

# Alcohol and junk food advertising and promotion through sport

## Research highlights

### Preventing harm from alcohol

#### Introduction

It is widely recognised that alcohol and obesity are major risk factors for disease and that problems related to alcohol and junk food consumption are both considerable and of global concern (Rehm et al, 2004; World Health Organization, 2007). There is a large body of evidence that television advertising is an important influence on the values, attitudes, and behaviours of children and young people (Jernigan & Mosher, 2005).

The findings of research undertaken in both Australia and abroad show that attitudes and assumptions about drinking alcohol are not only shaped by the content of advertising, but also by the sheer volume and variety of marketing (Australian Medical Association, 2012). The purpose of this research was to identify the amount, and classify the nature of, alcohol and junk food advertising and promotion through sport on broadcast television in Victoria.

#### Key findings

- Victorian television viewers are exposed to a higher volume of junk food and alcohol advertising during sports broadcasts than during other programming.
- Nearly half of all junk food (45.7%) and alcohol advertisements (49.5%) broadcast during July 2010 and January 2011 were shown during sports broadcasts. This is despite the fact that sports broadcasts made up just 29% of programming during these periods.
- When comparing in-game (ground and uniform signage) and in-break advertising, it was clear that viewers had significantly more time exposure to alcohol, junk food and sugary drinks products through in-game advertising than they did through in-break advertising.
- The average in-game advertising time of alcohol, junk food and sugary drinks products ranged from an average of 12% of total screen time across the Australian Football League (AFL) broadcasts to an average of 8%, 16.4% and 61.3% across Test Cricket, One Day International (ODI) and 20/20 (T20) broadcasts during the cricket season.

This research was funded by VicHealth and conducted by The Centre for Sport and Social Impact at La Trobe University.

#### Method

A content analysis was undertaken to examine the amount of in-break alcohol and junk food advertising in sport. The analysis focused on two complete weeks of television programming, one in summer and one in winter, which took account of seasonal differences in the timing of sport events and leagues, as presented in the following table.

Winter (July 2010)	Summer (January 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Australian Football League</li><li>• National Rugby League</li><li>• Super 14 (rugby union)</li><li>• V8 Supercars</li><li>• TransTasman Netball League</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• International cricket</li><li>• National Basketball League</li><li>• A-League (soccer)</li><li>• International tennis</li></ul>

The two weeks of programming were examined across four free-to-air stations (SBS, Channel 7, Channel 9 and Channel 10) and one pay television station (FoxSports 1). These stations were selected because they ran advertising and broadcasted the majority of Australian sport, including the aforementioned major professional sport leagues and competitions. The entire data set was coded by the research team using double coding across coders as a validation tool. The coding identified and classified the number, type, time and duration of advertisements broadcast during sport and non-sport programming, and the number, type, time, duration and content of alcohol and junk food advertisements during sport and non-sport programming.

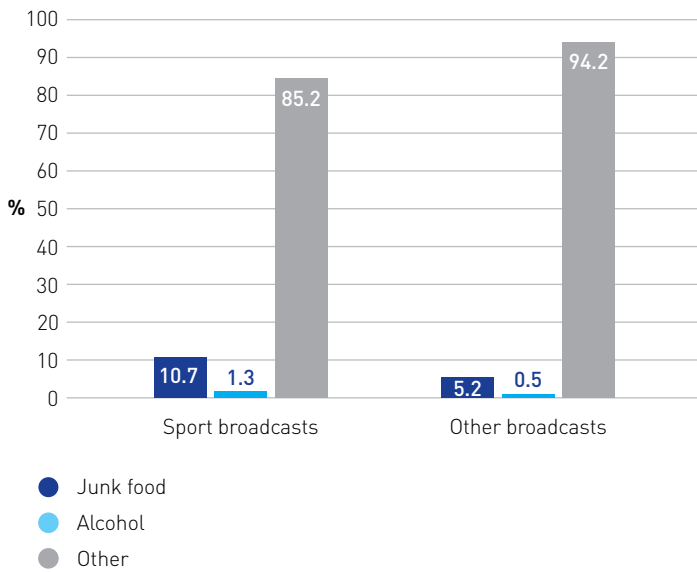
In order to conduct a detailed manifest content analysis of in-game alcohol and junk food advertising (ground and uniform signage), two of the most prominent and popular Australian sports were chosen for analysis, one in winter and one in summer: the AFL free-to-air broadcasts on Channel 7 in the 2012 season and international cricket games broadcast on free-to-air network Channel 9 in the 2012/13 season. During the match or game, the number of seconds each ground or uniform sign was visible was recorded to the nearest second, as long as the signage was visible for at least one second. This was done from the beginning of the match or game until its conclusion. These coding lists were then converted so that the total in-game time for each advertiser could be calculated.

