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An Impact Study of Women in U.S. Super Bowl Beer Commercials, 2011-2015

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AN IMPACT STUDY OF WOMEN IN U.S. SUPER BOWL BEER COMMERCIALS, 2011-2015

by

Elizabeth Robinson

B.A., Drake University, 2014

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science.

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

AN IMPACT STUDY OF WOMEN IN U.S. SUPER BOWL BEER COMMERCIALS, 2011-2015

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Elizabeth Robinson

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Master of Science

in the field of Professional Media and Media Management

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TITLE: AN IMPACT STUDY OF WOMEN IN U.S. SUPER BOWL BEER COMMERCIALS, 2011-2015

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Uche Onyebadi

The beer industry is one of the largest moneymaking industries in the U.S., and is one that spends a significant amount of money on advertising expenditures. While beer companies traditionally target men in their advertisements, particularly those aired during televised sporting events, the female audience is practically ignored, although it is one that is growing in importance due to the increase in women as beer drinkers and sports fans.

The objectives of this study are to: (1) determine the extent to which females are targeted as potential consumers in beer advertising aired during Super Bowl broadcasts from 2011-2015; (2) examine the representations of men and women in these commercials; and (3) understand the impact that these beer commercials had on consumers in terms of how the content applied to them and whether they felt compelled to buy or drink the advertised beer.

A content analysis of 19 Bud Light and Budweiser commercials aired during Super Bowls from 2011 to 2015 was conducted to understand the commercial content and representations of characters. The sample was then narrowed to five commercials – one from each year – and a survey was conducted with 100 respondents who watched and analyzed each commercial. The survey discussed whether men or women were the primary

targets in the commercials, whether respondents felt the commercials were engaging and appealing, the perceived messages of the commercials, respondents' descriptions of the characters, and details about the respondents regarding their affinity to beer and sports.

In general, the research found that although women were present in the majority of commercials, respondents viewed them as pretty or sexy background characters rather than as primary targets or consumers. Very few respondents agreed that the commercials targeted a female audience. The men, on the other hand, were viewed as main characters in the commercials and were overwhelmingly seen as the primary audience for the commercials. The research also found that despite respondents finding the commercials visually engaging, few felt the content was applicable to them and even fewer felt compelled to buy or drink the advertised beer after watching the commercials.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The beer industry is one of the largest moneymakers and markets in the United States. In 2014 alone, the beer industry made approximately \$101.5 billion in sales and produced over 197 million barrels of beer, or more than 6 trillion gallons (Brewers Association, 2015). Being a huge industry in the U.S., beer producers tend to dominate the world of advertising with individual brands spending as much as \$539 million in advertising in 2014 (Kantar Media, 2015). A study conducted by the University of Texas at Austin found that from 1971 to 2011 alcohol advertising in the U.S. increased by more than 400 percent (Wilcox, 2015). Of all beer marketing and promotions, 95 percent of televised beer-advertising expenditures were in sports programming (Grube, 2004).

Due to the fact that the beer industry is so successful and TV commercials for beer are so prominent, there have been several studies conducted on commercial content regarding topics of beer, sports and masculinity (Johnson, 1988; Morgenstern et al., 2015; Postman, 1987; State, 1991; Wenner, 2009; Wenner, 2010). However, very few studies focus on women in relation to beer commercials, particularly in relation to sports.

Women have increasingly become more involved in the world of sports, as sports' fastest growing demographic, according to CBS News (2015). With the surge in female participation in fantasy sports and even their involvement in the professional sports industry (e.g. Jen Welter is a coach for the Arizona Cardinals, and Becky Hammon is an assistant coach for the San Antonio Spurs), women have gradually become a primary audience for sporting events. Meanwhile, women have also become more prominent beer

consumers. According to The Brewer's Association 2014 Craft Beer in Review report, as of 2014 women consumed almost 32 percent of craft beer produced in the U.S (2015). The sale of beer to women is a growing market too, as women currently account for 25 percent of beer consumption in the U.S. compared to around 20 percent in previous estimates (Schonbrun, 2016).

Consequently, this study examined the extent to which females were targeted as primary consumers in beer commercials aired during the Super Bowl broadcasts from 2011-15. The study also examined the representations of men and women in these commercials and the impact the commercials have on male and female consumers in terms of their interest in buying or drinking the beer as a result of the advertisement.

This research is interdisciplinary as it touches on subjects related to marketing, advertising, media, economics of the beer industry, entertainment in relation to the sports industry, and representation of gender in the aforementioned fields. The research also sheds light on the future of televised beer marketing and promotions in relation to gender and will help draw attention to females, female sports fans, and female beer drinker as legitimate target markets and consumers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contrary to common opinion, beer has long been considered a woman's drink, dating back to the days of ancient Mesopotamia, Sumeria and Babylon. Alan D. Earnes, a self-proclaimed beer anthropologist, even called beer "the most feminine of beverages" (Martin, 2007). The beer brewing process dates back to the fourth millennium BCE after the earliest known chemical evidence for beer production was found on ceramics from the Godin Tepe settlement in Mesopotamia (Homan, 2004). According to archaeologists like Dr. Patrick McGovern who studied the Mesopotamian drinking vessels, women were the original beer brewers, fermenting drinks in their homes while men were out hunting and collecting food (Nurin, 2015).

The female involvement with beer in ancient times was largely due to the idea that beer was a gift from a goddess, rather than from a god. Perhaps the most well known goddess of beer was the Sumerian goddess, Ninkasi. A Sumerian poem praising the goddess, entitled *A Hymn to Ninkasi*, was found on a stone tablet dating back to 1800 BCE. The poem includes a recipe for beer that was used by the female brewers, who were called the priestesses of Ninkasi (Mark, 2011). Several other cuneiform tablets have been discovered from the Tigris-Euphrates Valley that depict women's roles in relation to beer, including limitations that were placed on them despite their key role in its production. Social sanctions in some areas made it unlawful for women to be present in beer halls, and females were forced to drink in the privacy of their homes. Despite this, images of women drinking beer were used as a means to promote the beer, a strategy that has lasted into

modern society. Even then, “the use of attractive bare-breasted women for the purpose of advertising beer brands and shops was coming into vogue. Images of curvaceous barmaids invited patrons to sample the delight of both beer and, sometimes, brothels” (Rhodes, 1995).

As the popularity of beer and brewing spread over time and across regions, similar attitudes regarding women and beer were present in European countries. Women continued to be the primary brewers of beer, called brewsters, but laws and customs kept them out of the public eye in relation to beer, and limited them to their homes (Nurin, 2015). The same was true for Americans, as colonial wives continued the in-home brewing process, but also occasionally tended to taverns. Beer maintained its femininity even then with “‘bride-ale,’ a beer brewed and sold during weddings with all proceeds going to the bride, and ‘groaning’ beer, which was consumed during and after labor by the midwives and mothers” (Baugher, 2013).

In the 19th century, American women’s roles in relation to beer shifted in two different ways. First, as industrialization worked its way into American cities, the brewing of beer moved to factories, which largely consisted of male workers due to cultural norms. As a result, “public drinking became an increasingly working class male activity” (Mittelman, 2007). On the other hand, German beer gardens opened up public drinking to women, giving them the rare freedom to drink outside of their homes. This, however, was a factor that ultimately led to Prohibition. “Beer gardens encouraged a style of drinking and leisure activity that would have to wait for a more gender neutral social culture than that of the late nineteenth century” (Mittelman, 2007).

It was following Prohibition, just as alcohol was making its way back into society with the ratification of the 21st Amendment in 1933, that television became a new platform for marketing. With concerns about regressing to a second prohibition, the beer and brewing industry was cautious in its marketing approaches, careful not to rock the boat or stir up controversy. Early critics of television were concerned beer commercials were intrusive and that the ads may “offend the viewers’ sensibilities” (Miller, 2002). Rather than depicted as consumers of beer, women were shown as providers of beer for the good of their husbands, enforcing a domestic ideology that was present in advertisements in that time. Again, for women, drinking beer was confined to the privacy of their homes.

According to Corzine (2010, p. 844):

For women the ads represented a symphony of complications and contradictions. They were being offered a ticket into a world heretofore belonging to men, but the price of admission was steep. Sure, women *could* drink, but the advertisements also delimited the place and manner of the act. More importantly, the ads subverted the act of consumption to the obligation of purchase. Beer meant good times for men, but only if women were fulfilling their obligation to provide it.

The role of women in beer commercials in the 1940s was as providers, hostesses, cooks, and good housewives, images that depicted the goals and realities of American society. But even when women entered the workforce during World War II, the messages and imagery in beer advertising stayed the same. Women were not seen as consumers, if they were even seen at all. Although many products addressed or appealed to the working woman, beer advertisements chose to ignore them, continuing to target men as consumers and women as providers (Corzine, 2010).

As Prohibition faded into history, beer became more accepted in society and the brewing industry became less uptight with their advertising. Hesitations regarding women and beer remained, but women were eventually depicted as more than subservient, beer-serving housewives. “The stigma associated with women drinking beer remained into the 1950s and, though the boundaries weakened in that decade to be sure, the stigma remains extant – but somewhat muted – today” (Corzine, 2010).

Beer commercials on television became a societal norm by the late 1940s, with companies like Hyde Park and Blatz Beer regularly airing their ads, particularly during sporting events. Even in the early stages of televised beer advertisements, sports and beer were regularly paired together. “The notion that ‘sports sells beer’ is perhaps the most sacred axiom of beer marketing, just as true 50 years ago as today” (Miller, 2002). Statistics have shown that sports fans are a prime market for beer advertising, as they are one of the largest consumer segments of beer and malt beverages (Johnson, 1988). A 1988 Sports Illustrated article reported “the age of maximum beer consumption and the age of maximum sports involvement are the same for both men and women.” Peak beer-consuming years and peak sports-consuming years, for both participants and spectators, are ages 18-29, according to the article (Johnson, 1988). The pairing of beer and sports remains true today, perhaps to an even greater extent. In 2000, nearly \$1.5 billion was spent on alcohol advertising in the U.S., with just under \$900 million spent on broadcast media. Of those expenditures, 95 percent was in sports programming (Grube, 2004). In 2014, marketers spent nearly \$14 billion on commercials aired during sporting events, with Budweiser alone spending nearly \$270 million for sports air time (Crupi, 2015).

