

Gender Portrayal in Television Beer Commercials Versus Hard Seltzer Television Commercials

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Abstract

The beer industry has taken advantage of television advertising for decades, reaching millions with attempts to one-up their many competitors. More recently, alcoholic “hard seltzer” advertising targets traditional beer consumers while also tapping into new demographics. This study examines a sample of television advertisements from Bud Light and Coors Light beers as well as White Claw and Bud Light Seltzers from 2016 to 2022. This qualitative content analysis compares gender portrayals in beer and hard seltzer commercials, a topic that has not previously been studied academically. Results find that traditional, stereotypical gender archetypes continue to apply, particularly in beer commercials. Meanwhile, seltzer ads are more likely to show men and women doing the same activities, and women buying products, therefore driving the plot.

I. Introduction

The beer industry has long been recognized for its prime-time television advertising slots. The many competing brands vie for consumers’ attention and loyalty. “Big beer” brands can be seen airing bold and memorable ads on some of television’s most-viewed programs, such as the Super Bowl. While the industry is known for its quick-witted and creative advertising, gendered stereotypes and character archetypes have developed within beer commercials.

In 2016, a new alcoholic beverage burst into the market and quickly gained popularity in the years following. Alcoholic “hard seltzer” targets traditional beer consumers while also tapping into new demographics. The product category has become so popular that many large beer companies have released their own lines. With this new type of carbonated beverage came a fresh advertising opportunity.

This article will analyze television commercials from a sample of both beer and hard seltzer brands, looking at the differences in gender portrayals between the two products. All advertisements in the sample are from the year 2016 to 2022, as cultural and societal norms related to gender representation have changed drastically throughout the years. The findings will look at thematic similarities and differences between commercial portrayals and patterns in gendered archetypes between the two beverage categories. The research examines how beer and alcoholic seltzer portray masculinity and femininity in both similar and different ways.

Keywords: *gender portrayal, alcohol advertising, television commercials, stereotypes*

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II. Literature Review

For decades, television commercials have been recognized for their mass distribution to a diverse audience of viewers. One product category in particular, the beer industry, has taken advantage of the medium, reaching millions with attempts to one-up their many competitors. Companies battle with creativity and wit, trying to distance and differentiate their brand from the field with memorable content. This ongoing, industry-wide strive for customer loyalty comes with a large audience viewing the content. Beer commercials frequently show men and women as one-dimensional archetypes, feeding the nation's preconceptions and biases about gender norms (Hall & Crum, 1994).

In television advertisements across all industries, men are shown on screen two times more than women. In beer commercials, this holds particularly true (Hall & Crum, 1994). Though men are more often visible in advertisements, women have a greater chance of having their body parts displayed to the masses in these product endorsements. In a beer commercial, there is a 49% chance that a lingering camera will show a woman's chest (Hall & Crum, 1994).

When women are pictured in commercials in the beer industry, they are most often shown as a collection of body parts. Conversely, scenes with men are most commonly focused on faces. This concept is important to note because "intelligence and personality are communicated through pictures of faces, while only attractiveness is communicated through pictures of bodies" (Hellman et al., 2018, p. 330). This phenomenon suggests that men are valued for their holistic inner identities, while a woman's greatest asset should be seen as her physical attributes.

Additionally, while both men and women are most frequently depicted in leisurewear, the second most common male wardrobe is professional clothing; for women it is a swimsuit (Hall & Crum, 1994). These costume decisions in beer advertising further the idea that men are skilled, successful, and productive members of society, while women serve the primary role of onlookers and a focal point for the male gaze.

Television beer advertisements traditionally "portray men as active, autonomous, and capable, as ideal citizens" (Hellman et al., 2018, p. 173). Men are shown as protagonists driving the plot as well as steering their own lives. Men in beer ads are typically shown functioning in two capacities: work or leisure, particularly in outdoor activities. Beer is presented as a reward for a hard day of work; it is the transition between work and relaxation. The attainment of this reward suggests men are productive and accomplished. They are also often shown participating in leisure activities with other male friends. Beer is seen as social, a way to connect with pals and unwind (Postman et al., 1987).

Men in beer commercials can generally be boiled down into two archetypes: the loser and the buddies. The "loser" is often on the verge of embarrassment, frequently not knowing how to successfully communicate with a beautiful woman. The loser's masculinity is fragile but the buddies who accompany him (and usually provide him beer), act as a security for his manhood (Messner & Montez de oca, 2005). Buddies and beer allow the average man to become suave, charismatic, talented, and most importantly, manly (Hall & Kappel, 2018). An analysis study of beer commercials on broadcast television in 1987 found that these ads:

promote the view that to be a real man in American culture and accepted among other men one must drink beer. Beer is represented as the 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 et al., 1987, p. 48).

Despite the idea that men are capable and successful with a beer in their hand, ads can lead to negative perceptions of masculinity, particularly regarding trustworthiness. A study focusing on "male relational deception" in beer commercials found that both men and women felt a greater sense of distrust toward the gender after being exposed to beer ads. Participants shared that they felt that men, particularly in the context of romantic relationships, were shown as purposely deceptive, misleading, and dishonest (Lopez, 2010).

