

## Literature Review

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# Alcohol Advertising in Pacific Islands Countries and Territories: A Scoping Review

Monleigh IKIUA, <sup>1</sup> Vili NOSA <sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Alcohol has become embedded into the cultural, economic, and social fabric of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT); however, it continues to be a neglected health issue for many PICT. This scoping literature review explores current alcohol advertising policies in each PICT.

**Methods:** This review utilises the 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses for Scoping reviews' to identify literature on alcohol advertising policies. Twenty-five sources, ranging from 1963 to 2020, form the final data synthesis.

**Finding:** The results of this review reveal that not all PICT have alcohol advertising restrictions in place. Health warning labels as a means of deterring alcohol use are also inconsistent across PICT but aid in consumer decisions. A notable concern in alcohol advertising is the use of culture as a marketing ploy.

**Conclusions:** This review provides essential information on alcohol advertising in PICT. Nine PICT enforce some form of alcohol advertising prohibition, and ten do not. In countries with alcohol advertising, drinking behaviours vary, demonstrating a need for further research on the implementation efforts of current policies. In countries with no alcohol advertising, alcohol use is normalised and portrayed as unproblematic. The use of health warning labels is also not consistent amongst PICT. The use of culture as a marketing ploy is unacceptable as it belittles culture and is disrespectful to leaders. Understanding the alcohol advertising restrictions that work in each PICT can help decrease alcohol consumption and the harms associated with its misuse across all PICT.

**Key words:** Alcohol, Advertising, Pacific

### INTRODUCTION

Since its' introduction, alcohol has become embedded into the cultural, social and economic structure of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT). Within this report, PICT will refer to American Samoa, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis, and Futuna. This scoping review aims to examine and discuss what alcohol advertising research exists in each PICT. Such research will support the development of consistent and effective alcohol legislation and advertising restrictions across PICT.

**Corresponding author:** Monleigh Ikiua,  
[miki845@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:miki845@aucklanduni.ac.nz)

1. University of Auckland
2. Head of Pacific Health Section, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, The University of Auckland.

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### METHODS

This review utilises the 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses for Scoping reviews' <sup>1</sup> to identify potential literature. Eligible citations include information on alcohol advertising in at least one of the PICT. Literature from all geographical areas was

viewed; however, publications not produced in English or French were excluded. Suitable literature types included 15 Reports, 5 journal articles, 4 websites and 1 policy review. A total of 25 references were used in this report, ranging from 1963 to 2020. A search of Scopus, Google Scholar, ProQuest Research Library, Medline (OVID), Medline (PubMed), Clinical key, Science Direct, and the Library Catalogue provided potentially relevant citations. Governmental websites supplemented this database search. Some of the key research terms that were used were Pacific alcohol advertising, Pacific region alcohol advertising, advertising, and Pacific alcohol consumption. The literature was analysed using thematic analysis and then cross-checked by the supervisor.

## RESULTS

### Advertising Restrictions

Global research supports using advertising restrictions to decrease alcohol consumption.<sup>2</sup> Atkin, and Block<sup>3</sup> emphasise that alcohol advertising has a significant impact on the social attitudes toward alcohol. PICT implementing advertising restrictions include the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Wallis and Futuna.<sup>4-12</sup> In Fiji, there are prohibitions against vehicle alcohol advertising.<sup>4, 12</sup> In French Polynesia, there are prohibitions on alcohol advertising in sports venues.<sup>7, 13</sup> In Papua New Guinea, alcohol advertisements in statements, notices, photographs, pictures, and other materials promoting liquor are against the law.<sup>9</sup> Despite these restrictions in Papua New Guinea, the rates of youth alcohol consumption remain high.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of advertising restrictions also varies. For example in Nauru, alcohol prohibitions are in place to discourage irresponsible consumption; in New Caledonia, it is to deter youth alcohol consumption, delinquency and violence, and in Niue, it is to decrease youth exposure to alcohol across popular media forums.<sup>5, 10, 14</sup>

### No Alcohol Advertising

PICT with no alcohol advertising restrictions include American Samoa, Cook Island, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu.<sup>4, 13, 15-17</sup> In the Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Vanuatu, there are no regulations on alcohol advertising, product placement, alcohol sponsorship, or sales.<sup>17</sup> However, the Cook Island Government has expressed commitment to public awareness

campaigns on alcohol in sports, radio programmes, television, documentaries, and alcohol awareness weeks.<sup>18</sup> In Guam, alcohol is unrestricted and heavily advertised through satellite television, videos, billboards, and sponsorships.<sup>4</sup> Samoa bans alcohol advertisements that target children; however, the continued use of billboards and television commercials with alcohol content results in the inadvertent exposure of advertising to children.<sup>4, 19</sup> Furthermore, young people in Samoa reported seeing alcohol advertising on billboards that are initially advertising for restaurants and hotels.<sup>4, 19</sup> Tonga permits alcohol advertising in all media, with 80% of youth exposed to alcohol advertisements.<sup>4, 13</sup>

### Alcohol Advertising and Health Warning Labels

There were only two PICT that had health warning labels on alcohol advertisements. These PICT were the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu.<sup>17</sup> According to the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD), health warning labels outline the general health risks associated with alcohol consumption to aid in consumer decisions on drinking.<sup>20</sup> Global research varies regarding the effectiveness of health warning labels on decreasing alcohol consumption.<sup>20, 21</sup>

### Cultural uses of Alcohol Advertising

A notable concern for alcohol advertising is the use of culture to increase alcohol consumption. In Fiji, the production of 'Ratu Rum' was met with backlash from the community for its use of the highly respected title of Chief in its branding.<sup>22</sup> Ram<sup>22</sup> highlights that these marketing ploys disrespect the Fijian culture in an attempt to increase the appeal of the alcoholic drink to youth. Internationally, these strategies have been deemed an appropriation of cultural systems and described as the reinvention of culture as a commodity.<sup>23</sup>

## DISCUSSION

This review provides essential insights into alcohol advertising in PICT. Nine PICT enforce some form of alcohol advertising prohibition, and ten do not. For countries with alcohol advertising, drinking behaviours vary, demonstrating a need for further research on the implementation efforts of current policies. In general, countries with alcohol advertising normalise alcohol and portray alcohol use as unproblematic.<sup>24</sup> This narrative is in direct contrast to the issues commonly associated with alcohol use, including violence, domestic abuse, family issues, driving accidents and finance

issues.<sup>25</sup> The use of health warning labels is also not consistent amongst PICT. Health warning labels increase consumer decision making; however, the research on its effectiveness continues to vary. Health warning advertising labels need to be investigated in terms of what key messages would be effective in reducing alcohol consumption. There was also the use of culture in advertising alcohol products, which was unacceptable as it belittles culture and is disrespectful to leaders. There needs to be further research around the inappropriate use of culture as a mechanism for alcohol advertising.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, more work is needed to have a better understanding for alcohol advertising restrictions that work in each PICT that can help decrease alcohol consumption and the harms associated with its misuse, across all PICT.

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All authors have no competing interests to declare

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