As viewers became more accustomed to beer advertisements, the commercials required more substance, consistency and appeal. With the evolution of beer commercials, the role of women varied, particularly in regard to their use, misuse or lack of representation in popular ad campaigns. Carling Black Label beer had one of the first, most popular beer commercial campaigns, lasting from 1951 to 1971. The main character, a woman named Mabel, became the face of Black Label beer, and the new image of women in relation to beer – seen, but seldom heard. The blonde, attractive bar girl served beer to the men at the local watering hole, rarely saying a word, but ending each ad with a wink. “For nearly the next 20 years, Mabel and her tray of Carling Black Label Beers glided across millions of television screens in response to that familiar call, ‘Hey Mabel–Black Label!’ Mabel’s graceful charm and captivating smile seemed to hit beer drinkers right between the eyes” (Miller, 2002). The role of women as an image rather than a voice is not uncommon according to Morna and Ndlovu who make the case that “women are more likely to be seen than heard” as a result of research of gender representation in various advertising mediums (Morna, 2007). They argue that the more visual the medium, the greater the chance of women being represented (Pedelty, 2014).

As Mabel faded from television sets in the early 1970s, another ad campaign came rolling in with equal, if not greater, success. In 1973 Miller Brewing brewed the first light, low-calorie beer in the industry, calling it Miller Lite. Despite the low calorie option, a feature that could have easily appealed to a female audience, women were absent from Miller Lite’s successful ad campaign altogether. The focus, however, was on the men. “Naysayers argued that men – who, naturally, comprise the bulk of the beer-consuming public – not only had no interest in counting calories but would likely regard Lite as a ‘sissy beer’”

(Miller, 2002). In response, McCann Erickson, the New York ad agency working for Miller Brewing, orchestrated a plan to use retired male athletes to endorse the beer – the epitome of manliness. Matt Snell, a former New York Jets running back starred in the first Miller Lite commercial with the catchphrase, “You know, new Lite Beer from Miller is all you ever wanted in a beer ... and less” (Herrewig, 2013). The campaign launched in 1975 and was a success, running until 1994. Over the 20-year active life of the campaign, women were rarely, if ever featured. Actress Lee Meredith made fleeting appearances with crime novelist Mickey Spillane in Miller Lite commercials, but did little more than make a brief appearance on screen in a tight-fitting dress. Nevertheless, the appeal to men was a success, with the ad campaign boosting Miller Lite to second place among U.S. brewers, behind only Anheuser-Busch in just a matter of years.

Years later in 2003, the “Great Taste, Less Filling” campaign made a comeback with a commercial that featured women having the popular debate over the beer. Two attractive, young businesswomen enjoy Miller Lite beer together at an outdoor dining area near a seemingly tranquil fountain. Before long, however, the commercial’s intent to target men becomes evident as the women begin to fight. The scuffle continued until it ultimately led to the two degenerated into nearly naked women still fighting in a mud bath in a highly sexualized manner. The commercial concludes with a cut to a shot of two men in a bar fantasizing over how the situation would make a great beer commercial, while the women they were with look less than enthused. Shortly after the commercial aired, MillerCoors received immense backlash, with 200 viewers emailing the company with complaints regarding the degrading, sexualized nature of the commercial. According to a spokesperson

for Miller Lite, the majority of complaints came from over-40 married women with families, while the ad was a hit with 21-to-31-year-old beer drinkers (McCarthy, 2003).

Using women as sexualized objects in commercials, whether it is a woman wearing a tight dress in a bar or a nearly naked brawl over the flavor of beer, is one of many strategies or themes used in beer advertising. A study on content themes of alcohol advertising in U.S. television found that “the most frequent individual content themes over all ads were humor (51 percent of ads) and friendship (45 percent).” The study also found that “compared to non-beer ads, beer ads were more likely to contain humor, sports, and quality themes, and less likely to contain artistic, sexy, partying, luxury, taste, and tradition themes. No difference was found for friendship, love, and the ‘Manly’ theme” (Morgenstern, 2015). Neil Postman, however, found that the theme of manliness was at the forefront of beer commercials. After analyzing 40 beer commercials, Postman (1987) and his colleagues concluded that beer commercials promote the idea that to be a real, accepted man, one must drink beer. “Beer is represented as a medium through which one demonstrates one’s masculinity, is initiated into the adult world, communicates with other men, expresses feelings towards them, preserves and recaptures the history of one’s group of male friends, and makes romantic contacts with women” (Postman, 1987).

Choi, Yoon, Paek and Reid (2012) placed beer in an FCB matrix, classifying beer as a low involvement, feel-focused product, meaning it effectively utilizes value expressive message appeals in contemporary TV advertising. Such appeals include slice of life, drama, humor and sex (Choi, 2012). The way men and women understand these appeals, however, differs. Popcorn and Marigold (2000) note that men are more likely to understand the obvious message, i.e. “buy this beer,” whereas women are more likely to read into the

underlying message of the advertisement, i.e. “you will be attractive and popular if you buy this beer” (Popcorn, 2000). In his study on gender-based appeals, Prakash (1992) found that for men “it would be best to show males socializing in large groups, participating in competitive activities, especially sports related, and in scenarios of traditional sex-roles of male-female interaction,” citing examples such as Busch, Miller and Budweiser beers. Commercials for these brands, he said, “portray a sense of mastery, self-assertion, confidence and comradery, thus appealing to the achievement-oriented roles of the males” (Prakash, 1992). He found that both competitive and non-competitive situations appealed to female audiences and that women are more drawn to advertising appeals that include detailed and complete information (Prakash, 1992).

Despite these recommendations, these gender-based appeals and representations are not always the case. Several advertisements continue to “portray women as objects of male attention – the glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, the devious witch, the hard-faced corporate and political climber” (White, 2009). These representations of women ring true in many beer commercials, both aired during sports and non-sports programming. According to Wenner, there is often little overlap between sport and cross-gender interaction in beer commercials, speaking specifically of the commercials’ content, whether or not it was aired during a sporting event. When cross-gender interaction is present in beer commercials, however, Wenner found that these commercials “centered on men ogling women often with trepidation or disdain but without interaction or party scenes that often featured dancing with either limited or innuendo-dependent interaction” (Wenner, 2010, p. 93). Wenner also found that when women are represented in beer

commercials related to sports they are viewed as the “other,” and are often depicted as sexy, desirable, out of reach, and confusing (Wenner, 2009, p. 18).

Although the majority of marketing and advertising efforts for beer brands are targeted toward men (State, 1991), the number of female beer drinkers is increasing. A study by the market research firm Ipsos found that “women consumed more than 17 billion servings of beer in 2014, or 25 percent of the volume of the category — up from around 20 percent in previous estimates, and equal to the amount of beer that millennial males drank that year” (Schonbrun, 2016). This is particularly important because of the declining beer industry in the United States over the last 20 years. As the per-capita consumption of beer in the U.S. declines, the percentage of women consuming beer continues to increase (Tierney, 2014). In 2013, a periodic survey called the Alcoholic Beverage Demand Tracker found that there was a significant increase in female beer drinkers, while the percentage of men who described beer as their favorite beverage declined. In September 2013, 26 percent of women called beer their favorite alcoholic beverage compared to 24 percent in 2012. Fifty-one percent of men called beer their favorite versus 54 percent the year prior. The survey also found that “women are more likely than men to say they were drinking more beer due to “finding new brands” (39 percent of women vs. 36 percent men) and “finding new flavors” (38 percent of women vs. 31 percent of men)” (“Beer Losing,” 2013). These findings support the rise in females as consumers of craft beer, a market that is growing exponentially. In 2014 the overall beer market saw 0.5 percent growth, while the craft beer market grew by 17.6 percent. The Brewer’s Association’s 2014 Craft Beer In Review report stated that women consume nearly 32 percent of craft beer volume, almost half of which comes from women ages 21-34 (“The Year in Beer,” 2014).

Organizations advocating for women as beer drinkers are popping up as well, emphasizing the growth in the market and desire for acknowledgement from the beer industry. The Pink Boots Society, Barley's Angels and Women Enjoying Beer are just a few that dedicate their time and efforts toward women in the beer industry, promoting women as consumers and educating women with recommendations for beer and food pairings, specifics on how beer is brewed, how to buy the right beer, and more. Women have once again become contributors to beer brewing, with Teri Fahrendorf's Pink Boots Society spurring on the resurgence. The Pink Boots Society, founded in 2008, was created to empower female beer professionals and to focus on educating women about the beer industry (Gribbins, 2013). In the last eight years, the Pink Boots Society has grown from 60 members in 2008 to more than 2,500 today ("Pink Boots Society," 2016). Barley's Angels focuses on women as beer consumers, with more than 100 chapters worldwide, while Women Enjoying Beer approaches the topic from a more marketing-minded approach by conducting research on women and their relationship with beer and providing insights to both consumers and professionals ("Women Enjoying Beer," 2016).

Just as the number of female beer drinkers is increasing, so too are women making their way into the world of sports, a world that is largely married to the world of beer. Alan Easton, former vice-president for corporate affairs at Miller Brewing Company, once said, "Once you're into the demographics of sports, you are also into the total demographics of beer drinking... Even at a very high price, it is an extremely cost-effective buy. TV sports and beer commercials are a perfect marriage" (Johnson, 1988). According to Borer (2009), female fans are perceived to lack knowledge of the sport and to be more interested in trivial aspects such as attractiveness of players, uniforms and feminine-focused apparel. In

response to this stigma, he says, women identify as three types of sports fans: a tomboy fan, who adopt masculine attributes; an accessory fan who is more interested in the apparel and image of the game than the sport itself; or the pink-and-proud fan who embraces the femininity of her fandom. Esmonde, Cooky and Andrews (2015), on the other hand, contend that “there is no ‘woman-centric’ way of being a fan” and that “women do not form a distinct group of fans with shared interests, practices, or desires” (p. 43).

