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The Buzz Behind Alcohol Advertising: A study of how alcohol advertisements on social media impact behavior

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The Buzz Behind Alcohol Advertising:
A study of how alcohol advertisements on social media impact behavior

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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University of Arkansas
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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Literature Review..... | 2 |
| Methodology..... | 8 |
| Results..... | 16 |
| Discussion..... | 24 |
| Conclusion..... | 28 |
| References..... | 31 |

Abstract

Alcohol advertisements are known to be appealing and memorable, and several researchers have investigated what makes these advertisements so attractive. Several trends have emerged regarding the content within alcohol advertisements: themes of parties, celebration, and social success within television, magazines, and social media since the 1970s. Recently, several studies found that new themes in alcohol ads have been found to be popular, especially in social media advertisements (Campbell & Chung, 2022). The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) provides insight into why a person's attitude could be more susceptible or why their behavior could be more easily influenced by certain types of alcohol marketing messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This thesis tested three different alcohol advertising message strategies (i.e., taste, humor, and influencer appeals) to see how each strategy affects consumer attitude and behavior, including the consumers' inclination to drink or purchase alcohol and perceptions of drinking alcohol. Two of the most popular ad appeals- taste and joke/humor- along with "influencer marketing" were tested. Results showed that alcohol advertisements positively changed peoples' perceptions and attitudes about drinking; without really changing their drinking intention. Influencer marketing and humor were not nearly as effective as the taste appeal at impacting behavior, indicating that the central route of appeals works best for alcohol advertisements from the ELM. Being a heavy social media user or a member of Greek Life increased the impact of these advertisements on behavior.

Keywords: Alcohol, social media, advertisements, drinking, strategies,

Introduction

Now more than ever, the alcoholic beverage industry is a powerful, lucrative, trillion-dollar global industry that is continuously growing by the year in sales, consumption, competition, ad spend, and social media use (Mailman School of Public Health, 2021; “Alcoholic drinks,” 2022). Alcohol advertisements have been found to be very appealing and memorable (Douglas *et al.*, 2019; Jernigan *et al.*, 2017; Mclure *et al.*, 2016), and several researchers have investigated what makes these advertisements so attractive (Chen *et al.*, 2005; Weaver, 2016). Several trends have emerged regarding the content within alcohol advertisements; themes of parties, celebration, and social success within television, magazines, and social media since the 1970s (Barry *et al.*, 2018; Breed & De Foe, 1979; Morgenstern *et al.*, 2015; Noel & Babor, 2017). Recently, several studies found that new themes in alcohol ads have been found to be popular, especially in social media advertisements (Campbell & Chung, 2022). Seemingly, alcoholic beverage brands have taken a different and new approach, and more research must be conducted to better understand how these new popular themes affect consumer attitudes and behavior (Atkinson *et al.*, 2021; Campbell & Chung, 2022). An example of this is “influencer marketing,” an extremely popular modern tactic that was not accounted for in most previous studies (Campbell & Chung, 2022)

The first part of this research was a content analysis of popular alcohol brands’ advertisements on social media which examined the strategies used to appeal to consumers and the overall content patterns and characteristics within these online alcohol advertisements (Campbell & Chung, 2022). Four hundred and thirty-two alcohol advertisements on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, were evaluated for more than 20 themes, and the most common themes overall included taste, seasonal/holiday, recipe, and joke/humor. Likewise, the themes that were known as being popular in the past- parties, celebration, social success- were not found nearly as frequently as expected (Atkinson *et al.*, 2021; Campbell & Chung, 2022). Instead, themes such as memes, flavors, and seasonal/holiday characteristics were found as the most popular strategic approaches across brands.

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) provides insight into why a person's attitude could be more susceptible or why their behavior could be more easily influenced by certain types of alcohol marketing messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In situations where the viewer is only moderately interested in a topic, certain appeals can act as peripheral cues and may cause the audience members to engage in the central route of processing, making for a more impactful, longer-lasting message (Agostinelli & Grube, 2002; Chang *et al.*, 2020; Shao *et al.*, 2019). For example, people who are only moderately interested in messages about drinking may be more likely to deeply process a message delivered by a favorite celebrity or influencer.

This thesis will test three different advertising strategies to see how each strategy affects consumer attitude and behavior, including the consumers' inclination to drink or purchase alcohol and perceptions of drinking alcohol. Two of the most popular ad appeals- taste and joke/humor- along with "influencer marketing" will be tested (Campbell & Chung, 2022). Studying these marketing strategies should allow us to see which themes have the largest effect on consumer behavior and perceptions, how these effects additionally interplay with demographical data and globalization, and what the theoretical implications may be so that marketers can use these strategies appropriately.

Literature Review

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Hornik and Yanovitzky (2003) suggest that to properly evaluate a communication or advertising campaign, the campaign must be driven by a theory of effects. Theories provide powerful tools for a systematic inquiry of processes, including behavior change in the response to a campaign message, and messages that are dynamic and multifaceted (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003). The ELM provides some insight as to why behavior and attitude change can be impacted by alcohol advertisements.

The elaboration likelihood model, ELM hereafter, was developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and was the first persuasive theory offering a comprehensive framework for understanding attitude change (Kitchen *et al.*, 2014). It is widely acknowledged that the effects of an advertisement are not limited to the information in the advertisement but are also a function of the appeals used in

advertisements like featuring a joke or humor (Ott *et al.*, 2016). The ELM theory is a framework used to understand and evaluate the underlying mechanisms to describe the relationships between these strategies of appeal and consumer response to such advertisements.

The ELM asserts that persuasion is a cognitive process having two routes, a central route and a peripheral route with their use cases depending on a person's level of elaboration or cognitive effort (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route is taken when a person uses high elaboration, issue-relevant thinking, or motivated consideration of the persuasive message. Meanwhile, the peripheral route is taken when there is less elaboration, little cognitive effort is required, or attitudes are formed on relatively simple cues (Olaosebikan, 2020; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). These simple, often superficial, cues may be the credibility, attractiveness of the sources of the message, or the production quality of the message. A person's attitude change through the central route will be longer-lasting, more resistant, and more predictive of behavior than through the peripheral route (Olaosebikan, 2020; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, in situations where the audience may be only moderately interested in a topic, factors that typically act as peripheral cues can also cause the audience members to engage in the central route processing (Agostinelli & Grube, 2002; Chang *et al.*, 2020; Shao *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, people who are only moderately interested in messages about drinking may be more likely to deeply process a message with a peripheral cue they find enhancing, such as a message featuring their favorite celebrity or a meme that they find funny (Olaosebikan, 2020). As such, this thesis tests different appeals to represent both routes of the ELM. The taste appeal is a straightforward message, representing the central route of the ELM. Meanwhile, the humor and influencer appeals are known to be peripheral cues, representing the peripheral route of the ELM for this study.

Ad Message Appeals

As a potential solution for determining the most effective advertising strategy, Richard Vaughn created the Foote, Cone, and Belding (FCB) Model containing four quadrants that predict patterns for consumers behavior based on a consumer's motivation, involvement level, and the type of product (Vaughn, 1979). According to the original FCB model, alcoholic beverages would fall into quadrant four,

also known as the “Satisfaction Quadrant” (“Foote, Cone, and Belding,” 2017; Vaughn, 1979). This quadrant is a category of products requiring low levels of involvement and feelings, often products that are bought on impulse (Vaughn, 1979; “Foote, Cone, and Belding,” 2017). However, more recent research re-evaluated alcoholic beverages to be high-involvement products because of the emotional treatment they are now given by our society, which ultimately enhances their perceived value (Chaudhuri, 1993).

