

Through the Looking Glass: An E-Cigarette or Alcohol-Related Advertisement Every 60 Seconds

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Aims: There is growing concern over the presence of substance-related advertisements on social media platforms frequented by youths and young adults due to the lack of regulations regarding online advertising behaviours. This study aims to build upon existing research that assesses the frequency with which young Australians (17-25) are being shown advertisements which promote substance use (e.g. alcohol, vaping, cannabis, other drugs) and the themes of these advertisements on popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Methods: 125 Australian youths (mean age 18.74 years; 74.40% female) were recruited in exchange for course credit to participate in an online study. Participants scrolled through their chosen social media platform, being Facebook or Instagram, for a period of 30 minutes and screenshotted any substance-related advertisements encountered. A systematic thematic analysis was then conducted to identify non-mutually exclusive themes present in the advertisements. Demographic, social media usage, and historical personal, peer or familial substance use behaviour data was also collected.

Results: A total of 797 substance-related advertisements were identified, indicating that Australian youths are exposed to 1 substance-related advertisement every 60 seconds on average. Most advertisements included a link for instantaneous purchasing on both Facebook (78.80%) and Instagram (71.17%). Advertisements relating to *Ease of Access* (41.72% and 42.56%) and *Sales Incentives* (43.70% and 46.84%) were most common across both platforms.

Conclusions: Substance-related advertisements are highly prevalent online, particularly among Australian youth social media users. These advertisements provide consumers with the opportunity to purchase products and promote use through sales incentives and ease of access.