Regardless of the type of fan, it is undisputed that the number of female sports fans is increasing. Female fans, particularly fans of the National Football League, are one of the fastest-growing demographics in sports (CBS, 2015), with teams like the Minnesota Vikings even enacting female-focused campaigns with the addition of the Director of Women’s Initiatives position in the organization’s front office. From 2009 to 2013, female NFL viewership increased by 26 percent compared to an 18 percent increase for men. *Sunday Night Football* viewership saw a 25 percent increase from women compared to 10 percent from men, and there was a 32 percent increase in *Thursday Night Football*’s female viewers compared to 21 percent for men (Chemi, 2014). Nielsen ratings from 2013 found that women made up 35 percent of the NFL audience, 30 percent for the National Basketball Association, 30 percent for Major League Baseball and 32 percent for the National Hockey League (MBA@UNC, 2016). A 2015 Gallup poll found that 51 percent of women say they are sports fans (Jones, 2015), which is demonstrated in Nielsen’s 2015 Year in Sports Media Report. Not only are women fans of mainstream sports (i.e. football, basketball, baseball, hockey), but also secondary sports such as soccer, golf and professional fighting. In 2015, the Women’s World Cup Final was the third-most viewed non-football sporting event, with women comprising 43 percent of the audience. Women also tuned in to the

2015 PGA U.S. Open with a 38 percent increase of female viewers ages 18-34 and also accounted for 38 percent of the Ultimate Fighting Championship's unique audience, with 11 percent growth in viewership from 2014 to 2015 (*Year in Sports*, 2016).

Given that the number of women both drinking beer and watching sports is increasing, this study investigated the extent to which females are represented and targeted as consumers in beer commercials aired during sporting events, and how these commercials impact consumers, both men and women.

Super Bowl

The Super Bowl is the most watched televised sporting event of the year in the U.S., with over 114 million viewers for the 2015 Super Bowl alone. According to Nielsen, women made up 47 percent of Super Bowl viewers in 2015. From 2011 to 2015 females have ranged from 45 to 47 percent of viewership, while the men range from 53 to 55 percent (Nielsen, 2016). Figure 1, below, shows Super Bowl viewership by males and females from 2011-2015.

The Super Bowl is not just an event for sports fans, it is also the biggest opportunity for advertisers to target a large audience and a variety of demographics. A Nielsen report found that from 2010 to 2015, Brand Memorability of ads aired during the Super Bowl was 55 percent more effective than ads aired during other sporting events and 60 percent more effective than ads aired during non-sports programming (*Year in Sports*, 2016). As was noted in the previous section, 95 percent of televised beer commercials are aired during sporting events (Grube, 2004). Anheuser-Busch InBev, the world's leading brewing company, demonstrates the pairing of beer and sports year after year as the top Super

Bowl advertiser in terms of ad expenditures over the past five years (*Year in Sports*, 2016).

This can be seen in Figure 2, below.

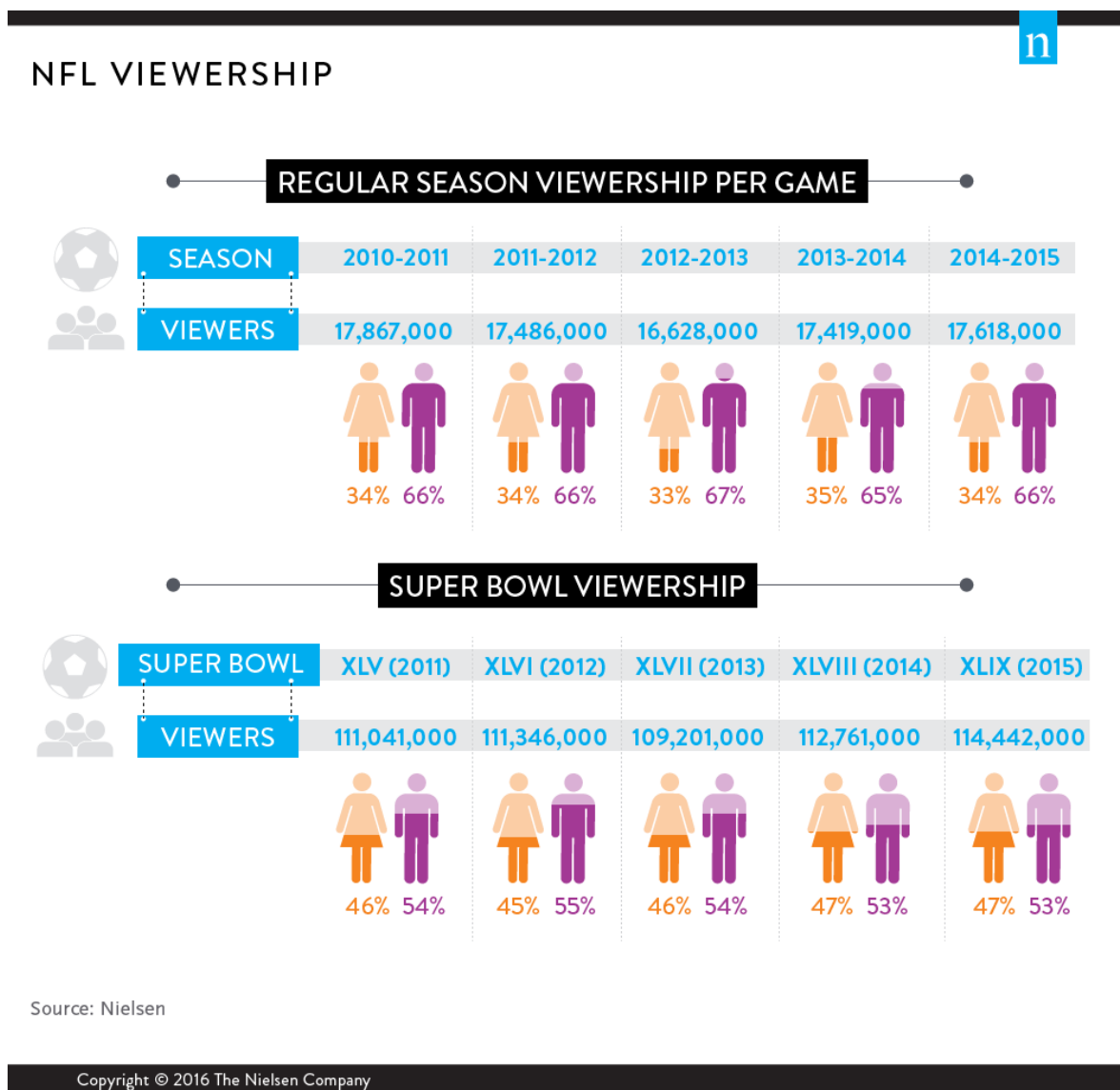


Figure 1. NFL Viewership by Gender, 2011-2015

(Nielsen, 2016)

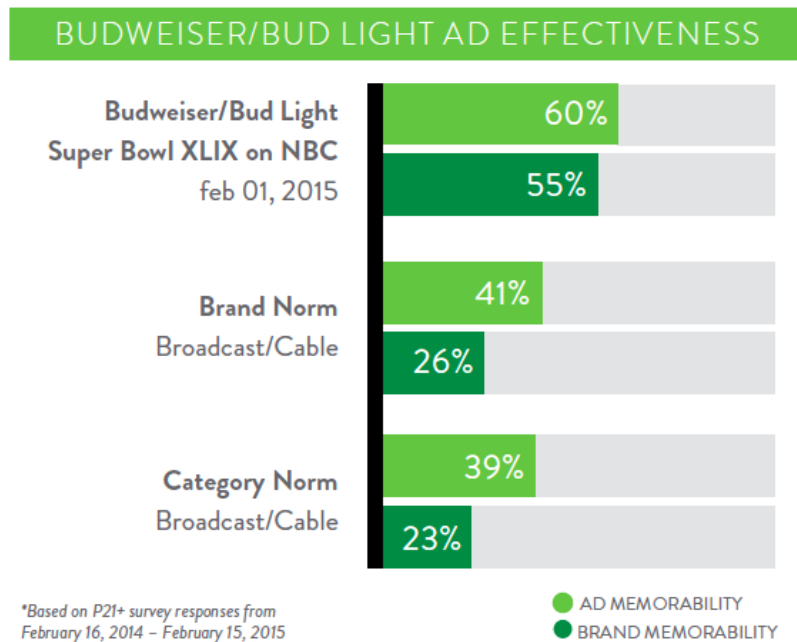


Figure 2. Budweiser/Bud Light Ad Effectiveness

(Year in Sports, 2016)

From 2011 to 2015, Anheuser-Busch aired 21 commercials during the Super Bowl compared to only one commercial by another beer brand, Newcastle Brown Ale, in 2015. Of the 21 commercials, 10 promoted Budweiser, nine promoted Bud Light and two commercials aired for Anheuser-Busch's Beck's and Stella Artois beers.

Due to the prevalence of beer advertising in sporting events and the popularity of the Super Bowl for both men and women, this study analyzes the representations of men and women in Budweiser and Bud Light commercials aired during the last five Super Bowl broadcasts, 2011-2015. The study also examines the extent to which women are targeted as primary consumers in these commercials and how the content of the commercials impacts consumers. This study hypothesizes that despite the increases in women as beer drinkers and sports fans, consumers will find that women continue to be depicted as

imagery or visual additions to commercials targeted toward men rather than as consumers in commercials that are gender-neutral or targeted toward women.

Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the theoretical foundation of this study, helps explain the influence that televised content has on viewers in regard to their perceptions of gender roles. According to Bandura, "to see the world as the televised messages portray it is to harbor some misconceptions," commonly related to "occupational pursuits, ethnic groups, minorities, the elderly, social and sex roles, and other aspects of life that are at least partly cultivated through symbolic modeling of stereotypes" (Bandura, 2001).