In 1924, Melvin Copeland proposed that individuals typically make a purchase based on motivations that are either emotional, rational, or instinctive (Copeland, 1924). In general, advertising appeals are primarily categorized into the two overarching categories of rational and emotional appeals (Copeland, 1924; Fernández-Vázquez & Álvarez-Delgado, 2019; Gong & Cummins 2020). In an appeal that uses the rational motive approach, the reasons why a consumer should buy the product, such as its dependability, durability, or economic advantage, are stated plainly (Copeland, 1924; Gong & Cummins, 2020; González Oñate, 2018). On the contrary, emotional appeals invoke feelings and emotions. Typically, when an emotional appeal is effective, the consumer does not apply reason when making a purchase (Copeland, 1924; Gong & Cummins, 2020; González Oñate, 2018). Many studies have found that the effectiveness of rational or emotional appeals is dependent on the consumers’ buying scenario, the relevancy of the product to them, and how interested they are in the specific product (Gong & Cummins, 2020; Johar & Sirgy, 1991).

It has been found that when an advertised product has high relevance for the consumer, rational appeals are more effective; and likewise, when a product has low relevance to a consumer, emotional appeals may capture their attention better (Gong & Cummins, 2020). Typically, rational appeals should be used with caution when a product has low relevance to a consumer, as the consumer is far less likely to pay attention to the factual aspects of the feature (Copeland, 1924; Gong & Cummins 2020). Some studies assert that these appeals work best when kept separately, while other studies have asserted that they can work well together (Cheong & Cheong, 2020; Ruiz & Sicilia, 2004). In this study, the taste appeal serves as a rational buying appeal, while the humor appeal and influencer appeal serve as an emotional appeal.

As the recent study suggests, alcohol is likely becoming more of a high-involvement product and less of an impulse buy, as people are more regularly consuming and there are now numerous differentiating types, brands, and flavors of an alcoholic beverage for a consumer to consider and choose from.

In the past, social media advertising content has been categorized into three types of content: informational, transactional, and entertainment content (Tafesse, 2015). Transactional content is information about the activities related to product promotion or sales details such as discount information or loyalty information (Mhimed & Belkhir, 2018; Tafesse, 2015). Content is regarded as informative when it contains information about the company, brand, or product. This could be specifications, technical details, attributes, reviews, or recommendations (Mhimed & Belkhir, 2018; Tafesse, 2015). Entertainment content refers to messages that are not directly related to information about the brand/product but rather offer the audience enjoyment and pastime; for example, jokes, daily greetings, or artistic work (Mhimed & Belkhir, 2018; Tafesse, 2015). In this study, the humor falls into the category of entertainment and the taste appeal is informational content. Each appeal is effective depending on various variables, including involvement level, scenario, and atmosphere. However, perhaps because of its informal atmosphere, entertainment content has been found to be most effective for higher engagement and consumption on social media (De vries *et al.*, 2012; Eriksson *et al.*, 2019; Kietzmann *et al.*, 2012; Tafasse, 2015).

Influencer Marketing

With the digital age and the increasing popularity of social media, influencer marketing has become one of the fastest-growing marketing channels and is still on the rise (Geysler, 2022). Influencer marketing is described as a type of social media marketing that utilizes endorsements and product mentions from individuals, called influencers, who have a dedicated social following and are seen as experts within their niche (Chen, 2021). These influencers are compensated for creating advertisements or posts about a product/service on social media (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Top influencers can even make more than six figures for one post and millions of dollars per year (McCoole, 2018). Today, with social media technically anybody can become an influencer (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018). The latest influencer

marketing benchmark report from Influencer Marketing Hub estimated the influencer marketing industry was worth \$13.8 billion in 2021 (Geysler, 2022). Today nearly 80% of consumers have purchased something via an influencer recommendation (Moran, 2022) and 85% of companies spent more than \$1000 on influencer marketing in 2019 (Bailis, 2021).

Campbell and Farrell (2020) attribute the recent growth of influencer marketing to a few different forces including: (1) consumers are shifting media consumption online and reacting differently to such advertisements, and (2) advertising in an online environment where there is an abundance of advertisements is more difficult, therefore softer and more authentic approaches may have an advantage. Additionally, the scope of influencers has become very large and influencers are classified into categories depending on their amount of followers, engagement levels, and perceived authenticity. These categories are celebrity influencers, mega influencers, macro-influencers, micro-influencers, and nano influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Most influencers are experts in a particular topic or niche area, so brands can target an audience by finding influencers that are specialized in an area that aligns with their product/service.

While influencers are not necessarily celebrities, they are a type of opinion leaders. The main difference between influencers and most opinion leaders or celebrities is that “the border between content creation and consumption vanishes” (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018, p.#). These influencers create their own content for their audience. In fact, they have great two-way communication and retake audience feedback very seriously, thereby “being influenced by their audience” (Gross & Wangenheim, 2018). Influencers add a sense of humanity to a product, and the social comparison theory only enforces the idea that these content creators provide a relatable model that serves as a norm and standard for other consumers. Past studies showed that celebrity endorsement is an important marketing strategy in persuasion. Consumers typically assume celebrities as credible when endorsing a brand or product and in general they tend to have a positive influence on attitude (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Seno & Lukas, 2005). Regarding the ELM, celebrities are known to serve as a peripheral cue and can sway or influence consumers who do not have high-involvement or relevance, especially if the consumer likes or is familiar

with the celebrity (Agostinelli & Grube, 2002). The perceived value of congruence between the celebrity and the product ultimately has been found to enhance consumer purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2012; Liang & Lin, 2018). It has also been found that consumers pay more attention to celebrity-containing ads and view them more credible than advertisements without celebrities (Rollins & Bhutada, 2014).

Nowadays, since social media is the main channel to communicate with consumers, almost all brands are making official social media accounts. In fact, 97% of Fortune 500 companies rely on social media (Porteous, 2021), and 92% of U.S. marketers for companies larger than 100 employees are expected to use social media for marketing purposes (Statista, 2022).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis builds upon previous research about advertising message strategies, especially alcohol advertisements, by testing various message strategies including influencer marketing. Based on the review of previous studies on advertising message strategies, influencer marketing and the ELM model, the following research questions are posed.

RQ1: How does an alcohol ad change peoples' intention to drink, perception about drinking, and attitudes towards drinking?

RQ2-1: Does a message that has taste appeal have more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message that doesn't have taste appeal?

RQ2-2: Does a message that has taste appeal have more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and intention to recommend) than a message that doesn't have taste appeal?

RQ3-1: Does a message that has humor appeal have more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message that doesn't have humor appeal?

RQ3-2: Does a message that has humor appeal have more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and intention to recommend) than a message that doesn't have humor appeal?

RQ4-1: Does a message that has influencer appeal have more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message that doesn't have influencer appeal?

RQ4-2: Does a message that has influencer appeal have more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and intention to recommend) than a message that doesn't have influencer appeal?

RQ5-1: Which factor is the most significant predictor of perception about drinking, attitudes toward drinking, and intention to drink?

RQ5-2: Which factor is the most significant predictor of attitudes toward brands, products, and behavioral intention?

RQ6: To what extent does social media usage (i.e., intensity and frequency) relate to attitudes toward brands, products, and behavioral intention?