## Results

### 1. Alcohol and junk food within in-break advertising in sport

As shown in Figure 1.1, the proportion of advertisements made up by junk food and alcohol advertisements was significantly higher during sports broadcasts than other programming. The proportion of advertisements more than doubled when moving to sport programmes from all other types of programmes combined. Alcohol advertisements made up 0.5% of all advertising in other programming and 1.3% of advertisements in sport programmes; for junk food, the increase was from 5.2% to 10.7%.

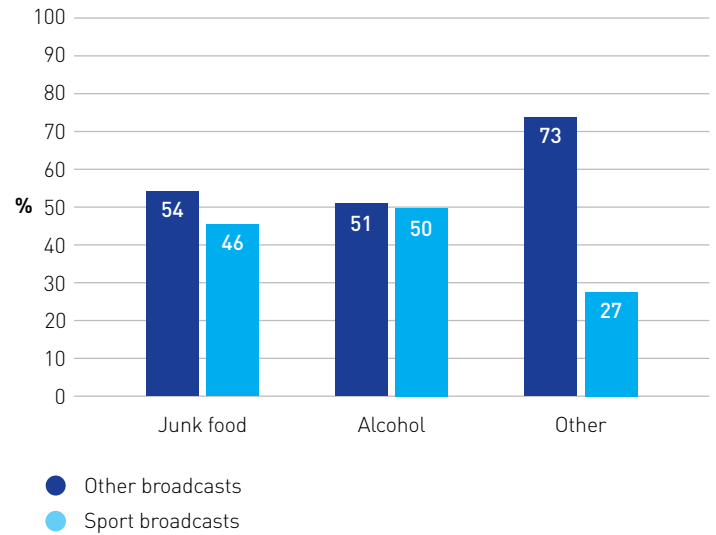
Figure 1.1: Proportion of advertising made up by junk food and alcohol (sports broadcasts vs all other programming)



Nearly half of all junk food (45.7%) and alcohol advertisements (49.5%) broadcast during the research periods were shown during sports broadcasts. This is despite the fact that sports broadcasts made up just 29% of total programming during these periods.

Exposure to junk food and alcohol advertising is significantly higher during sports broadcasts than other programming.

Figure 1.2: Proportion of all junk food and alcohol advertising shown in sports broadcasts



### 2. Alcohol and junk food within in-game advertising in sport

The content analysis showed that alcohol, junk food and sugary drinks were three highly prominent categories of products within in-game advertising across football and cricket broadcasts.

The findings are divided into two main sections: the first section examines the AFL broadcasts content analysis, while the second section examines the international cricket broadcasts content analysis.

#### 2.1 AFL

Figure 2.1 shows the average proportion of total screen time for each form of advertising across the 28 games of AFL broadcast on free-to-air television during the last seven rounds of the 2012 season. Alcohol and junk food/sugary drinks in-game advertising comprised 12% of the total screen time.