Social Cognitive Theory supports the claim that television influences viewers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Application of this theory is found in LaRose, Mastro and Eastin's (2001) study on Internet usage, which relied on enactive learning, a mechanism of Social Cognitive Theory that refers to humans learning from experience without physically enacting the behavior but rather, by observing others. Arslan's (2015) research on gender portrayal in Turkish commercials, also based on Social Cognitive Theory, concluded that viewers are likely to understand the value of men and women based on the content and appearances of the commercials' characters. From this point of view, this study relies on Social Cognitive theory in understanding how viewers understand beer commercials, particularly how they perceive the representations of men and women in such commercials, and what effect these representations and the content of the commercials have on them.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study is to determine to what extent females are targeted as potential consumers in beer advertising aired during Super Bowl broadcasts from 2011 to 2015. This study also examines the representations of men and women in these commercials and aims to understand the impact the commercials had on male and female consumers in terms of how the content applied to them and whether they felt compelled to buy or drink the advertised beer.

In order to better understand the messages and imagery in Bud Light and Budweiser Super Bowl commercials from 2011 to 2015, this study did a content analysis of the 19 commercials aired during that time period. As Collins (2011) notes, a main goal of a content analysis is to examine the characteristics of media to determine how they can positively or negatively influence users' attitudes and behaviors. Rudy et al. (2010) also emphasizes the importance of content analyses, noting that examining media for their potential effects is one reason in which society has the greatest stake. The aim of this study was to examine both the content of the commercials (i.e. setting, message appeal, promotional theme, etc.) and the characteristics of the males and females shown in the commercials (i.e. age, positioning, primary behavior, etc.).

In this content analysis, commercial content was measured by the following categories: genders present, setting, voiceover, message appeal and promotional theme. *Genders present* simply answered the yes or no question if men or women were shown in the commercial, regardless of their roles, amount of time on screen or the way they were

represented. *Setting* addressed the primary location in which the commercial took place, and was divided into four categories based on the content of the commercials: in a bar, in a home, outside, or other. Each commercial was sorted based on the categories, however some took place in multiple settings and were sorted accordingly. *Voiceover* referred to whether or not an unseen narrator is present in the commercial. Pedelty and Kuecker note that “sound’s subordination to sight might have particularly important consequences for gender” and found that “the omniscient narrator, the disembodied voice of reason and authority, is much more likely to be male” (2014). Voiceovers were characterized as male, female or not present in this study. Next, this study examined the *message appeal* of the commercials. Modeled after Choi et al.’s (2012) study of ‘thinking and feeling’ products and ‘utilitarian and value-expressive’ appeals in TV advertising, the commercials were categorized into the following message appeals: slice of life, testimonial, problem and solution, product as a hero, comparison, drama, humor and sex. Again, some commercials fit multiple categories and were represented in all that applied. Finally, the analysis of the commercial’s content included their *promotional themes*. Again, some commercials fit into multiple categories and were sorted as such. Gbadeyan’s (2010) descriptions of the following themes served as guidelines for this study:

Fun/happiness (positive association provided by the use of product),
taste/flower/smell (any association related to taste or flavor of the product),
product performance (description of the feature capabilities of the product),
product in social context (social situation surrounding the use of the product),
appearance (improving personal appearance as the main reason for having the

product, or personal gain (any additional personal satisfaction for having the product).

After analyzing the content of the commercial, this study focused more specifically at the representations of the men and women in each commercial. Character details were measured as follows: age, positioning, primary behavior, alluring behavior and whether the characters were sexualized or objectified. *Age* was broken down into two ranges: young adults, ages 21 to 35, or middle-aged adults, ages 36-65. *Positioning* of the characters referred to how prominently the characters were featured on the screen. If a character was directly shown for a period of time, his or her positioning was considered prominent. If not, however, the character was considered to be in the background. The characters' *primary behavior* was analyzed based on Arslan's (2015) categories in a study on male and female portrayal in Turkish commercials. Primary behaviors were separated into four categories: work, domestic, recreation or other. Following Arslan's guidelines, *alluring behavior* of characters was also studied. Arslan refers to Coltrane and Messineo (2000), who define alluring behavior as "flirting, winking, puckering, batting eyelashes, or sexual teasing." Finally, whether the characters were sexualized or objectified was noted. Sexualization was based on whether the character's clothes were considered sexualized, which, according to Goodin et al. (2011), is if an item of clothing "(a) revealed a sexualized body part, (b) emphasized a sexualized body part, (c) had characteristics associated with sexiness, and/or (d) had writing on it with sexualizing content. Sexualized body parts included the chest, waist, buttocks, and legs" (p. 5). Objectification of a character is defined as "any presentation emphasizing sexually suggestive body parts or not including the head" (Sheehan, 2003, p. 107).

The researcher viewed the commercials twice, a week apart, to establish intracoder reliability. On commercial details (Table 1 on page 26), the following intracoder coefficients were obtained using Scott's pi: genders present – 1; setting – 0.94; voiceover – 1; message appeal – 0.87; promotional theme – 0.91. On character details (Table 2 on page 28), the following intracoder coefficients were obtained using Scott's pi: age – 1; positioning – 0.98; primary behavior – 0.88; alluring behavior – 0.97; sexualized or objectified – 0.94.

Description of Commercials

For this study, a survey regarding the content of beer commercials aired during Super Bowl broadcasts from 2011 to 2015 was conducted. Two Budweiser commercials were selected from 2013 and 2015, while three Bud Light commercials were selected from 2011, 2012 and 2014. All commercials were viewed on iSpot.tv. Descriptions of each commercial are found below.

2011: Bud Light – Hack Job

The commercial features a fictional show called Hack Job, where a man and woman, the Gilberts, are waiting to see their newly remodeled kitchen. The woman screams with excitement about seeing her new kitchen, but her excitement quickly fades while the man's increases when they enter the kitchen and see a bucket of Bud Light on the counter. A before and after shot of the kitchen shows that adding the bucket of Bud Light was the only change made to the kitchen. The Gilberts, the crew of the show and the show's host then pass around the Bud Light as if they will be drinking it with the host saying, "Clearly this is a room people want to hang out in." The host then announces that the landscapers are outside, with a view of men building with Bud Light pallets in the yard to conclude the commercial.

2012: Bud Light – Rescue Dog

This commercial is set in a backyard party, where the male host of the party tells his friends that he got new a rescue dog that he named Wego. The man encourages his confused guests to call the dog, resulting in shouts of “Here, Wego.” This call mimics the Bud Light slogan “Here We Go.” The dog responds by running to get a Bud Light for the caller. Soon, the dog is retrieving beers for several guests, even bringing in a six-pack and rolling in on a keg. Men are most often the characters calling the dog, both to get beers for themselves and to impress a group of women as they arrive to the party. At the end of the commercial, the dog is seen floating on a raft in the pool.

2013: Budweiser – Black Crown

The commercial begins with a shot of a woman’s legs as she walks into a party, gradually showing a full shot of her in a black sparkly dress as she carries two bottles of Budweiser Black Crown into the party. The commercial features men and women all dressed in dark clothes in a dimly lit, yet extravagant party, socializing and drinking Black Crown. The commercial ends with a man standing at the head of a long table raising his beer and saying “Here’s to taste,” as the party-goers cheer and raise their beers. A deep-voiced male voiceover narrates the commercial, speaking specifically of the taste of the beer.

2014: Bud Light – Up for Whatever

The commercial opens with a man sitting by himself at a table in a bar. A woman approaches him, they introduce themselves and she offers him a beer, only if he’s up for whatever happens the rest of the night. In the meantime, shots of camera crews show that situation is staged and that all participants know except for the man. He agrees to go with

the woman, and they leave the bar and get into a red limousine filled with partying women, flashing lights and a deejay. A deep-voiced male voiceover and scrolling words explain that the commercial is just getting started. The second half of the commercial opens with a scene from inside the limousine, and then shows the man and woman inside a building getting in an elevator. While in the elevator, actor Don Cheadle enters alongside a llama. Shortly after, the identical twin of the woman at the start of the commercial enters the elevator. The man seems confused and excited as the different characters come into view. The twins and the man enter a party only to find Arnold Schwarzenegger in a wig prepared to play the man in ping-pong. Clips of the game are shown, resulting in the man winning the game and raising his hands in excitement. As he wins, the walls in the room collapse and he finds himself on stage in front of a large cheering crowd as the band One Republic puts on a concert. All the while, the man is excitedly shocked. The same deep-voiced male voiceover summarizes what happened throughout the commercial and concludes with the Bud Light campaign tagline: "Bud Light: The perfect beer for whatever happens."

2015: Budweiser – Brewed the Hard Way

The commercial opens with shots of the Budweiser brewery, a handful of hops, and text that reads "Proudly a macro brew." Quick cut-to shots show beer being opened, poured, served, brewed, clips of the Budweiser Clydesdales, groups at a bar, men tasting beer, etc. As the quick clips are shown, text describing how Budweiser is made, what Budweiser drinkers are like, how Budweiser is not for fans of fruity, flavored beer, and how Budweiser is brewed the hard way. Text regarding the history and tradition of Budweiser is accompanied with clips of Budweiser signs and video of the Clydesdale horses. The

commercial concludes with an up-close shot of the beer with text that reads “This Bud’s for you.”

A survey including the five commercials and corresponding questions was distributed via email and social media, and was completed by 100 participants, all over the age of 21, ensuring that participants were of age to consume alcohol and could be potential consumers. Forty-seven females and 53 males were part of the sample. The survey began with a video clip of one of the five beer commercials aired during the Super Bowl, followed by a series of questions pertaining to the participants’ feelings and opinions toward the commercial, how the participant would describe the characters or scenarios in the ad, who he or she thinks the ad was specifically targeting, if the advertisement would motivate the participant to buy the beer, etc. This process was repeated five times in total to account for the five beer ads. Additional questions regarding the participants’ gender, affinity to drinking beer, and level of sports fandom followed the clips, providing information about the participants without revealing their identities and maintaining anonymity.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The intent of this study is to determine to what extent women are targeted as consumers in beer commercials aired during the Super Bowl, how men and women are represented in these commercials, and how the commercials impact consumers in terms of whether they feel compelled to buy or drink the advertised beer.

First, a content analysis of the 19 Bud Light and Budweiser commercials aired during Super Bowl broadcasts from 2011 to 2015 was conducted. The purpose of the content analysis was to understand the overarching representations of men and women in these commercials. Results from the content analysis show that both men and women were included in nearly all commercials, but that their roles and representations differed.