RQ7: To what extent does Greek life membership relate to attitudes toward brands, products, and behavioral intention?

Method

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how the alcohol industry's most popular advertising message strategies and appeals can impact consumer behavior, attitudes, and perceptions and how these interplay with demographics and psychographics. This will be accomplished through a 2 (taste appeal vs. no taste appeal) × 2 (influencer appeal vs. no influencer appeal) × 2 (humor appeal vs. no humor appeal)

experiment embedded in a web survey. Experiments can be used to establish causality between independent (advertising message strategies) and dependent variables (drinking intent/behavior and perceptions; see Wimmer & Dominick, 2010). With an experimental approach, I had control over the selection process of the research experiment and could vary each subject's exposure to advertisements of different types to determine which strategy was the most effective.

Sample

For the pilot test, students at the University of Arkansas were offered extra credit upon completion. The questionnaire was sent out to personal contacts as well. After the pilot test was completed, the survey was posted on Amazon Turk with a \$0.20 award for finishing the experiment. Respondents who are 18+ years old and living in the United States with various backgrounds were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is a software that finds the participants for a survey based on parameters set by the researcher and compensates the participants to complete it.

A total of 726 participants were included in the final data analysis. Females made up 39.8% of the data ($n = 289$), males accounted for 59.9% ($n=435$), and gender non-conforming and "other" each accounted for .1% ($n=1$). The majority ethnicity for this data set was 88.0% white ($n=639$), followed by 5.5% Asian ($n=40$), 3.2% Black or African American ($n=23$), 2.6% ($n=19$) American Indian or Alaskan native, 0.3% ($n=2$) Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander, 0.3% ($n=2$) other, and 0.1% ($n=1$) selected "prefer not to respond." The majority of respondents were married (80.3%) ($n=583$), 17.5% ($n=127$) were single, 1.1% ($n=8$) were divorced, 1.0% ($n=7$) were widowed, and 0.1% ($n=1$) were separated. The majority age group for this data set was 30 – 39 (49.5%) ($n=330$), followed by 21 - 29 (23.1%) ($n=168$), 40 -49 (17.1%) ($n=124$), 50 - 59 (9.2%) ($n=67$), 60 – 69 (3.9%) ($n=28$), 18 - 20 (.8%) ($n=6$), and 70+ (.1%) ($n=1$). The average age was 36.31 ($SD = 10.24$), the minimum age was 10 and the maximum age was 81.

The average annual income was \$50,000-59,999 (23.6%) ($n=171$), followed by \$40,000-49,999 (15.8%) ($n=115$), \$70,000-79,999 (12.3%) ($n=89$), \$60,000-69,999 (9.8%) ($n=71$), \$20,000-\$29,999 (9.1%) ($n=66$), \$30,000-39,999 (8.8%) ($n=64$), \$90,000-99,999 (5.5%) ($n=40$), the brackets \$10,000-

19,999 and less than \$10,000 both made up 4.1% (n=30) each, \$80,000-89,999 made up 3.9% (n=28), followed by \$100,000 or more making up 2.9% (n=21), and prefer not to respond made up 0.1% of responses (n=1). Of the sample, 65.2% of respondents had the highest education of a bachelor's degree (n=473). 20.1% of the samples' highest education was a master's degree (n=146), followed by 9.0% having a high school diploma or GED (n=65), 2.9% had some college (n=21), 1.4% had an Associate degree (n=10), 0.8% had a Professional degree (n=6), 0.4% had a Doctorate degree (n=3), and 0.3% selected "prefer not to respond" (n=2).

90.3% of the sample currently or formerly was a part of a Greek Life fraternity or sorority (n=656), while 7.7% of the sample was never part of Greek Life (n=56) and 1.9% (n=14) selected prefer not to respond.

86.8% of respondents regularly use Twitter (n=630), 88.4% regularly use Facebook (n=642), 93.0% regularly use Instagram (n=675), 50.0% use Pinterest (n=363), 92.6% use YouTube (n=672), 69.7% use Snapchat (n=493), and 67.2% use TikTok (n=488). 15.9% of respondents (n=180) selected that they also used "other" social media. The "other" category included LinkedIn, What's App and others. 11.3% of respondents (n=82) answered that they accessed social media less than a few times per week, 6.2% of respondents (n=45) access social media a few times per week, 6.5% of respondents (n=47) access social media less than one hour per day, 9.6% of respondents (n=47) access social media one hour per day, 15.0% of respondents (n=109) access social media 2 hours per day, 17.2% of respondents (n=125) access social media three hours per day, 11.2% of respondents (n=81) access social media 4 hours per day, 11.4% of respondents (n=83) access social media five hours per day, 6.3% of respondents (n=46) access social media six hours per day, and 5.2% of respondents (n=38) access social media seven or more hours per day.

Procedure

The questionnaire features a note to participants before beginning that explains the subject matter of the research as well as making participants check a box of consent before beginning. The note before the questionnaire states that the participants are ensured confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any

time without penalty. Once consent was given, participants were asked to answer personal questions including gender, ethnicity, marital status, age, income bracket, and social media habits.

From there, respondents were placed into groups at random, and each group was shown an advertisement with a different appeal (taste, humor, influencer) combination. Table 1 shows 8 experimental conditions.

Table 1. Eight experimental conditions

| | Humor | | No Humor | |
|---------------|-------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Taste | No Taste | Taste | No Taste |
| Influencer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| No Influencer | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |

Participants were given a pre-test before viewing the advertisement about their current state of being and emotions, and a post-test after viewing the advertisement to measure how their emotions and feelings may have changed. In the post-test, participants will answer additional questions about the variables listed below. After completion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their time and were asked to enter a code to ensure their completion and payment.

Stimulus development

The alcohol product selected in the current study was hard seltzer.

The stimulus for the advertisements was designed with Adobe Creative Cloud by a graphic designer. The advertisements, although different themes, were from the same brand and the same campaign. Appendix A shows all conditions/stimuli.

Influencer appeal. The influencer appeal stimulus was shown as posted by an influencer account by someone named @emily with a person featured as the account profile picture. There were more than 153,000 likes and 1400 comments on the picture. The advertisement contained the phrasing: “I am

LOVING this drink and just had to share it with all five million of my followers! Blue Raz is my absolute favorite!”

Taste appeal. The taste appeal stimulus included the phrasing: “SODKA combines a crisp fizz with a smooth finish and is a smart, re-defined take on the vodka-soda. A refreshing drink that’s infused with 14 different flavors, including Bubblin Blackberry, Radical Raspberry, Tropical Thrill, and Lemon-Lime Twist!”

Humor appeal. The humor appeal stimulus included the phrasing: “Hakuna Ma-Sodka (it means no worries) 😊”.

Pilot test. Before the main data collection using MTurk, a pilot test was conducted using Qualtrics, an online survey tool available for graduate students and faculty. After the pilot test, the main data collection was executed.

Measures

Demographics. Demographic variables included gender, race, marital status, age, income, and education level.

Psychographics. This study evaluated participants’ activities, interests, and opinions, including previous or current involvement in Greek Life membership (sororities/fraternities), and social media usage. In the United States, Greek Life membership at a university is often associated and stereotyped with drinking and parties. Wamboldt *et al.* (2019) found that membership in Greek Life was a significant predictor of heavy drinking and Bonar *et al.* (2021) found that college students who reported greater amounts of binge drinking and higher perceived drinking norms were more likely to be in Greek Life. Social media usage questions explored what forms of social media participants used and how many hours per day they typically spent on social media.