While men are portrayed as autonomous beings, women are frequently depicted in secondary roles, serving as eye candy or props for the male protagonists. Women in television beer commercials are primarily categorized into two archetypes: hotties and bitches. "Hotties" represent highly sexualized and objectified women. They are shown for their physical attractiveness, and often reduced to a collection of their body

parts. Hotties serve as prizes to validate masculinity (Messner & Montez de oca, 2005). The other character that a woman can play is a “bitch.” Bitches serve the role of limiting men’s freedom, particularly the freedom to drink beer with friends. Bitches are commonly the wives or girlfriends of male protagonists, serving as the advertisement’s villain by nagging, threatening, or reprimanding her male partner for drinking beer, having fun, socializing, and looking at the “hotties” (Messner & Montez de oca, 2005).

Researchers have additionally broken these stereotypical female characters into even more specific segments known as the prop, the party girl, and the skinny girl, all similar variations of the original archetypes and all serving little purpose other than to satisfy the dominant male beer drinkers (Hall & Kappel, 2018). In short, women in television beer advertisements are “viewed as ‘things,’ objects of male sexual desire, and/or part of the merchandise rather than people” (Hall & Crum, 1994, p. 330).

The one-dimensional portrayals of masculinity and femininity in beer commercials have an impact on society’s beliefs and behaviors. While advertising often reflects the trends and values already present, “research shows that the media affects behaviors as much as behaviors influence the media” (Hall & Kappel, 2018, p. 573). This means that the content of advertisements can shape viewers’ thoughts and perceptions. This can become meaningful when commercials have the mass audience that prime-time television or the Super Bowl attracts. Social scientists Matilda Hellman and Anu Katainen and communications professor Janne Seppänen share that “the scale and visibility of beer advertising is massive, having potentially a major impact on cultural representations of both alcohol and gender” (Hellman et al., 2018, p.164). While children are particularly susceptible to socialization, “the way that people learn about their culture, its values, belief systems, perspectives, and social norms,” this process continues throughout adulthood and is particularly influenced by the media (Pryor & Knupfer, 1997, p. 287). While kids are not specifically targeted by alcohol advertisers, they are susceptible to and often present for these messages.

Mass media such as beer commercials often perpetuate stereotypes and can define gender norms, including how individuals think people should look or behave within society (Pryor & Knupfer, 1997). While it is acknowledged that “the primary objective of TV ads is to create product awareness and to encourage product purchase, social scientists have often suggested that they may have more wide-ranging effects on viewers’ beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors” (Lavine et al., 1999, p. 1049). Despite the primary intentions of the beer advertisements being to sell and differentiate a company’s brew, the secondary effects can lead to damaging notions of masculinity and femininity.

The stereotyped gender displays often shown in beer advertisements can contribute to a large “range of social problems, including sexist attitudes and beliefs, sexual harassment, violence against women, eating disorders, and stereotyped perceptions of and behavior toward men and women” (Lavine et al., 1999, p.1049). Depicting men as dominant, powerful, and often attaining their desires can be harmful to women’s autonomy and safety. Commercials not only sell a product, but they frequently come with an unspoken promise. In beer advertisements, this promise is often that if a man buys the beer, he will get the girl (Hall & Crum, 1994). This leads to unrealistic and potentially harmful expectations. Beer advertisements commonly air during major sporting events and there have long been ties between watching sports and drinking. These advertisements create the link between sports, which are often violent contact sports, alcohol, and women. These subconscious associations can further notions of sexual and gender violence (Hall & Crum, 1994). Women are rarely shown as decision-makers in these advertisements, suggesting to society that a woman’s choice is less important than a man’s desire.

In addition to creating harmful sexual expectations, the one-dimensional, stereotypical portrayal of gender in television beer commercials can influence an individual’s concept of his or her own identity. Men are repeatedly shown that masculinity is defined by the work they do, the friends they have, the women they “get,” and most importantly, by the beer they drink. Young men begin to form their ideas on what it means to be a man with these concepts in mind, possibly feeling ashamed or attempting to change if they do not fit into these molds set by the beer industry. Men in beer ads are encouraged to prioritize drinking with their friends over emotional displays and meaningful relationships with romantic partners (Atkinson et al., 2019).

The objectifications of women in these advertisements leave many women feeling powerless and questioning their worth. The women displayed in beer commercials are commonly secondary or background characters with no real role in driving the plot and without the opportunity to make decisions. The women shown in these ads often do not align with how real women view themselves and their roles in society, this

leaves females feeling disconnected from the product and can lead to them questioning their own identity (Schilb, 2017). Television beer commercials do not just sell a product, they sell a lifestyle. This way of life is often riddled with stereotypical portrayal of gender which can influence society's values, beliefs, and behaviors (Messner & Montez de oca, 2005).