Table 1 (below) describes the content of the commercials, with an emphasis on the presence or absence of male and female characters, the setting, voiceover, message appeal and promotional theme. The results show that both men and women were present in the majority of the Bud Light and Budweiser ads aired during the last five Super Bowls. Of the 19 commercials aired, men are present in 17 (89.47 percent) while women are present in 16 (84.21 percent). Despite the apparent equality in representation of males and females, the uses and representations of the two differ greatly.

Commercial Details		
	Number of Commercials	Percentage of Commercials
Genders Present		
Male	17 of 19	89.47%
Female	16 of 19	84.21%
Setting		
Bar	8 of 19	42.10%
Home	6 of 19	31.57%
Outdoors	8 of 19	42.10%
Other	9 of 19	47.36%
Voiceover		
Male	9 of 19	47.36%
Female	0 of 19	0
None	10 of 19	52.63%
Message Appeal		
Slice of life	6 of 19	31.57%
Testimonial	0 of 19	0
Problem and solution	1 of 19	5.26%
Product as a hero	6 of 19	31.57%
Comparison	1 of 19	5.26%
Drama	5 of 19	26.31%
Humor	5 of 19	26.31%
Sex	0 of 19	0
Promotional Theme		
Fun/happiness	12 of 19	63.15%
Taste/flavor/smell	5 of 19	26.31%
Product in social context	12 of 19	63.15%
Product Performance	1 of 19	5.26%
Appearance	3 of 19	15.78%
Personal gain	6 of 19	31.57%

Table 1. Content Analysis: Commercial Details

However, despite this apparent numerical balance in the presence of men and women in the commercials, men maintained dominant roles compared to women. The number of voiceovers in the commercials supports this contention. Nine out of the 19 commercials included voiceovers, accounting for 47.36 percent of the ads, and all voiceovers were done by male voices. As was referenced in the methodology section of this paper, voiceovers tend to represent the narrator and the voice of reason or authority

(Pedelty, 2014). The women in these commercials rarely spoke, while the men are represented in dialogue or as narrators via the voiceover. The dominance of men is also represented in their positioning within the commercials, as demonstrated in Table 2 (below). Positioning refers to the characters' prominence on screen. If a character was shown on screen in a direct shot, rather than in passing, his or her positioning was considered prominent. If not, however, the character was considered to be in the background. According to the content analysis, men were prominently featured 16 of the 17 commercials where men were present, accounting for 94.11 percent. Therefore, men were considered to be background characters in only one of the 17 commercials, or 5.88 percent. Women, on the other hand, were prominently featured in only 11 of the 16 commercials where women were shown, accounting for 68.75 percent, and were considered background characters in around five commercials, or 31.25 percent.

Character Details				
	Male		Female	
	Number of Commercials	Percentage of Commercials	Number of Commercials	Percentage of Commercials
Age				
Young adult (21-35)	16 of 17	94.11%	16 of 16	100%
Middle-aged adult (36-65)	2 of 17	11.76%	0 of 16	0%
Positioning				
Prominent	16 of 17	94.11%	11 of 16	68.75%
Background	1 of 17	5.88%	5 of 16	31.25%
Primary behavior				
Work	5 of 17	29.41%	2 of 16	12.5%
Domestic	2 of 17	11.76%	0 of 16	0
Recreation	11 of 17	64.70%	8 of 16	50%
Other	3 of 17	17.64%	6 of 16	37.5%
Alluring behavior				
Yes	0 of 17	0%	4 of 16	25%
No	17 of 17	100%	12 of 16	75%
Sexualized or Objectified				
Yes	0 of 17	0%	7 of 16	43.75%
No	17 of 17	100%	9 of 16	56.25%

Table 2. Content Analysis: Character Details

While men were portrayed as the more dominant characters, women were present in commercials largely for imagery purposes, rather than as main characters. This is first shown in the positioning of women, with females only prominently displayed in 11 commercials for 68.75 percent compared to the prominence of men at 94.11 percent. What is more telling of the role of women in these commercials, however, is their behavior or representations, shown in Table 2. According to the study, women were sexualized or objectified in some way in seven of 16 commercials, or 43.75 percent. This included low cut shirts drawing attention to the women's breasts, images of the women that did not include their heads, but rather their torso or legs, etc. Men were not sexualized or objectified in any of the commercials involved in this study. Along with the sexualization and objectification,

women were shown demonstrating alluring behavior in four of 16, or 25 percent, of the commercials. Alluring behavior includes flirting, winking, puckering, batting eyelashes or sexual teasing (Coltrane, 2000). While this number is fairly low, it is significant compared to how men are represented. None of the commercials in this study included alluring behavior by men.

Taking these findings into consideration, results from a survey completed by 100 participants helped determine how the commercials involved in the study were perceived by consumers, and how they interpreted the representations of men and women in these commercials. Of the 100 participants involved in the survey, 53 were males and 47 were females, providing a relatively even sample of gender. Eighty percent of respondents identified as beer drinkers, including 87 percent of men and 72 percent of women. Although the findings show that a greater percentage of men identify as beer drinkers, the percentage of female beer drinkers involved in this study is above the national average, as discussed in the literature review of this paper. Results from this survey indicate that 91 percent of respondents watch the Super Bowl, while only 83 percent of respondents identify as sports fans. Of the female respondents to this survey, 85 percent said they watch the Super Bowl and 74 percent identified as sports fans, for an 11 percent variance. In comparison, only a four percent difference exists between men who watch the Super Bowl and identify as sports fans. According to the survey, the number of participants who watched the Super Bowl over the last five years remained relatively consistent from year to year, ranging from 85 percent at its lowest viewership by participants in 2011 to 97 percent at its highest viewership in 2013. Most recently, 91 percent of respondents

watched the Super Bowl in 2015. Figure 3, below, depicts the breakdown of beer drinkers, Super Bowl viewers and sports fans by gender.

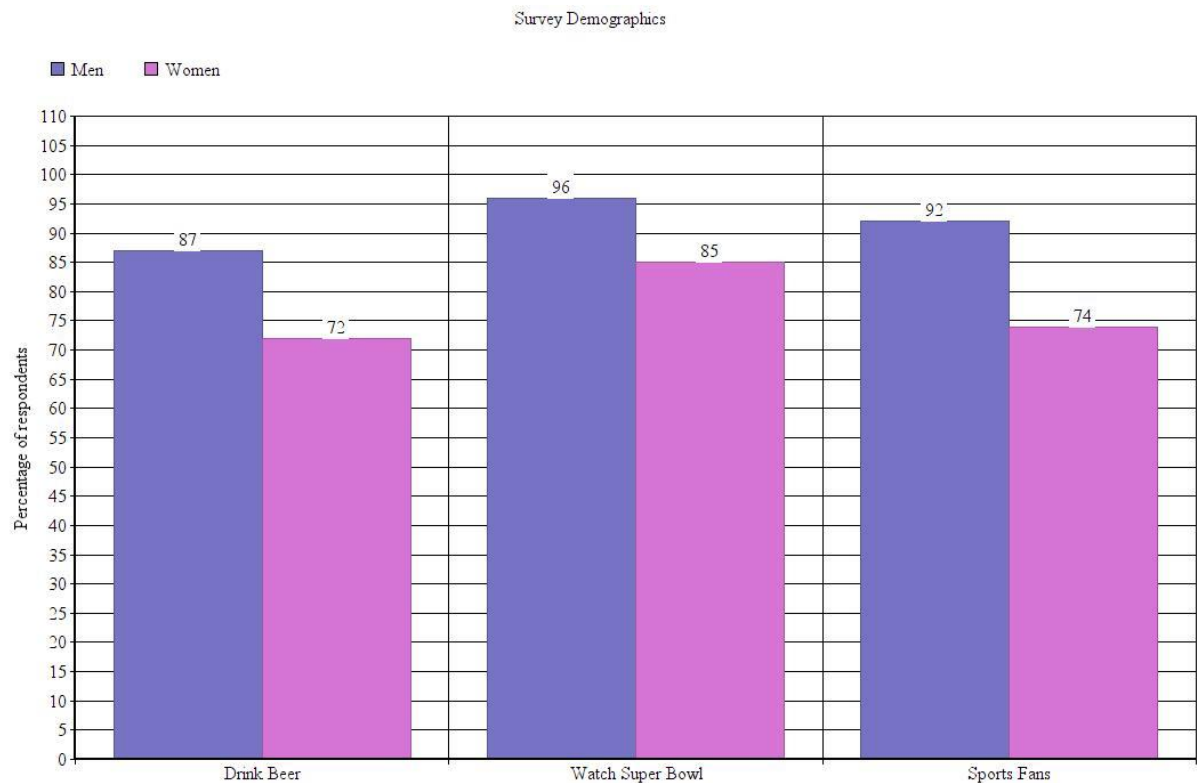


Figure 3: Survey Demographics

The first research question related to the extent to which females are the main targets of beer commercials aired during the Super Bowl from 2011 to 2015. Responses from the survey leaned overwhelmingly in favor of men as the target audience for each of the commercials. Budweiser's Black Crown commercial, which aired during the 2013 Super Bowl, was considered the most targeted to women of the five commercials, with 30 percent of respondents agreeing that women were targeted as consumers. Men, however, were considered to be primary targets in the majority of commercials, with up to 89 percent of respondents agreeing that men were main targets. Commercials aired in 2011 and 2014 differed greatly in terms of target audience. In 2011, 89 percent agreed that the Bud Light

commercial was aimed toward men, while only 13 percent agreed the commercial targeted women, a 76 percent difference (see Figure 4 below).