Involvement measures. A series of Likert scales ranging from 1 to 7 measured the participants’ involvement in alcohol/drinking and their opinions of whether alcohol was 1) important, 2) relevant, or 3)

of concern to them (e.g., 1 = very unimportant; to 7 = very important). The reliability was high at the Cronbach alpha of .896.

Pre-Attitudes toward drinking. This study evaluated the participants' level of agreement with 11 statements about how drinking makes them feel such as "Drinking alcohol makes me feel cool," "Drinking alcohol makes me feel relaxed," "Drinking alcohol makes me feel more outgoing," etc. The level of agreement was indicated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The statements were derived from themes previously explored in alcohol advertisements by both Campbell and Chung (2022) and Weaver *et al* (2016). These questions were modeled off Mackenzie and Lutz (1989). The reliability was high at a Cronbach alpha of .956.

Pre-Perceptions These questions were repeated post-advertisement. This study evaluated participants' thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about drinking alcohol prior to viewing the advertisement on a series of seven-point Likert scales along four dimensions: bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, unfavorable/favorable, and negative/positive (e.g., 1 = unpleasant; to = pleasant). The reliability was high at the Cronbach alpha of .851.

Alcohol use disorders. Participants were also asked how often they consumed a drink containing alcohol, how many drinks containing alcohol they consumed on a typical day, and often they have six or more drinks on one occasion (National Institute on Drug Abuse). These three questions come from the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), a standard alcohol screening that helps to identify hazardous drinkers or people who have an alcohol use disorder. This test is a shortened version of a test developed by the World Health Organization in 1998 and is used by the U.S. federal government and other organizations to assist in identifying alcohol/drinking habits and more.

Each of the three questions has 5 answer choices valued from 0 points to 4 points. For men, a score of 4 or more is considered positive for identifying hazardous drinking or an alcohol use disorder. For women, a score of 3 or more is considered positive. Typically, the higher the score, the more likely it is that a person's drinking could be unsafe or hazardous (National Institute on Drug Abuse). Among our

723 participants, the minimum score was 0, the maximum score was 12, and the average was a score of 5.24 ($SD = 2.46$).

Intention to drink. Participants were asked the likelihood that they would drink that week or that night, on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 (1 = not at all likely; 7 = highly likely). The reliability was moderate at the Cronbach alpha of .784.

Social Media Intensity. Respondents were asked whether they're using **each social media platform and answered as 0 = no and 1 = yes**; Twitter, (n=630), Facebook (n=642), Instagram (n=675), Pinterest (n=363), Youtube (n=672), Snapchat (n=493), and 67.2% use TikTok (n=488). 15.9% of respondents (n=180) selected that they also used "other" social media. Then, the respondents' answers were summed up to examine the intensity (quantity) of their use of social media platforms. The mean for the social media use intensity was 5.72 ($SD = 1.54$) with a maximum of 8 and thainimum of 1. This means that among 723 participants, they use at least one social media platform.

Social Media Frequency. Answers were recategorized as (1) very light users: less than a few times per week & a few times per week, (2) light users: less than 1 hour per day & 1 hour per day; (3) average users: 2-3 hours per day; (4) heavy users: 4-5 hours per day; and (5) very heavy users: more than 6 hours per day (Buchholz, 2022). With these categories, 17.5% of respondents (n=127) are considered very light users, 16.1% of respondents (n=117) are light users, 32.2% of respondents (n=234) are average users, 22.6% of respondents (n=164) are heavy users, and 11.5% of respondents (n=84) are very heavy users.

Manipulation questions. Eight manipulation check questions were included to ensure that participants were paying attention and that variables were manipulated effectively. Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of simple statements, two statements relevant to each independent variable. The influencer manipulation questions are: (1) The person who made the posting about SODKA is an influencer (1 = Agree; 2 = Disagree). (2) The account that made the posting about SODKA is a brand (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). The taste manipulations are: (1) The caption featured the

different tastes and flavors (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). (2) I learned the different types of flavors of SODKA (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree).

Attitudes toward the product. Participants were asked their thoughts in general of the product and brand they viewed within the advertisement on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 for Good/Bad, Pleasant/Unpleasant, Favorable/Unfavorable, and Positive/Negative (e.g., 1 = unpleasant; to 5 = pleasant). These questions were modeled off Mackenzie and Lutz (1989). The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .851.

Attitudes toward the brand. Participants were asked their thoughts in general of the brand, SODKA, within the advertisement on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 for Good/Bad, Pleasant/Unpleasant, Favorable/Unfavorable, and Positive/Negative (e.g., 1 = unpleasant; to 5 = pleasant). These questions were modeled off Mackenzie and Lutz (1989). The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .855.

Intent to purchase. Participants were asked the level to which the advertisement made them want to buy the product. Questions were asked on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 (1 = not at all likely; 7 = highly likely). The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .811.

Intention to recommend. Participants were asked about the likelihood that they would recommend it to others. Questions were asked on a Likert scale of 1 to 7 (1 = not at all likely; 7 = highly likely). The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .808.

Post attitudes toward alcohol. Participants were asked again their level of agreement with the 11 statements about how drinking made them feel. This data was compared to their first answers before viewing the advertisement to see if the advertisement had an impact on the statement. The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .956.

Post perceptions of alcohol. Participants were also again asked their thoughts/attitudes toward drinking on the Likert scale of 1 to 7 for Good/Bad, Pleasant/Unpleasant, Favorable/Unfavorable, Positive/Negative (e.g., 1 = unpleasant; to 7 = very pleasant) modeled off Mackenzie and Lutz (1989). The reliability was high at the Cronbach alpha at .903.

Intent to consume alcohol. Participants were also asked post-advertisement the likelihood they would drink that night or that week. The reliability was high at a Cronbach's Alpha at .805.

Results

Manipulation checks

The influencer manipulation questions are: (1) The person who made the posting about SODKA is an influencer (1 = Agree; 2 = Disagree). (2) The account that made the posting about SODKA is a brand (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). The t-test yielded a significant difference in measuring their perception on logical reasoning ($t = 2.223$, $df = 708$, $p = .027$, $M_{\text{influencer}} = .213$, $SD_{\text{influencer}} = .410$ vs. $M_{\text{noinfluencer}} = .149$, $SD_{\text{noinfluencer}} = .356$).

The taste manipulation questions are: (1) The caption featured multiple different tastes and flavors (1 = Agree; 2 = Disagree). (2) I learned about multiple different flavors of SODKA (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). The t-test yielded a significant difference in measuring their perception on logical reasoning ($t = -2.$, $df = 708$, $p = .013$, $M_{\text{taste}} = .815$, $SD_{\text{taste}} = .389$ vs. $M_{\text{notaste}} = .737$, $SD_{\text{notaste}} = .441$).

The humor manipulation questions are: (1) The caption featured a joke, humor, or a pun (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). (2) The caption was fun and light-hearted (1 Agree; 2 = Disagree). The t-test yielded a significant difference in measuring their perception on logical reasoning ($t = -3.523$, $df = 708$, $p = .000$, $M_{\text{humor}} = 1.549$, $SD_{\text{humor}} = .627$ vs. $M_{\text{nohumor}} = 1.368$, $SD_{\text{nohumor}} = .740$).

