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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kids like cute creatures in beer ads, more likely to buy brand of beer, study suggests

A Budweiser commercial showing a rock star ferret replacing talking lizards as the official beer mascot was the most appealing among a sample of TV beer ads and made the viewers want to buy Bud. However, the viewers rating the commercials were children ages 10 to 17 years old.

In a study published in the Fall edition of the *Journal of Health Communication*, researchers found the “Ferret replaces Lizards” ad along with Budweiser TV commercials starring Dalmations and a mouse were popular among school-age children. Additionally, a large proportion of the children said the ads made them want to buy Bud. By contrast, Anheuser Busch advertisements that touted their “Legacy of Quality” did not appeal to the children.

These were some of the findings of a recent study of school children in two public schools in central California done by PIRE’s Prevention Research Center. The three most favored advertisements had animal characters as the focus of the advertisement. Whereas the

least favored ads either focused on products or portrayed adult scenes, according to the study.

The researchers showed 253 children a sample of advertisements taped from four major network channels (NBC, CBS, ABC, and FOX) during prime time weeknight programs and during weekend daytime sports events. In general, the ads the children found most appealing – based on humor, music, people characters, animal characters, and story – were also rated as the most persuasive. Specifically, 35% of the respondents agreed that the Budweiser–*Ferret Replaces Lizard* advertisement made them want to buy Budweiser and 43% of them reported that they would be “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to buy Budweiser beer if they wanted to buy beer. In contrast, only 5% of the respondents indicated that the Anheuser Busch–*A legacy of Quality* advertisement made them want to buy the beer and 12% reported being likely to buy the brand advertised. Interestingly, of the 66 different beer ads sampled, only five of them were of the type that the kids did *not* find appealing.

These findings add to a growing body of research showing that alcohol advertising influences young people. Exposure to advertisements has been shown to create positive opinions about alcohol, stronger intentions to use alcohol, and more alcohol consumption.

“This study provides further proof that alcohol advertising influences children who are years away from being able to drink legally,” said Meng-Jinn Chen, the study’s lead author. “Alcohol advertisers should do a better job of avoiding exposing underage youth to beer advertising – particularly the kinds of ads with cute animals, humorous story lines and other features that kids find appealing.”

These suggestions support the recent Institute of Medicine report on underage drinking that urges advertisers to strengthen their advertising codes to end marketing practices with underage appeal and avoid marketing in venues where the audience is underage.

Full text of the study is available at <http://resources.prev.org/prcpublications.html>