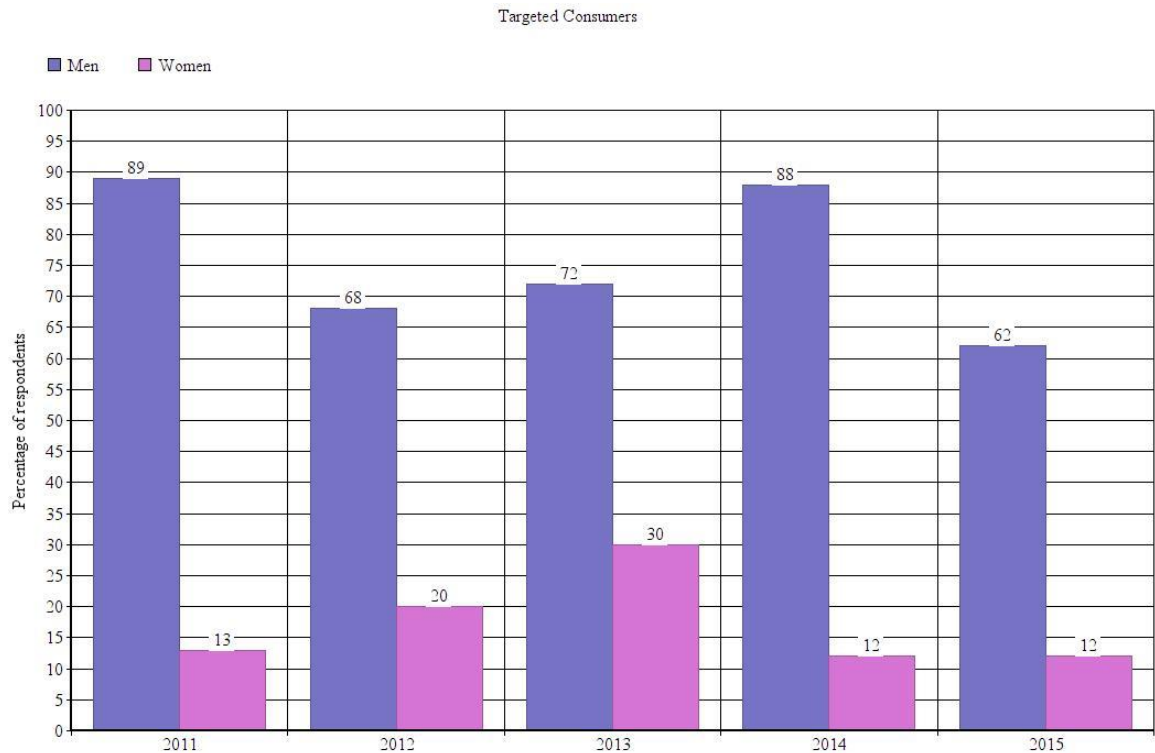


Figure 4. Targeted Consumers in 2011-2015 Budweiser and Bud Light Super Bowl ads

Responses to the Bud Light commercial aired in 2014 also saw a 76 percent variance as 88 percent agreed the commercial targeted men with only 12 percent who believed it targeted women. Throughout the years, the amount to which beer commercials target women has fluctuated, according to the survey, in a way that reflects the female viewership of the Super Bowls in which the commercials aired. Despite the similarities from year to year, there are significantly more women watching the Super Bowl than those who feel they are being targeted as consumers in the commercials (see Figure 5 below).

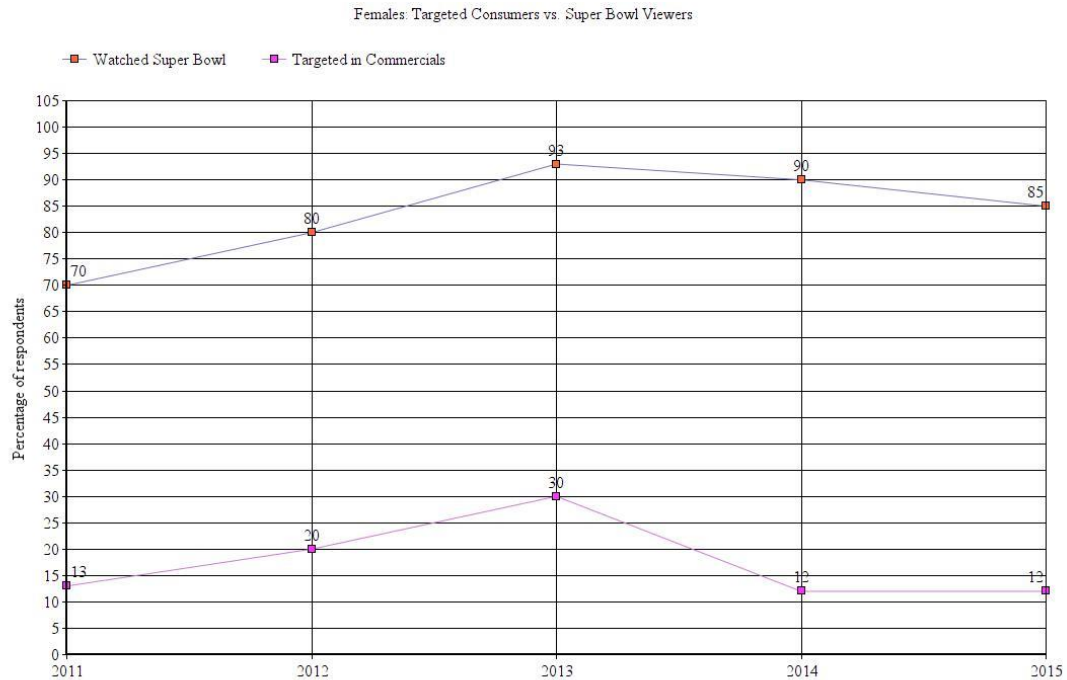


Figure 5. Females: Targeted Consumers versus Super Bowl Viewership

The understandings of the messages in the commercials also influenced whether respondents felt men or women were targeted in each commercial. An open-ended question about the intended message of each commercial resulted in similar answers from several respondents, both in terms of overall message of the commercial, as well as gender-specific responses.

Respondents had two major takeaways from Bud Light's 2011 "Hack Job" commercial: (1) Bud Light makes things better, and (2) buy Bud Light. Of the 100 responses, variations of these phrases were most often used. Twenty-four of the 100 responses commented directly on gender differences present in the commercial, most noting that the message of the commercial was intended for males and disregarded the female's opinion. Unedited examples of responses are found below:

- “The woman seems forced to enjoy the beer, she seems to be disappointed at first about the ‘unchanged’ kitchen, which is another stereotype of women. This commercial is so targeted on men and regardless of women.”
- “Guys care about beer, women live a domestic role and care about renovated kitchens.”
- “Men are always the final say and like what they want to like. No women’s opinion matters.”
- “Unfortunately the message came across to me that beer is more important than anything that man’s wife wants.”
- “Men are more interested in drinking beer than home improvements, while women are the opposite.”

Bud Light’s commercial in 2012 that featured the dog named “Wego,” did not elicit as many gendered responses. Several respondents felt the commercial was gender neutral due to the presence of the dog, which they claimed added a universal likeness or cute-factor. Overall, respondents felt the primary messages of the commercials were as follows: (1) liven up a party with Bud Light, (2) emphasis on the “Here We Go” Bud Light slogan, and (3) dogs and beer are a good pairing. Gender-specific responses differed in opinions. Some felt the commercial appealed to both men and women, whereas others felt the commercial showed men using beer to attract females. Unedited examples or responses are found below:

- “Aiming to bring women and men together over a cold drink, having fun.”
- “Men can have fun and get girls by training their dog to fetch beer like a slave.”
- “It was a gender neutral commercial because the dog added the cute factor.”

- “Beer and dogs get women to find men attractive and fun.”
- “Dog is a man’s best friend and can be used to impress the ladies.”

Following two humorous Bud Light advertisements, Budweiser’s 2013 Black Crown commercial was perceived to have a very different message. Overall, respondents described the message of the commercial with the following key words or phrases: (1) beer is sexy, (2) party, (3) high-class/fancy. When asked whom the commercial targeted, this commercial had the smallest difference in whether respondents believed it was targeted toward men or women. Seventy-two percent agreed that the commercial was aimed at men, while 30 percent believed the commercial targeted women, accounting for a 42 percent difference. In open-ended responses, however, some respondents felt the commercial targeted women, while others viewed them simply as imagery.

- “This new Budweiser beer is classier, and is specifically for men.”
- That women enjoy a man’s beer, Budweiser took the sexy appeal to women and how they like the same as what men drink.”
- “Everybody contributed to beer, but women serve it.”
- “Use women as images to go along with the beer.”
- “You will have fun if you drink this beer regardless if you are a man or woman.”

Respondents had very few gender-related comments regarding the fourth commercial, which aired in 2014 and promoted Bud Light. Words and phrases commonly used to describe the overarching message of the Bud Light “Up For Whatever” commercial were as follows: (1) fun night/good times, and (2) anything can happen. These phrases made up the majority of responses, with only a few relating specifically to gender. This is especially interesting because this commercial had the greatest difference in terms of who

respondents believed the commercial targeted. According to the survey, 88 percent felt the commercial targeted men, with only 12 percent who felt it targeted women, for a 76 percent difference. Only three gender-related responses were collected:

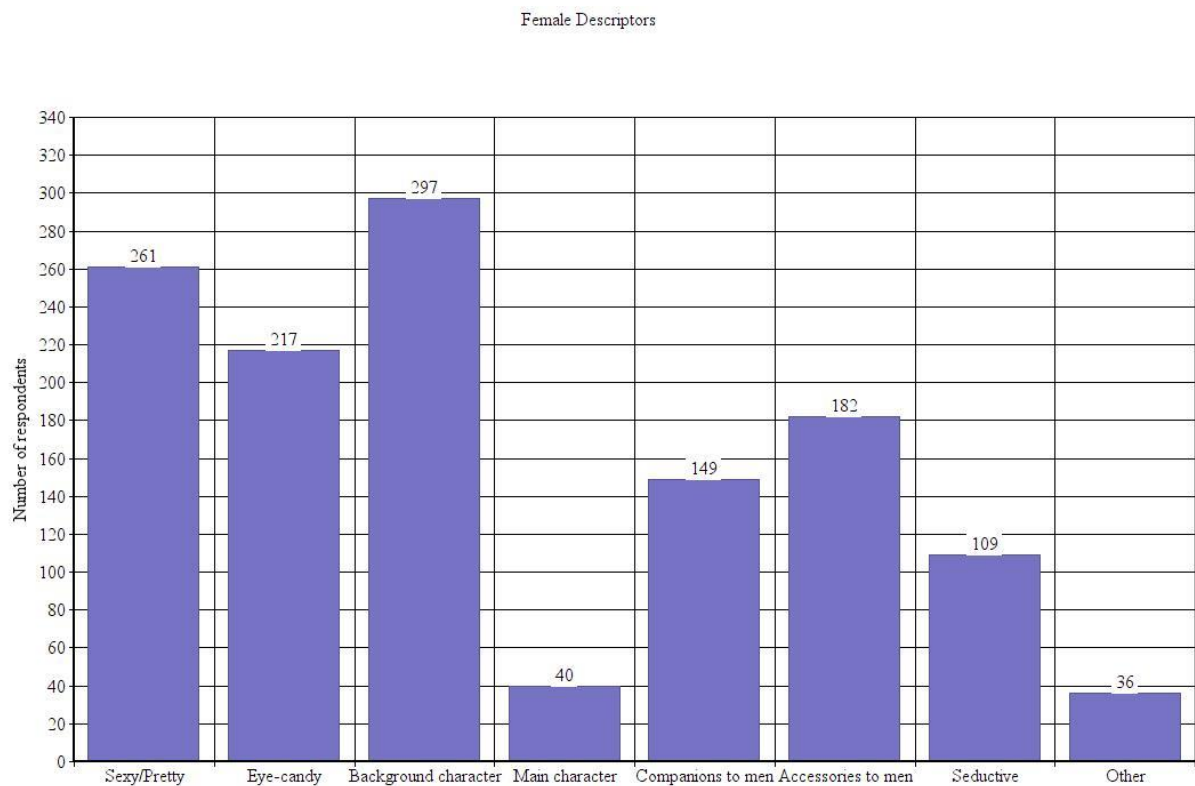
- “Drinking beer will get you plenty of babes.”
- “Ridiculous, adventurous things happen and attractive women show up when men drink beer.”
- “Men use beer to uplift themselves.”

Finally, Budweiser’s 2015 commercial, entitled “Brewed the Hard Way,” received several gendered responses related to its intended message. The phrases *manly* or *real men* were consistently present throughout the responses. Overall, respondents noted the following phrases when asked to describe the intended message: (1) manly/real men, (2) tradition/history, and (3) better than craft beer. Responses that note gender continue to use the aforementioned phrases:

- “Tough guys drink Budweiser.”
- “A “man’s” beer. Don’t be a girl and drink IPAs or fruity beer.”
- “Budweiser beer is classic, manly and the choice of the tough man.”
- “The craft beer scene is not manly (almost feminine). Men drink Bud.”
- “That the only people that drink Budweiser are men, the women serve it.”

Although the open-ended descriptions help depict how respondents perceived men and women in the commercials, specific questions regarding the representation of men and women help quantify the opinions of respondents. Respondents had the option to describe the women in the commercials as follows: sexy/pretty, eye-candy, background character, main character, companions to men, accessories to men, seductive and other, which

allowed respondents to write in their own descriptions. Definitions of the aforementioned descriptors can be found in the appendix. Respondents were able to choose all descriptors that applied. Overall, *background character*, *sexy/pretty*, and *eye-candy* were the top three terms used to describe women in these commercials, in that order. Each of the three responses was included as a top-three response in four of the five commercials. *Accessories to men* followed as the fourth most-selected descriptor. Figure 6 (below) shows the number of times each descriptor was selected by survey respondents.

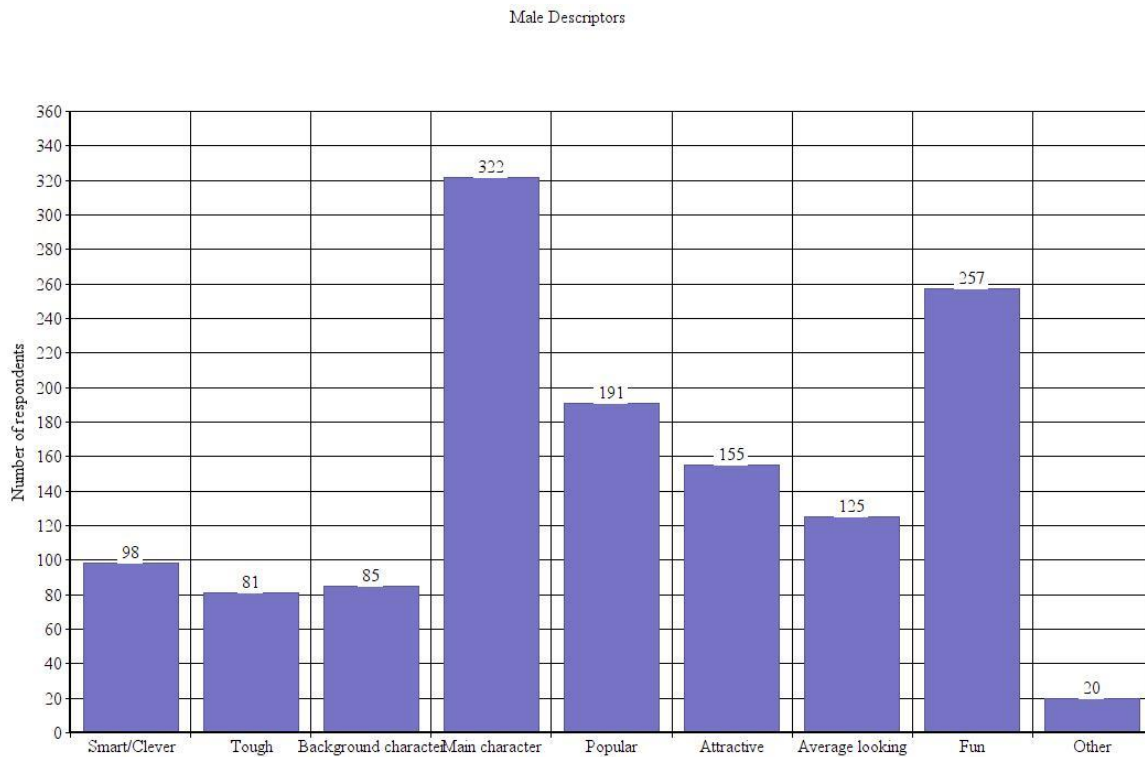


*NOTE: The values noted in Figure 6 represent the number of times each descriptor was selected out of 500 potential responses (100 respondents for five commercials).

Figure 6. Female Descriptors

The following were descriptors used in relation to men: smart/clever, tough, background character, main character, popular, attractive, average looking, fun, and other, again with an open-ended option. Definitions of the aforementioned descriptors can be

found in the appendix. Throughout the five commercials, *main character*, *fun*, and *popular* were the three most-used descriptors. *Main character* was a top-three descriptor in all five commercials, while *fun* and *popular* were considered top-three descriptors in three of the five. Figure 7 (below) shows the number of times each descriptor was selected by survey respondents.



*NOTE: The values noted in Figure 6 represent the number of times each descriptor was selected out of 500 potential responses (100 respondents for five commercials).

Figure 7. Male Descriptors

Finally, this survey examined what impact the Bud Light and Budweiser commercials had on consumers. In order to understand the impact, the participants were asked if they felt the commercial appealed or applied to them and if after watching the commercial they felt compelled to drink or buy the advertised beer. Although more men felt the commercial appealed to them and were more compelled to buy or drink beer than

women, the numbers for both genders were very low. Both males and females felt the Bud Light commercial from 2012 featuring the dog named Wego appealed to them the most, with 67 percent of males and 57 percent of females agreeing that the commercial applied to them. These findings are consistent with participants' open-ended responses in relation to that commercial, with several respondents expressing that the commercial applied to both men and women. Aside from the 2012 commercial, no more than 45 percent of women felt the commercials applied or appealed to them. Male respondents that felt the commercials applied to them hovered around 50 percent, with the lowest percentage at 27 percent in response to the 2013 Budweiser Black Crown commercial. Responses were similar in regard to whether participants were interested in drinking or buying the beer after watching the commercials. No more than 44 percent of male respondents or 39 percent of female respondents felt compelled to buy or drink beer. Despite low responses from participants regarding the impact of the commercials, the majority of respondents found the commercials visually engaging. Up to 88 percent of men and 87 percent of women agreed that the commercials were visually engaging.

Consumer Impact (Percentages from 100 respondents from survey)			
	Year	Men	Women
Respondent found commercial engaging	2011	77%	64%
	2012	88%	83%
	2013	68%	70%
	2014	87%	87%
	2015	77%	75%
Commercial applied to respondent	2011	52%	23%
	2012	67%	57%
	2013	27%	28%
	2014	53%	45%
	2015	51%	36%
Respondent felt compelled to buy or drink advertised beer	2011	25%	13%
	2012	41%	21%
	2013	19%	15%
	2014	38%	30%
	2015	44%	39%

Table 3. Consumer Impact

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The main goal of this research was to determine whether women were targeted as consumers in Super Bowl commercials aired from 2011 to 2015, and how men and women were represented in these commercials.

First, a content analysis of the 19 Budweiser and Bud Light commercials aired during the Super Bowls from 2011-15 examined the commercials' content and representation of characters. Results from this analysis showed that men were depicted in a more dominant light than females, with prominent positioning and representation via voiceovers. Women, on the other hand, were shown in fewer commercials, were considered background characters more often than men, and were sexualized or objectified, while men were not. These findings support Morna and Ndlovu's (2007) conclusion that women are more likely to be seen than heard, and Wenner's (2009) observation that women in beer commercials are often represented as sexy, out of reach, or as the 'other.'

Next, a survey of 100 people resulted in more detailed, viewer and consumer-based observations from a sample of five commercials – one from each Super Bowl from 2011 to 2015. In relation to demographics, specifically sports fandom versus Super Bowl viewership, the survey found that 91 percent of respondents watched the Super Bowl while only 83 percent identified as sports fans. These findings support the notion that the Super Bowl is a platform that advertisers use to target more than just sports fans as potential consumers, and is one of the many reasons why the Super Bowl is considered the biggest televised advertising event of the year (Nielsen, 2016; *Year in Sports*, 2016).