Findings

Alcohol ads and attitude change

The first research question asked whether people change their thoughts about drinking (i.e., perception, attitudes, and intention to drink) after viewing the alcohol ad. To examine the difference between initial thoughts on drinking and thoughts on drinking after being exposed to an alcohol ad, a series of paired t-tests was conducted. The result showed that there was a significant difference between initial perceptions of drinking ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.54$) and perceptions after viewing the ad ($M = 5.44$, SD

= 1.38), $t(706) = -8.288, p < .001$. In other words, respondents had changed to more favorable perceptions about drinking after viewing the alcohol ad.

To examine the difference between attitudes toward drinking and attitudes toward drinking after being exposed to an alcohol ad, a series of paired t-tests was conducted once again. The result showed that there was a significant difference between initial perceptions of drinking ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.28$) and perceptions after viewing the ad ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.24$), $t(707) = -3.650, p < .001$. In other words, respondents had changed more favorable attitudes about drinking after viewing the alcohol ad.

To examine the difference between intentions to drink before and after being exposed to an alcohol ad, a series of paired t-tests was conducted once again. The result showed that there was not a significant difference between the initial intention of drinking and post intention to drink. In other words, exposure to alcohol ad didn't change people's intention to drink.

Taste, Influencer, and Humor Appeals and their roles

The second research question asked if a message with taste appeal has more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message without taste appeal.

To test the group differences between **the use of taste appeal** and no use of taste appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' thoughts on drinking, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in perception of drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink between the two groups. In other words, the use of taste appeal didn't affect the perception, attitude,s and intention to drink.

Research Question 2-2 asked if a message that has taste appeal has more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and intention to recommend) than a message without taste appeal. To test the group differences between the use of taste appeal and no use of taste appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' attitudes on product and behavioral intention, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in respondents' attitudes toward the brand/product and behavioral intention between the two

groups. In other words, the use of taste appeal didn't affect the attitudes toward the brand or product, purchase intention, or intention to recommend.

Research question three asked if a message that has **humor appeal** has more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message that doesn't have humor appeal. To test the group differences between the use of humor appeal and no use of humor appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' thoughts on drinking, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in perception of drinking, attitudes towards drinking and intention to drink between the two groups. In other words, the use of humor appeal didn't affect the perception, attitudes and intention to drink.

Research question RQ3-2 asked if a message with humor appeal has more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and intention to recommend) than a message that doesn't have humor appeal. To test the group differences between the use of humor appeal and no use of humor appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' attitudes on product and behavioral intention, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in respondents' attitudes toward the brand/product and behavioral intention between the two groups. In other words, the use of humor appeal didn't affect the attitudes toward the brand or product, purchase intention, or intention to recommend.

Research question four asked if a message with **influencer appeal** has more impact on respondents' perception about drinking, attitudes towards drinking, and intention to drink than a message that doesn't have influencer appeal. To test the group differences between the use of influencer appeal and no use of influencer appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' thoughts on drinking, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in perception of drinking, attitudes towards drinking and intention to drink between the two groups. In other words, the use of influencer appeal didn't affect the perception, attitudes and intention to drink.

Research question RQ4-2 asked if a message with influencer appeal has more impact on respondents' attitudes towards the brand, products, and behavioral intention (i.e., purchasing intention and

intention to recommend) than a message that doesn't have influencer appeal. To test the group differences between the use of influencer appeal and no use of influencer appeal in the alcohol ad on respondents' attitudes on product and behavioral intention, three independent t-tests were conducted. The result showed that there were no statistical differences in respondents' attitudes toward the brand/product and behavioral intention between the two groups. In other words, the use of influencer appeal didn't affect the attitudes toward the brand or product, purchase intention, or intention to recommend.

To see further their roles on dependent variable (i.e., purchasing intention), $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial ANOVA test was conducted on "intention to buy." Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for eight cells.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for 8 conditions: Intention to buy

| Conditions | N | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---------------------------|----|-------------|-----------|
| Control | 87 | 5.60 | 1.16 |
| Taste only | 90 | 5.03 | 1.46 |
| Influencer only | 85 | 5.31 | 1.17 |
| Influencer + Taste | 87 | 5.31 | 1.17 |
| Joke only | 90 | 5.03 | 1.44 |
| Joke + Taste | 90 | 5.38 | 1.28 |
| Joke + Influencer | 90 | 5.33 | 1.31 |
| Joke + Taste + Influencer | 89 | 5.44 | 1.21 |

The results of a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial ANOVA showed that there were no main effects for three appeals but one two-way interaction (i.e., Humor x Taste) and three-way interaction effects (see Table 3).

Table 3. Analysis of Factorial ANOVA Analysis

| Effects | Variables | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Main Effect | Humor | .028 | .867 |
| | Influencer | .803 | .370 |
| | Taste | .067 | .797 |
| Two-way interactions | Humor × Taste | 7.001 | .008 |
| | Influencer x Taste | .681 | .410 |
| | Influencer x Humor | .947 | .331 |
| Three-way interactions | Humor × Taste × Influencer | 4.516 | .034 |

To see further their roles in intention to recommend, a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial ANOVA test was conducted on "intention to recommend." Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for eight cells.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for 8 conditions: Intention to recommend

| Conditions | N | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|------------|---|----------|-----------|
|------------|---|----------|-----------|

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|------|------|
| Control | 87 | 5.80 | .99 |
| Taste only | 90 | 5.02 | 1.45 |
| Influencer only | 85 | 5.48 | 1.18 |
| Taste + Influencer | 87 | 5.51 | 1.13 |
| Joke only | 90 | 5.31 | 1.43 |
| Joke + Taste | 90 | 5.56 | 1.23 |
| Joke + Influencer | 180 | 5.41 | 1.34 |
| Joke + Influencer + Taste | 179 | 5.57 | 1.21 |

The results of a 2×2×2 factorial ANOVA showed that there were no main effects for three appeals but one two-way interaction (i.e., Humor x Taste) and three-way interaction effects (see Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of Factorial ANOVA Analysis

| Effects | Variables | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Main Effect | Humor | .156 | .693 |
| | Influencer | 1.098 | .295 |
| | Taste | 1.404 | .236 |
| Two-way interactions | Humor × Taste | 8.355 | .004 |
| | Humor x Influencer | .015 | .904 |
| | Influencer x Taste | 2.905 | .089 |
| Three-way interactions | Humor × Taste × Influencer | 7.205 | .007 |

Factors predicting behavioral changes

Research question five asked which factor is the most significant predictor of perception about drinking, attitudes toward drinking, and intention to drink. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations among IVs and DVs.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and Correlations

| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---|---|
| 1. Involvement | 4.97 | 1.68 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Pre_attitude | 5.24 | 1.28 | .71* | - | | | | | | | |
| 3. Attitude_product | 5.65 | 1.14 | .43* | .54* | - | | | | | | |
| 4. Attitude_brand | 5.72 | 1.12 | .40* | .53* | .88* | - | | | | | |
| 5. Post_drinking | 5.17 | 1.46 | .66* | .81* | .49* | .48* | - | | | | |
| 6. Pre_drinking | 5.15 | 1.43 | .68* | .81* | .43* | .42* | .86* | - | | | |
| 7. Sum of each social media use | 5.72 | 1.54 | .15* | .18* | .20* | .19* | .16* | .15* | - | | |
| 8. Intention_buy | 5.30 | 1.29 | .43* | .61* | .74* | .76* | .61* | .57* | .23* | - | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| 9. | 5.47 | 1.25 | .41* | .58* | .65* | .67* | .61* | .55* | .22* | .76* | - |
| Intention_Reco | | | * | * | * | * | * | | * | * | |
| mmend | | | | | | | | | | | |

To see how factors including involvement, pre-attitudes, attitudes towards products, attitudes towards brand, post attitude and pre and post drinking intention, affect the purchase intention and recommendation intention, regression analyses were conducted. The results from multiple linear regression analysis indicated that the attitudes toward brand ($\beta = .456$), attitude toward product ($\beta = .210$), and pre-drinking intention ($\beta = .293$) are significant predictors on purchasing intention [$R^2 = .671$, adjusted $R^2 = .669$, $F(3, 698) = 473.68$, $p < .001$]. For recommendation intention, the results from multiple linear regression analysis indicated attitudes toward brand ($\beta = .488$) and post-drinking intention ($\beta = .377$) are significant predictors on purchasing intention [$R^2 = .558$, adjusted $R^2 = .557$, $F(2, 699) = 441.635$, $p < .001$]. In other attitudes toward the brand is the most significant factor to predict behavioral intention.

