 videos. These videos had a median of 773,750 views ($SD = \pm 6,315,294$), median likes count of 57,500 ($SD = \pm 547,860$) and a median of 311 ($SD = \pm 4,341$) comments. Most videos portrayed the risky alcohol use behaviours depicted positively (70.09%; collectively viewed 1.21 billion times). The thematic analysis identified seven non-mutually exclusive themes, with content promoting *Binge Culture* accounting for 40.86% of the sample. A further 28.99% promoted the *Lifestyle Acceptability* of binge drinking behaviours and 24.88% were *Instructional* content.

Conclusions: Most of the alcohol-related challenges on TikTok were promoting binge drinking behaviours to youth. All videos were publicly accessible through standard web and smartphone applications. Existing literature has demonstrated an association between exposure to alcohol-related content online and subsequent drinking and high-risk drinking behaviours, as well as altering social norms. Social media regulators and policy makers should consider the efficacy of banner warnings on substance-related content and the introduction of more effective age restrictions.