Of the female respondents, 85 percent said they watch the Super Bowl and 74 percent identified as sports fans. Seventy-two percent of women identified as beer drinkers. Despite these high numbers, the survey found that beer commercials aired during the Super Bowl continued to target men as primary consumers, with up to 89 percent of respondents agreeing that men were the main target of a commercial. Only 30 percent of respondents, however, believed women to be the main targets of a commercial. These findings reaffirm previous research that the majority of marketing and advertising efforts for beer brands are targeted to men (State, 1991).

In analyzing the perceived messages and representations of the men and women in the beer commercials, the study found that women were viewed as background characters, sexy or pretty, or eye candy by the majority of respondents. These results could have different implications. First, despite the attempts by beer companies to incorporate women into their commercials, the women are still used largely as supporting images rather than as main characters or primary consumers, shedding light on the patriarchal nature of the beer industry. On the other hand, Social Cognitive Theory reminds us that what we see and interpret on television impacts our thoughts and beliefs. Perhaps years of sexualized, attractive women in beer commercials has tainted the opinions of modern-day consumers, therefore causing them to automatically point out stereotypical or sexist representations in such commercials.

Men, on the other hand, were most often perceived as the main character, fun and popular. The fact that *main character* was the most selected descriptor links back to the idea that men are primary targets of beer commercials and that women are viewed as background characters or imagery rather than primary targets (Wenner, 2010).

In regard to the impact the commercials had on male and female consumers, speaking specifically of whether the commercial compelled them to buy or drink the advertised beer, the study found that the commercials had little effect on the viewers' consumer impulses. No more than 44 percent of male respondents or 39 percent of female respondents felt compelled to buy or drink the advertised beer as a result of watching the commercials. These findings are consistent with past studies, including one conducted at the University of Texas at Austin that found that ads actually have little impact on how much alcohol people consume. From 1971 to 2011, the study reports, alcohol advertising in the U.S. increased by more than 400 percent. In that same time, per capita consumption stayed somewhat constant, only fluctuating by as many as six points (Wilcox, 2015). What is interesting, however, is up to 88 percent of men and 87 percent of women agreed that the commercials were visually engaging. These findings show that whether a commercial's content is interesting and engaging to various consumers does not determine whether there will be an actionable response from them, such as buying or drinking beer.

Looking forward, as beer companies understand the significance of females as consumers rather than simply props or images in their advertisements, it is important that women are portrayed as primary characters in commercials and not only as attractive eye-candy for male consumers. Commercial content should be tailored to appeal to both men and women, rather than the significant slant toward men that was demonstrated in the findings of this study. This can be done by focusing less on the masculine and feminine stereotypes and gender-specific appeals, and by focusing more on gender-neutral, or rather "gender-friendly" approaches. As has been discussed via Social Cognitive Theory in this study, messages and imagery on television help shape the beliefs, opinions and actions of

viewers. The results from this study indicate that consumers view women in beer commercials as pretty or sexy background characters, a perception that may come as a result of years of sexualized and objectified women in these commercials, thus shaping their opinions and beliefs about women in beer commercials. Despite efforts by beer companies to change this image, the perceptions of consumers may be difficult to change after they've grown accustomed to a certain representation of women in commercials.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

This study examined how men and women are portrayed, to what extent women are targeted as consumers, and the ways in which consumers are impacted by Bud Light and Budweiser commercials aired during Super Bowls from 2011 to 2015. The research reaffirmed the hypothesis in the study that women are used more as imagery in beer commercials rather than as potential consumers or primary targets for the advertisement, despite their affinity to drinking beer and watching sports. According to the findings, women were present in the majority of beer commercials in the study, but were perceived by viewers as pretty or sexy background characters. My survey found that women felt targeted in less than 30 percent of Bud Light and Budweiser commercials aired from 2011-15, while men felt targeted in more than 60 percent. The study also found that while the majority of men and women found the commercials to be visually engaging, very few respondents felt the commercials applied to them personally or felt compelled to drink or buy the beer as a result of the ad. Results from this study reaffirmed previous research done by Wenner, who found that women were most often shown as sexy or desirable and that they were the object of men's attention in beer commercials, as referenced in the literature review of this paper (Wenner, 2009). This was demonstrated in this study by the survey respondents' selection of *sexy/pretty* and *eye-candy* as top descriptors for women in the commercials. The findings also support the dominance and masculinity of men that Postman (1987) found is often portrayed in beer commercials, with men being defined as

main characters and primary targets in each of the studied commercials by survey respondents.

Despite these findings, beer companies like Anheuser-Busch InBev and MillerCoors are taking steps to address the issue of the representation of women in their commercials by creating more female-friendly campaigns. Combined, these two companies sell 72 percent of beer in the U.S. (Kaplan, 2015). In this year's Super Bowl, Anheuser-Busch InBev aired a commercial for Bud Light featuring actress and comedian Amy Schumer alongside actor and comedian Seth Rogan. Schumer served as a spokesperson and main character in the commercial, and was not sexualized or objectified based on definitions explained in the methodology section of this paper. The commercial is one in a series featuring Schumer and Rogan, including one with an appearance by UFC fighter Ronda Rousey in which she plays a bodyguard. MillerCoors is focusing on targeting females as well, with Coors Light's new ad campaign, "Climb On," which, according to MillerCoors Chief Marketing Officer David Kroll, works to "attract women as loyal drinkers" (Schultz, 2016). According to MillerCoors' senior marketing insights director Britt Dougherty, more "gender-friendly" beer could lead to an increase of 5 million barrels of beer added to the U.S. beer industry's annual 206 million barrels by 2020 (Kaplan, 2015).

This study has a number of limitations. First, a secondary analysis or additional respondents may have resulted in more objective results in the content analysis. Additional coders, rather than just one, would have provided intercoder rather than intracoder reliability, which may have given more accurate and perhaps more conclusive responses. In terms of respondents for the survey, the goal of reaching males and females was met with a nearly even split of 53 percent male respondents and 47 percent female. One drawback in

the survey demographics, however, was determining the age of participants, which would have made for a more narrow and specified sample. The original intent was to survey graduate students, but with the varying ages of graduate students and the fact that the survey was distributed via social media, it was difficult to maintain a narrow age group. Adding a question regarding age of participants into the survey would have added more clarity to this issue. Finally, focusing specifically on Bud Light and Budweiser's commercials, both owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev, only shows the representations of men and women in one beer company's advertisements. A more diverse sample of beer commercials would have provided a wider lens view of target audiences and representations of men and women in the beer industry.

Looking forward, further research could take this wide-lens approach and examine how representations of men and women in beer commercials differ from brand to brand, not only looking at Anheuser-Busch InBev products, but other brewers like MillerCoors or Heineken as well. Examining the casting choices, stereotypes, social cues and comparisons from brand to brand would provide greater insight on the advertising and commercial practices in relation to gender in the beer industry as a whole.

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APPENDIX

The following definitions are terms used to describe male and female characters in Super Bowl commercials aired from 2011-2015. These terms are found in the results section of this study.

Accessories to men	females present to enhance male appearance or character
Attractive	having a pleasing appearance
Average-looking	normal or undistinguishable in appearance
Background character	not considered a main character or of great importance
Companions to men	females considered equal to their male counterparts
Eye-candy	superficially attractive to look at, but not serious or interesting
Fun	someone that is amusing, entertaining or enjoyable
Main character	the most important character or of great importance
Popular	accepted, liked or enjoyed by many people
Seductive	sexually attractive, or having alluring or tempting qualities
Sexy/Pretty	attractive or appealing to look at, commonly women
Smart/Clever	showing intelligence or good judgment
Tough	physically, emotionally or mentally strong

SIUC HSC FORM A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

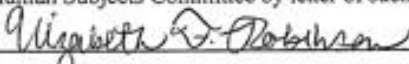
By making this application, I certify that I have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research activities involving human subjects. I agree to comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I acknowledge my obligation to:

1. Accept responsibility for the research described, including work by students under my direction.
2. Obtain written approval from the Human Subjects Committee of any changes from the originally approved protocol **BEFORE** implementing those changes.
3. Retain signed consent forms in a secure location separate from the data for at least **three** years after the completion of the research.
4. Immediately report any adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Human Subjects Committee, SIUC, Carbondale, Illinois - 618-453-4533 and to the Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, SIUC.
Phone 618-453-4531. E-mail: siuhsc@siu.edu

Project Title

An impact study of women in U.S. Super Bowl beer commercials, 2011-2015

RESEARCH ADVISOR'S ASSURANCE: My signature on this application certifies that the student is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects. I am aware of my obligations stated on Form A and will be available to supervise the research. When on sabbatical leave or vacation, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence. I will advise the Human Subjects Committee by letter of such arrangements.

 2-16-16
 Researcher(s) or Project Director(s) Elizabeth Robinson Date
 Please print or type name below signature.

 2-16-16
 Researcher's Advisor (required for all student projects) Dr. Uche Onyebadi / Dr. Kavita Karan Date
 Please print or type name below signature.


The request submitted by the above-named researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.

This approval is valid for one year from the review date. Unless the protocol is approved as Category I (exempt), researchers must request an extension to continue the research after that date. This approval form must be included in all Master's theses/research papers and Doctoral dissertations involving human subjects that are submitted to the Graduate School.

 2-18-16
 Interim Chairperson, Southern Illinois University Human Subjects Committee Date

HSC Approval letter (exempt)

To: Elizabeth Robinson

From: Wayne R. Glass, CRA 
Interim Chair, Human Subjects Committee

Date: February 18, 2016

Subject: *An impact study of women in U.S. Super Bowl beer commercials, 2011-2015*

Protocol Number: 16064

The revisions to the above referenced study have been approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. The study is determined to be exempt according to 45 CFR 46.101(b)2. This approval does not have an expiration date; however, any future modifications to your protocol must be submitted to the Committee for review and approval prior to their implementation.

Your Form A approval is enclosed.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the USDHHS Office of Human Research Protection. The Assurance number is FWA00005334.

WG:kr

Cc: Uche Onyebadi

VITA

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