Social Media Use and Attitudes & Behavioral Intention

The sixth research question investigated how people who have different social media uses have different attitudes toward brands, products, and their behavioral intention. To see the group differences (i.e., very light users- less than a few times per week & a few times per week; light users – less than 1 hour per day & 1 hour per day; average users-1~2 hours per day; heavy users-3~4 hours per day; very heavy users-more than 6 hours per day) on dependent variables, a series of one-way ANOVA tests was conducted. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics: Social media use and attitudes and behavioral changes

| | | n | M | S.D |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----|------|------|
| Attitudes toward Product | Very light users | 124 | 5.68 | 1.12 |
| | light users | 111 | 5.38 | 1.25 |
| | average users | 229 | 5.49 | 1.13 |
| | heavy users | 161 | 5.86 | .95 |
| | very heavy users | 83 | 5.98 | 1.26 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.65 | 1.14 |
| Attitudes toward Brand | Very light users | 124 | 5.79 | 1.06 |
| | light users | 111 | 5.48 | 1.27 |
| | average users | 229 | 5.55 | 1.15 |
| | heavy users | 161 | 5.90 | .93 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|------|------|--------|
| Intention to buy | very heavy users | 83 | 6.08 | 1.15 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.72 | 1.12 |
| | Very light users | 124 | 1.14 | 5.42 |
| | Light users | 111 | 1.49 | 5.01 |
| | Average users | 229 | 1.30 | 5.02 |
| Intention to recommend | Heavy users | 161 | 1.10 | 5.56 |
| | Very heavy users | 83 | 1.28 | 5.7892 |
| | Total | 708 | 1.29 | 5.30 |
| | Very light users | 5.73 | 1.12 | 124 |
| | Light users | 111 | 1.53 | 5.05 |
| | Average users | 229 | 1.22 | 5.24 |
| | Heavy users | 161 | 1.07 | 5.71 |
| | Very heavy users | 83 | 1.18 | 5.83 |
| Total | 708 | 1.25 | 5.47 | |

The results showed that there was a significant difference in **attitudes toward products** among five groups, $F=5.913$ (4, 703), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) light users ($n = 111$, $M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.25$) and heavy users ($n = 161$, $M = 5.86$, $SD = .95$), 2) light users and very heavy users ($n = 83$, $M = 5.99$, $SD = 1.26$), 3) average users ($n = 229$, $M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.123$) and heavy users, and 4) average users and very heavy users were statistically different.

For the group difference in **attitudes toward brands**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in attitudes toward brand among five groups, $F=6,119$ (4, 703), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) light users ($n = 111$, $M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.27$) and heavy users ($n = 161$, $M = 5.90$, $SD = .93$), 2) light users and very heavy users ($n = 83$, $M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.15$), 3) average users ($n = 229$, $M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.62$) and heavy users, and 4) average users and very heavy users were statistically different.

For the group difference in **intention to buy**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in purchasing intention among five groups, $F=9.474$ (4, 703), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) very light users ($n = 124$, $M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.14$) and average users ($n = 229$, $M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.30$), 2) light users ($n = 111$, $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.49$) and heavy users ($n = 161$, $M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.10$), 3) light users and very heavy users ($n = 83$, $M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.28$), 4) average users and heavy users and heavy users, and 5) average users and very heavy users were statistically different.

For the group difference in **intention to recommend**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in purchasing intention among five groups, $F=10.087$ (4, 703), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) very light users ($n = 124$, $M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.12$) and light users ($n = 111$, $M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.53$), 2) very light users and average users ($n = 229$, $M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.22$), 3) light users and heavy users ($n = 161$, $M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.07$), 4) light users and very heavy users ($n = 83$, $M = 5.83$, $SD = 1.18$), 5) average users and heavy users, and 6) average users and very heavy users were statistically different.

Greek Life and Attitudes & Behavioral Intention

Research question seven asked the extent to which Greek life membership (i.e., current members, past members, no membership, prefer not to say) relates to the attitudes toward brands, products, and behavioral intention. Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics: Greek life and attitudes and behavioral changes

| | | N | M | S.D. |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----|--------|---------|
| Attitude toward product | currently | 493 | 5.7226 | 1.08447 |
| | used to be | 151 | 5.5546 | 1.24194 |
| | no | 50 | 5.3600 | 1.27691 |
| | prefer not to respond | 14 | 5.0536 | 1.24876 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.6480 | 1.14279 |
| Attitude toward brand | currently | 493 | 5.8048 | 1.05684 |
| | used to be | 151 | 5.5828 | 1.24824 |
| | no | 50 | 5.5000 | 1.20479 |
| | prefer not to respond | 14 | 5.0000 | 1.27098 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.7200 | 1.12288 |
| Intention to buy | currently | 493 | 5.4635 | 1.17333 |
| | used to be | 151 | 5.2351 | 1.18295 |
| | no | 50 | 4.1500 | 1.87423 |
| | prefer not to respond | 14 | 4.4643 | 1.39317 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.3023 | 1.28879 |
| Intention to recommend | currently | 493 | 5.6846 | 1.04298 |
| | used to be | 151 | 5.2815 | 1.25774 |
| | no | 50 | 4.1900 | 1.92696 |
| | prefer not to respond | 14 | 4.5357 | 1.49954 |
| | Total | 708 | 5.4703 | 1.25067 |

The results showed that there was a significant difference in **attitudes toward products** among four groups, $F=3.392$ (3, 704), $p = 0.18$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) current members ($n = 493$, $M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.08$) and no membership ($n = 50$, $M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.27$) and 2) current members and people who preferred not to say ($n = 14$, $M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.25$) were statistically different.

For the group difference in **attitudes toward brands**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in attitudes toward brand among four groups, $F=4.306$ (3, 704), $p = 0.005$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) current members ($n = 493$, $M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.06$) and people who preferred not to say ($n = 14$, $M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.27$) were statistically different.

For the group difference in **intention to buy**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in purchasing intention among five groups, $F=19.410$ (3, 704), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) current members ($n = 493$, $M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.17$) and no membership ($n = 50$, $M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.87$), 2) current members and people who preferred not to say ($n = 14$, $M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.39$), 3) past members ($n = 151$, $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.18$) and no membership, and 4) past members and people who preferred not to say were statistically different.