**Figure 2.1: Proportion of in-game advertising screen time by type (average percentage) – AFL**

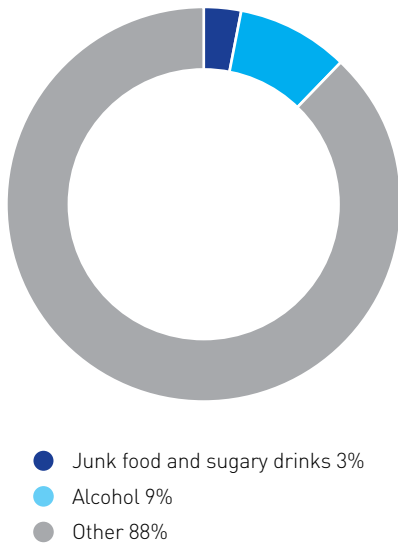
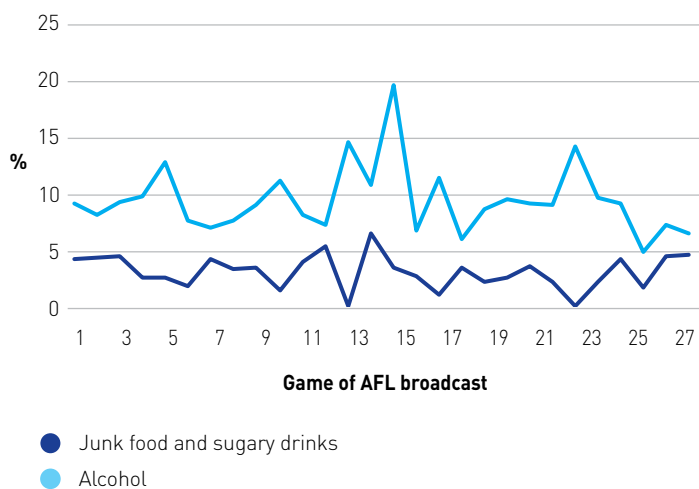


Figure 2.2 isolates the alcohol and junk food/sugary drink categories and shows the actual proportions across the entire 28 games. The proportion across the 28 games ranged from 6.4% to 23.2%. This range is due to the football matches being played at different stadia, which each have different advertising arrangements.

**Figure 2.2: Proportion of in-game advertising screen time by type – alcohol and junk food/sugary drinks (percentage) – AFL**



For each of the 28 AFL games that were content analysed for in-game advertising, a complementary in-break advertising content analysis was also undertaken, to establish the ratio between in-game and in-break advertising of alcohol and junk food/sugary drink products. Figure 2.3 shows the number of minutes of in-game alcohol advertising was substantially higher than the number of minutes of in-break advertising. Across the 28 games the average number of minutes of in-game alcohol advertising was 8.1 compared to 1.8 for in-break advertising, a ratio of 4.5 to 1.

Figure 2.4 shows that there was very little difference between in-game and in-break advertising of junk food and sugary drinks, with an average of 2.3 and 2.0 minutes respectively, essentially a ratio of 1 to 1.

**Figure 2.3: Comparison of in-game and in-break alcohol advertising during AFL games (minutes)**

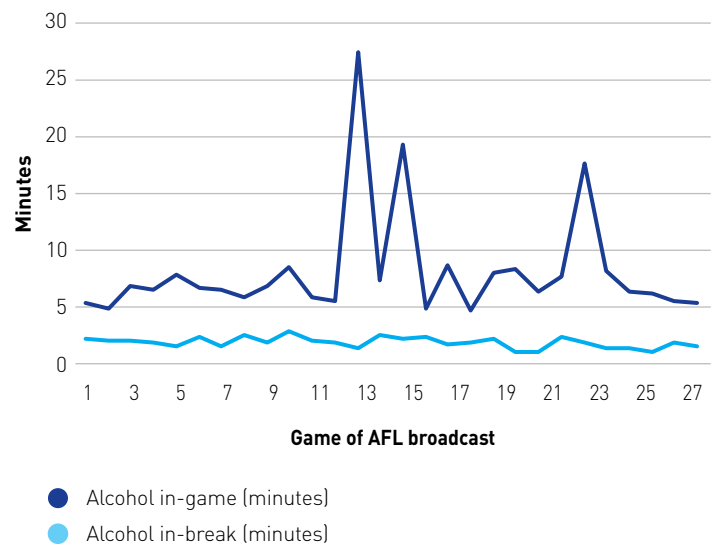
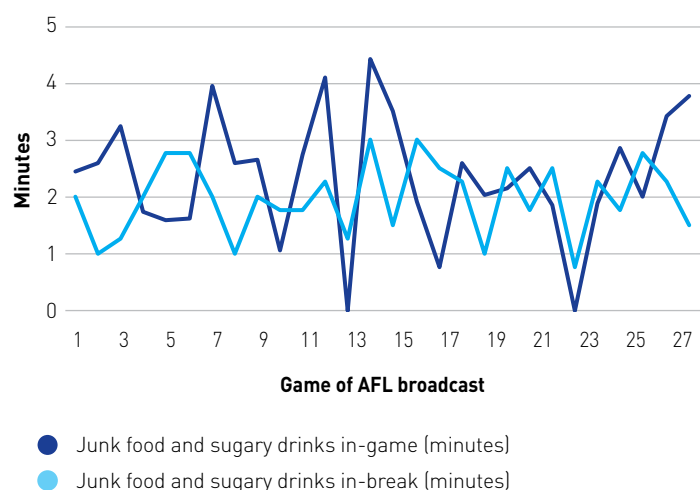


