

Construction of Alcohol-Related Risks and Harms in Public Health Advertising against Underage Drinking

Hoang Van Nguyen¹

¹ Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR), La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

Presenter's email: V.Nguyen5@latrobe.edu.au

Introduction/Issues: Underage alcohol consumption has been linked to major risks to young people [1]. However, parents may choose to supply alcohol to their children on occasions [2], which has prompted public health campaigns to discourage the practice [3]. However, there is little evidence of what constitutes effective messaging.

Method: A case study of Australian public health campaigns was conducted, using the methodology of multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics to understand the choices of language, images and sounds to construct alcohol-related risks and harms in the advertisements.

Key Findings: The analyses provide insights into multiple risk discourses, ranging from warning of adverse outcomes, encouraging self-responsibility, and promoting collective responsibility as a community.

Discussions and Conclusions: Through the risk discourses, the advertising campaigns form an 'ideal' selfhood and community membership, which act as a cohesive message to encourage the 'correct' behaviours to self-monitor and manage underage drinking risks.

Implications for Practice: The study will inform the design of effective alcohol-related risk communication aimed at behaviour change to reduce alcohol-related harms among young people.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *This body of work has received funding from the Australian Rechabite Foundation (ARF).*

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