For the group difference in **intention to recommend**, the results showed that there was a significant difference in purchasing intention among five groups, $F=29.155$ (3, 704), $p < 0.01$. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference between 1) current members ($n = 493$, $M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.04$) and no membership ($n = 50$, $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.92$), 2) current members and people who preferred not to say ($n = 14$, $M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.50$), 3) current members and past members ($n = 151$, $M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.26$) and 4) past members no membership were statistically different.

Discussion

Alcohol ads and attitude changes

The pre- and post-tests had interesting implications for how an alcohol advertisement may affect a consumer. The tests showed that the alcohol advertisement changed peoples' perceptions and attitudes about drinking; however, did not change their drinking intention. The advertisement impacted viewers'

perceptions and attitudes about drinking to be more positive. That is clearly one of the goals of the advertisement and, regardless of the theme, shows that the exposure that people have to alcohol advertisements can impact their cognitive processes. While there was no effect on the intention to drink after viewing the advertisement, these perceptions and attitudes are essentially what leads to action. It is likely that this conversion of attitude/perceptions to action is a long-term change and may take some time to affect behavior as many people have schedules and plans for each day or week that they are not willing to break after seeing just one advertisement. It would be interesting to see at what point continuous exposure to alcohol ads affects actual intention to drink and on what timeline.

Impact of Appeals

Regarding “intention to buy,” each appeal individually did not have a main effect or influence. However, when these appeals were combined (joke x taste, joke x taste x influencer) the message impacted peoples’ intention to purchase the product. This indicates that two or three appeals are necessary to work on affecting purchase behavior within alcohol advertisements.

Influencer marketing has been very powerful in advertising and marketing; however, this result showed that when influencer marketing combines taste and humor appeals, they were more powerful than influencer marketing only in alcohol ads on social media. This could be for several reasons; some studies suggest that there is a declining trust for influencers and a concept called “influencer fatigue” that is emerging (Casey, 2021). Lately, social media has experienced an overabundance of sponsored posts that people can often feel are inauthentic. When people perceive an influencer is posting just for payment from a brand and that that influencer’s like for a product is not authentic, the influencer can have the opposite effect as intended and steer people away from the product. This sponsored content has increased drastically over the past few years, possibly causing people to feel even stronger about the inauthenticity of the posts (Casey, 2021). As of 2020, 20.6% of posts in users’ feeds on Instagram are comprised of advertisements; typically one ad every four posts. It has also been noted that Instagram shows more advertisements the longer a user spends time within an app in one sitting (Ahmed, 2020). Effective influencers are often known to be experts of a specific niche, and because no one has heard of our made-

up influencer Emily, they may not consider her a niche expert, therefore, having no reason to consider her credible or trust her (Chen, 2021).

The humor appeal had a significantly negative impact on purchase decisions for consumers and their intentions to buy. A study by Ace Metrix, an ad-testing firm, found that while funny ads can be more appealing and memorable these advertisements were actually less likely to increase desire or intent to purchase than advertisements that were more straightforward (Tuttle, 2012). Other studies have found that the use of humor in advertisements can be ineffective when the product relies on some form of trust (Primanto, 2019; Dong-Hun, 2009).

These results support the findings by Chaudhuri (1993) that alcohol has evolved over time to become more of a high-involvement product possibly because of the emotional treatment it is given by society which could enhance its perceived value. This makes sense why a rational approach (taste) would be more effective than emotional appeals (humor). The made-up product in this study is unheard of by all of the respondents and since they are unfamiliar, they may require higher involvement levels than typically required with alcohol. In this scenario, involvement level also seems to trump the informal atmosphere that social media provides, indicating that involvement is possibly the important factor when consumers are viewing an advertisement (De vries *et al.*, 2012; Eriksson *et al.*, 2019; Kietzmann *et al.*, 2012; Tafasse, 2015)

Regarding the impact of these appeals on intentions to buy, the taste appeal was the most effective. The taste appeal also had the strongest intensity and impact on the “intention to recommend.” These results indicate that the central route of the ELM is still very important in impacting behavior when it comes to alcohol advertisements.

Factors predicting behavior change

To see the important predictors for the behavioral changes, involvement in drinking, pre-attitudes toward drinking, perception of drinking, intention to drink, attitudes toward drinking, product, and brand were all tested. The results showed that consumers having a positive attitude toward the brand was the most significant factor to predict behavioral intention. The consumers’ “attitude toward the brand” was

more important than the consumers' "attitude toward the product" which implies that branding can be very important in alcohol advertisements and marketing in general.

As explained in the literature review, alcohol is a high-involvement product, which requires rational reasoning, such as perception, attitudes, involvement, and motivation to drink, in receiving the advertising messages (Gong & Cummins, 2020). However, this result showed that the attitudes toward brand and product are more important than consumers' perception/attitudes toward drinking. In other words, consumers are more likely to buy alcohol products when they have favorable attitudes toward brands and products rather than their thoughts about drinking.

Social media use and Greek life

The number of social media platforms a consumer used indicated that the consumer's "social media intensity" ranging from very light use to very heavy use. As far as social media usage, the results showed that very heavy users had the highest intention to buy a product and the highest intention to recommend, perhaps since these people are very invested in social media, it is where they make most of their purchasing decisions. Interestingly, light users have an even lower intention to buy than the very light users; perhaps since the very light users are out of tune with social media they are unaware of advertisement culture and can be more easily convinced than those that have some knowledge of how the advertising scene on social media functions. Also, the very light users have the second highest intention to recommend; perhaps if the light users really like a product they have more of a behavioral impact. Additionally, very heavy users have the most favorable attitudes about the product, brand, and attitude about drinking insinuating these intense social media users are more receptive to social media advertisements or perhaps even enjoy them.

Being a member of a Greek Life organization had a very significant impact on results as a whole. Respondents who were current or former members of a Greek organization had a significantly more positive attitude about the product, attitude about the brand, intention to buy, and intention to recommend. Greek Life members had the highest response for all of the above categories. The "current" members of Greek Life had the highest responses of all for each of the categories, and these people are known to be

college students typically ages 18-23. Just as many people in America associate drinking and being in a sorority or fraternity, the results show that these people respond most positively to advertisements, possibly because of their habits, and enforcing the findings of previous studies that Greek Life could be a predictor of heavy drinking, binge drinking, and higher perceived drinking norms (Wamboldt et al., 2019; Bonar et al., 2021). These results insinuate that these advertisements were particularly effective toward a younger demographic, possibly most influential to people who are underage or just barely of the age of drinking. The ELM suggests that peripheral cues and advertisements, in general, could affect younger people more as they may not have as much knowledge or involvement with a product and are more likely to deeply process advertising messages with enhancing appeals (Agostinelli & Grube, 2002). These advertisements may also provide younger consumers with low involvement large-scale modeling of drinking behaviors, possibly adding to the normalization of heavier drinking (Roberson et al., 2018).

Conclusion

This research explored the impact of social media alcohol advertisements with different appeals. Notably, the alcohol advertisement positively changed peoples' perceptions and attitudes about drinking; without really changing their drinking intention. The advertisement impacted viewers' perceptions and attitudes about drinking to be more positive. However, these perceptions and attitudes are essentially what lead to action.

The appeals were more effective when combined (joke x taste, joke x taste x influencer) than standing alone in regard to impacting peoples' intention to purchase the product. Influencer marketing and humor were not nearly as effective as the taste appeal at impacting behavior, indicating that the central route of appeals works best for alcohol advertisements.

Additionally, the results that alcohol has evolved over time to become more of a high-involvement product, possibly because of the emotional treatment it is given by society which could enhance its perceived value. This also provides an explanation as to why a rational appeal (taste) would be more effective than emotional appeals (humor).