Figure 2.4: Comparison of in-game and in-break junk food and sugary drinks advertising during AFL games (minutes)

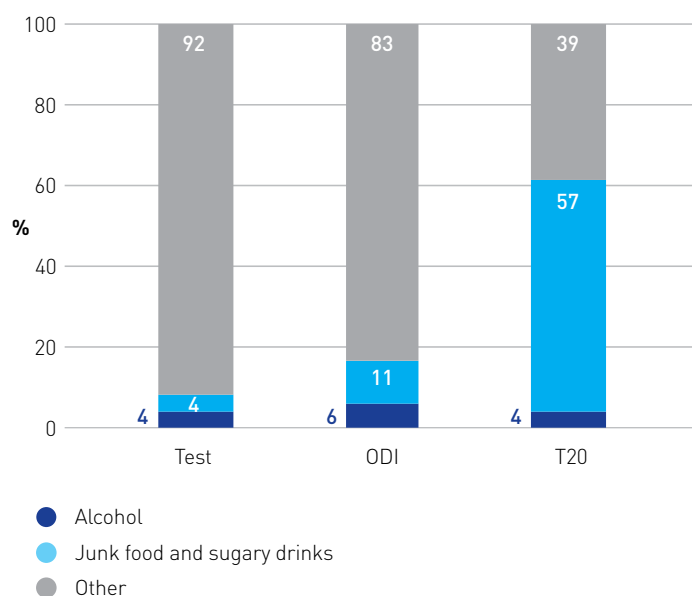


## 2.2 Cricket

Figure 2.5 shows a comparison between the three cricket match types (Test, ODI and T20) in terms of the overall proportions of in-game advertising divided between the target categories of junk food/sugary drinks and alcohol advertising and the remaining advertising aggregated into one category ('other'). As the cricket season moved from Test to ODI to T20, the proportion of exposure time taken by the target categories increased at each step. In Test matches the target categories achieved 8% of total exposure time rising to 17% in the one-day games and 61% in the T20 games.

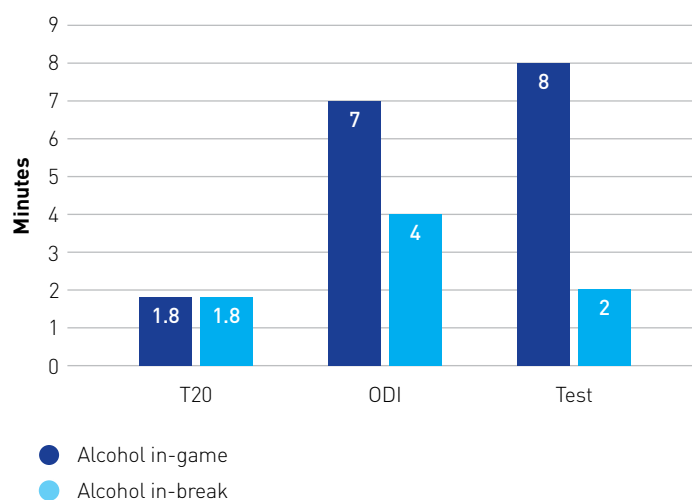
As the cricket season progressed, the proportion of exposure time taken by the target categories increased.

