

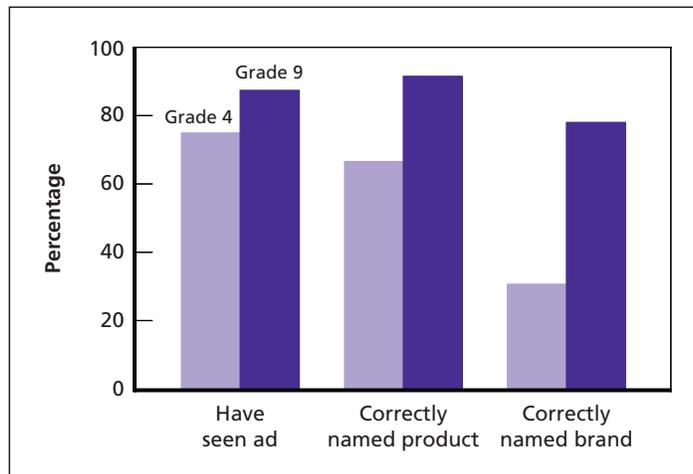
Saturated in Beer

Despite nationwide age restrictions on alcohol consumption, most youth have tried alcohol by the end of high school, and half are current drinkers by that time. Experts theorize that exposure to alcohol advertising, particularly ads whose content may hold special appeal for youth, may contribute to the problem. To assess whether children as young as 9 are affected by beer advertising, a group of RAND researchers surveyed a large sample of Midwestern children in the 4th and 9th grades. Whereas the 4th graders were almost entirely in the pre-alcohol-drinking stage, most of the 9th graders had already tried drinking. The researchers compared the two groups' awareness of, as well as exposure and attention to, beer advertising. To assess whether survey responses differed according to the characteristics of the ads, the researchers compared recognition of an ad for a popular beer that featured a talking ferret and lizards with reactions to other beer ads. To establish a benchmark indicating awareness of ads targeted at youth, they also examined responses to an ad for a popular soft drink. Their findings:

- 14 percent of 4th graders and 20 percent of 9th graders recognized at least three of four sample beer ads.
- 75 percent of 4th graders and 87 percent of 9th graders recognized the beer ad that featured talking animals; 95 percent of 4th graders and 99 percent of 9th graders recognized the soft drink ad.
- About 30 percent of 4th graders and more than 75 percent of 9th graders could name the brand advertised by the beer ad with the animals (see figure).
- Although 4th graders were more frequently exposed to beer ads than were 9th graders (primarily during televised sporting events), 9th graders reported liking the ads more and paying greater attention to them.

The researchers recommend that beer advertisers avoid advertising practices that appeal to youth.

Percentage of 4th and 9th Graders Who Were Aware of an Ad for a Popular Beer Featuring Talking Animals



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RB-9160 (2005)

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