It is notable that heavy social media users' behavior was more easily influenced by the advertisements than other social media users. Additionally, being a member of Greek Life was correlated with a more positive attitude and perceptions and an increased intention to buy or recommend.

These different types of alcohol advertisements clearly impact different people in different ways, it will be interesting to examine more how additional industry trends can affect behavior and cognition.

Limitations

Limitations exist within this study. It should be noted that often models of effect, such as the ELM, can assert that individual exposure affects cognitions that continue to affect behavior over the short term. Effects do not always operate on a short-term scale, as they may take more time or several exposures to accumulate a detectable change in an individual, and this may even be the case with some members of the audience but not others (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003). Media campaigns can affect behavior through at least three general paths including direct exposure to persuasive messages generated by the campaign, through social institutions and organizations, and through campaign-induced processes of social diffusion. Through direct exposure to the campaign, individuals learn certain aspects about the product/service advertised such as the cost, benefits of performing such behavior advertised, attitudes, beliefs, social norms, and skills necessary, and consequently, they develop positive or negative behavioral intentions that can eventually lead to actual behavior (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003). This is the path of effects most tested and evaluated in communication campaigns. This study, like others, assumes that intention to act is the primary determinant of whether that action will be undertaken, although there are several external forces such as the price of the alcohol, the availability, the options, etc., that may constrain/transition the intention to action. External factors can also include social expectations, demographic characteristics, and personal factors, which this study seeks to coincidentally evaluate in part. The way that campaigns can affect behavior is often very complex (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003).

Over time, the definition of advertising has shifted, but an almost unchanged definition is: "Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to

persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future” (Richards & Curran, 2002). It is well-known now that advertising takes a role to persuade or influence the audience, whether or not that be the sole purpose. Therefore, many advertising research studies have focused on attitude change, as this study evaluates. Friestad and Wright’s (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) asserts that consumers have learned knowledge about marketers’ motives and tactics and consumers draw on their persuasion knowledge when interacting with an advertisement. The PKM suggests that the consumer response is swayed by the consumers’ skepticism toward advertising. The ELM does not account for the audience members’ persuasion knowledge or skepticism (Nan & Faber, 2004). However, this study does apply aspects from both the accumulation model and competing replacement model to emphasize both absolute measures of response (intentions, recall, preferences) and these measures relative to alternative options.

Within this experiment design, there are limitations with the image within the stimulus (aside from the influencer profile picture) did not vary by independent variables but rather solely by the caption contents. To change the actual image within the advertisement by independent variables, too many external variables arise that could affect the dependent variables and data in uncontrollable or unmeasurable ways. Additionally, advertisement images that had two or more appeals began to look cluttered and unrealistic. Perhaps future research can be conducted to test the additional impact of different images within the advertisement stimulus.

This study also intended to examine the seasonal appeal, and the results indicated that the manipulation check failed. In the future, it would be ideal to examine how this appeal functions and impacts attitudes and behaviors.

There are also some limitations of experiments in general that apply to this study. Although there were manipulation check questions to assist in preventing this, it is difficult to determine the degree to which participants were paying attention while completing the study. Additionally, it is difficult to determine the degree to which the participants were honest and truthful when answering questions. Participants may have felt pressured to answer as though they drink less than they actually do.

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Appendix

8 Stimuli

You'll be asked to answer questions about the Instagram posting.

Condition 1. No attributes

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



Condition 2. Influencer (no taste, no humor)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:

 **emily** • [Follow](#) 



Liked by **john** and **153,460 others**

emily Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! I am LOVING this drink and just had to share it with all five million of my followers! Blue Raz is my absolute favorite! ... [more](#)

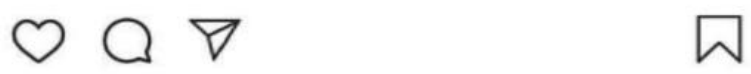
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2 HOURS AGO

Condition 3. Taste only (no influencer, no humor)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:

 SODKA • Follow



Liked by john and 153,460 others

SODKA Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! SODKA combines a crisp fizz with a smooth finish and is a smart, re-defined take on the vodka-soda. A refreshing drink that's infused with 14 different flavors, including Bubblin Blackberry, Radical Raspberry, Tropical Thrill, and Lemon-Lime Twist! ... more

[View all 1410 comments](#)

2 HOURS AGO

Condition 4. Influencer and taste (no humor)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



emily • [Follow](#)



Liked by [john](#) and **153,460** others

emily Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! I am LOVING this drink and just had to share it with all five million of my followers! Blue Raz is my absolute favorite! SODKA combines a crisp fizz with a smooth finish and is a smart, re-defined take on the vodka-soda. A refreshing drink that's infused with 14 different flavors, including Bubblin Blackberry, Radical Raspberry, Tropical Thrill, and Lemon-Lime Twist! ... [more](#)

[View all 1410 comments](#)

2 HOURS AGO

Condition 5. Humor (no taste, no influencer)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



Condition 6. Influencer + humor (no taste)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



emily • Follow



Liked by john and 153,460 others

emily Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! I am LOVING this drink and just had to share it with all five million of my followers! Blue Raz is my absolute favorite! Hakuna Ma-Sodka (it means no worries) 😊 ... more

[View all 1410 comments](#)

2 HOURS AGO

Condition 7. Taste + humor (no influencer)

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



SODKA • Follow



Liked by john and 153,460 others

SODKA Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! SODKA combines a crisp fizz with a smooth finish and is a smart, re-defined take on the vodka-soda. A refreshing drink that's infused with 14 different flavors, including Bubblin Blackberry, Radical Raspberry, Tropical Thrill, and Lemon-Lime Twist! Hakuna Ma-Sodka (it means no worries) 😊 ... more

[View all 1410 comments](#)

2 HOURS AGO

Condition 8. Influencer + taste + humor

Imagine that you are scrolling through Instagram. While you are scrolling, you run into a sponsored post about a new alcohol brand on Instagram. The post is as follows:



emily • Follow



Liked by john and 153,460 others

emily Say hello to SODKA, the new drink in town that's shaking up the world of hard seltzers! I am LOVING this drink and just had to share it with all five million of my followers! Blue Raz is my absolute favorite! SODKA combines a crisp fizz with a smooth finish and is a smart, re-defined take on the vodka-soda. A refreshing drink that's infused with 14 different flavors, including Bubblin Blackberry, Radical Raspberry, Tropical Thrill, and Lemon-Lime Twist! Hakuna Ma-Sodka (it means no worries) 😊... more

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2 HOURS AGO

9 Informed Consent

Greetings,

Thank you for participating in our study.

I am Dr. Jee-Young Chung, an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media at the Fulbright College, conducting an online survey about how universities can better use their official Facebook pages to connect with students and faculty/staff, encouraging them to like, comment on, or share their posts and perhaps post to their page.

This survey will take less than 15 - 20 minutes, participation is voluntary and your responses will remain confidential and your answers will not be associated with you individually in any way.

All foreseeable risks have been minimized. You may discontinue the study at any time for any reason without penalty. You may e-mail any possible concerns about the study to jychung@uark.edu. This survey has been reviewed and approved by the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office. You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

By continuing with this survey, you are giving us your informed consent to be a part of this study. Please click through the following links now or enter the URL in your Web browser to complete the questionnaire and submit your response to us. This survey invites participants who are at least seventeen years of age. We appreciate your help.

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