# Young people given platform to call out alcohol industry’s dirty tactics

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### While young people today are savvier than previous generations, many haven’t considered how alcohol advertising might be influencing their own decisions.

There are a number of factors that influence the way we drink but the millions of dollars spent by the alcohol industry in advertising and lobbying certainly plays a big role.

While young people today are savvier than previous generations, we know that many haven’t considered how advertising and other alcohol industry tactics might be influencing their own decisions when it comes to drinking. For example, how many of us actually stop to think about the reasons behind the saturation of alcohol advertising at our major sporting events.

The alcohol industry doesn’t care about young people’s health or wellbeing – it makes money off young people drinking to excess.

New VicHealth research shows the alcohol industry is employing tactics straight out of the playbook of Big Tobacco to appeal to young consumers.

While Victorians in their 20s are still more likely than other age groups to drink in a risky way, they are drinking less than previous generations at the same age and they are more supportive of action to reduce the harm caused by alcohol.

Young people are also becoming more sceptical of the alcohol industry’s spin. It’s becoming increasingly uncool to be drunk, which is great to see.

### Under the influence

Last week, VicHealth [revealed the murky nature of alcohol promotion on social media](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/media-releases/under-the-influence-promotion-of-alcoholic-drinks-rife-on-social-media) in a new report which showed a lack of disclosed sponsorship common among Australia’s top ‘influencers’.

The research looked into the top 70 Aussie Instagram influencers and their alcohol-related content. It found almost three-quarters of influencers featured alcoholic drinks in their posts, yet only a quarter fully disclosed when they had been paid by alcohol brands.

The research also found the alcohol industry often partnered with non-alcohol brands like active wear and events such as festivals, allowing the industry to use influencers to promote their products without having to disclose their sponsorship.

Alcoholic products such as branded glasses of wine or bottles of champagne were often featured as props by influencers, further blurring the lines of what are considered sponsored posts.

With Instagram and its influencers particularly popular with young people, the findings show the alcohol industry is using social media as a key tool to promote their products as cool and glamourous to an impressionable audience.

What’s most concerning is that influencers and brands can get away with not disclosing paid content, making it really hard for young people to discern when they’re being sold an ad.

We also know that young people who like or follow alcohol brands on social media are twice as likely to drink at risky levels than those who don’t.

Alcohol brands spend millions each year advertising their products to impressionable young people and it works – for every advertising dollar spent, young people drink three per cent more alcohol.

### No responsibility

Despite the positive trend in youth drinking, young people are still more likely to come to harm from alcohol than any other age group.

While the alcohol industry wants young people to think its products are glamourous and fun, it fails to take responsibility for the massive harm alcohol causes them.

We know that 40 per cent of Victorians aged 18-34 drink at risky levels at least monthly. That might boost alcohol industry profits, but it’s bad news for the rest of us.

Concerningly, the number of young Victorians who end up in hospital due to alcohol has increased by nearly a quarter (24%) since 2009.

We want to turn this around and empower young people to voice their concerns and spark a broader conversation about reducing alcohol harm in our communities.

### Top Spin

To counter the alcohol industry advertising, VicHealth has launched [Top Spin](https://www.topspinvic.com.au/), a statewide competition in Victoria encouraging young people to call out the sneaky tactics used by the alcohol industry to influence them to drink.Top Spin asks young people to look behind the glamour and the spin pushed by the industry and share their thoughts about being targeted by alcohol brands to spend big and drink bigger.

We’re hoping Top Spin will encourage young people to stop and think about how their relationship with alcohol is impacted by the industry and how they can continue to be the voice for change.

Each week there is $1000 in prizes up for grabs for the most creative and thought-provoking entries.

To submit an entry and find out more visit [www.topspinvic.com.au](https://www.topspinvic.com.au/)

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