Figure 2.5: Average in-game advertising by type (cricket tests, ODIs and T20s)

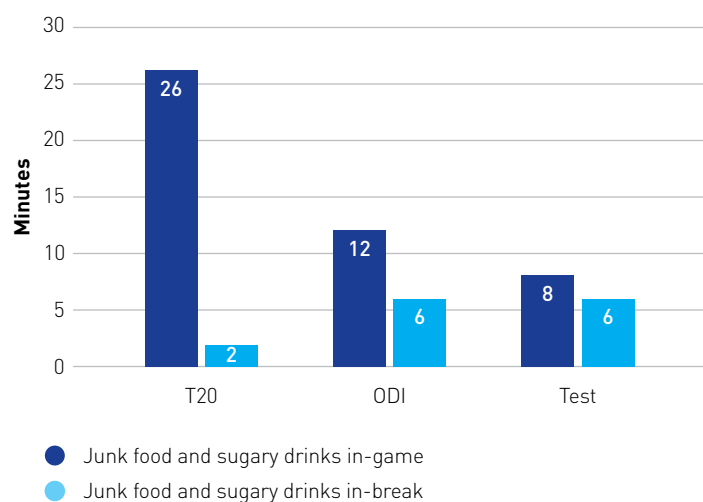


Figures 2.6 and 2.7 directly compare the in-game and in-break total advertising times (minutes) for each of the target categories and each cricket type. The clearest difference between the amount of in-game and in-break exposure is seen with junk food and sugary drinks in the T20 matches.

Figure 2.6: Average in-game and in-break alcohol advertising by cricket match type



**Figure 2.7: Average in-game and in-break junk food and sugary drinks advertising by cricket match type**



## Conclusions

This research affirms that there is significantly more junk food and alcohol advertisements shown in commercial breaks during sports broadcasts than in all other types of programming combined.

In terms of in-game advertising, the content analysis based on the 2012 AFL season and the 2012/3 international cricket season demonstrates that alcohol and junk food/sugary drink products were all heavily promoted through in-game advertising within free-to-air sport broadcasts. The amount of in-game advertising differed depending on the sport, the format of the sport (in the case of cricket) and the prominence of a naming rights sponsor. Setting aside these differences, the average in-game advertising time of alcohol and junk food/sugary drink products ranged from an average of 12% across the AFL broadcasts, to an average of 8%, 16.4% and 61.3% across Test, ODI and T20 broadcasts respectively, during the cricket season.

In addition, when comparing in-game and in-break advertising, it was clear that viewers had significantly more time exposure to alcohol and junk food/sugary drink products through in-game advertising than they did through in-break advertising.

## Recommendations

Given the high proportion of in-game and in-break advertising of alcohol and junk food in sport, and that sporting broadcasts are extremely popular with children, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Action is needed to better regulate the amount of alcohol and junk food advertisement in sport. As a first step, the exemption in the Commercial Television Industry code of practice, which allows alcohol advertising during live sports broadcasts, needs to be removed. This is necessary to limit the amount of alcohol advertising seen by children who are particularly vulnerable to advertising messages.
2. Further investigation of the regulations on alcohol and junk food sponsorship in sport should be undertaken.
3. Further work is recommended on the effects of in-game advertising on both televised and live audiences. Given the high volumes of such advertising identified in this research, it is likely that they could be having a corresponding effect on alcohol and junk food consumption.
4. Further research is also needed into the actual ways in which advertising materials may or may not lead to sport viewers/audiences consumption practices. For example, there may well be a difference between advertising effects on viewers in social sites (such as licenced premises) and private sites (such as homes/lounge rooms). Understanding the dynamics of these micro settings could provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which advertising does and does not work.

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**Viewers had significantly more time exposure to alcohol, junk food and sugary drink products through in-game advertising than they did through in-break advertising.**

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## References

Australian Medical Association 2012, *Alcohol Marketing and Young People: Time for a new policy agenda*, Canberra, Australia.

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