Background on the brands this paper will study

This study examines a sample of television advertisements from Bud Light and Coors Light beers as well as White Claw and Bud Light Seltzers. Bud Light is owned by parent company Anheuser-Busch, founded in 1852 by German immigrant, Adolphus Busch, after he married Lilly Anheuser. By the 1870s, the company was using technology that allowed beer to be shipped long distances, popularizing the brand. In 1982, Budweiser Light was released and by 1984, it was known exclusively as Bud Light (Anheuser-Busch, n.d.-b).

Molson Coors Beverage Company, parent to Coors Light beer, had similar beginnings. Founded in 1873 by German immigrant Adolph Coors, the brand began in Golden, Colorado. In 1953 the company began advertising largely on television, focusing mainly on nature and Colorado scenery. In 1978, the company introduced Coors Light (Sealover, 2019). Bud Light and Coors Light, as well as their parent companies, have long been considered "big beer," leading the domestic beer industry and participating heavily in television advertising spots. Both companies have historically released advertisements that contained similar gender stereotypes as previously discussed. Notably, Bud Light came under fire for the 2014 Super Bowl ad campaign titled "Up for Whatever." The commercial's slogan, "the perfect beer for removing 'no' from your vocabulary for the night," was largely criticized for its association with sexual assault (Bates, 2015).

In more recent history, beer brands have begun to recognize the traditional gender stereotypes used in the industry's advertising are both problematic and alienating to potential female customers. In 2016, Coors Light introduced the "Climb On" campaign, which depicted both men and women conquering personal goals such as a marathon or a rodeo. The brand "used a qualitative, ethnographic approach to study the lives of women to find out what motivates and energizes them in beer and in life" (Redscout, n.d.). The campaign's tagline, "Whatever your mountain, climb on," proved to be successful in attracting new consumers, particularly women over 35 (Redscout, n.d.). While beer brands are recognizing and pivoting away from harmful gender portrayals, this paper will examine more modern television advertisements to better understand how masculinity and femininity are being depicted.

In addition to beer commercials portraying gender stereotypes, alcohol itself can be highly gendered. There is commonly a notion that beer is for men and wine is for women. In 1993, Coors Brewing Company released Zima, an alcoholic malt beverage available in fruit flavors. The drink was labeled a "girly-man drink" and called "bitch beer," perpetuating gender divides in alcohol products (McCarthy, 2019). In 1999, Anthony von Mandl attempted to make a similar drink that could be enjoyed by both genders. Through research, he found that 25% of men do not like the taste of beer (Hitt, 2020). He created Mike's Hard Lemonade in beer shaped bottles to entice men to consume his sweet malt beverage. Despite targeted marketing efforts, young men similarly dismissed the beverage as girly.

In 2016, von Mandl made another attempt at producing a gender-neutral malt drink; he called his invention White Claw. These alcoholic seltzers became wildly popular during the summer of 2019, causing a national shortage of the product. White Claw strategically developed marketing strategies to target both men and women; they avoid bright feminine colors, show women taking part in activities such as boating or playing frisbee, and show men doing traditionally masculine things while enjoying the beverage. In short, "White Claw's marketing is selling its fans a lifestyle, one that both men and women want to be a part of" (McCarthy, 2019).

Seeing White Claw and competitor Truly's success, in January 2020, Anheuser-Busch released Bud Light Seltzer. In just a few months and as the product market saturated, the new hard seltzer brand became the third most popular nationally (Valinsky, 2020). Danelle Kosmal, vice president of Nielson's beverage alcohol practice shared that "hard seltzer is one of the most gender-neutral products we have seen across the alcohol industry" (Heil, 2019). Bank of America Merrill Lynch analyzed millennial drinking preferences, finding that "there's a clean 50-50 split in younger consumers of hard seltzer," proving that the alcohol category is in fact as gender-neutral as it gets (Heil, 2019). While alcoholic seltzer is still young, this paper will analyze available television advertisements from White Claw and Bud Light Seltzer, looking at and categorizing gender portrayals.

While extensive research has been conducted and presented on the depiction of masculinity and femininity in television beer commercials, there has been little research published about how this concept applies to alcoholic seltzer brands. The only notable source on the topic was published in the Summer 2022 edition of *Advertising and Society Quarterly*. This study found that White Claw strategically depicts men and women hanging out together in gender neutral settings, and since “White Claw has controlled nearly half (or more) of the hard seltzer market since its launch, its brand position on gender spilled over, creating the perception of ungendering the entire category” (Contois, 2022). While this study examines gender neutrality in hard seltzer advertisements, it fails to elaborate further on the portrayals of masculinity and femininity in the product category. Additionally, the article does not compare these gender representations to that of beer television commercials, displaying a clear gap in research and knowledge on the subject. This paper aims to expand on previous research, focusing on comparing gender portrayals in beer and hard seltzer commercials, a topic that has not been studied academically.

III. Methods

This research asks the following question: How are men and women portrayed in beer television commercials versus hard seltzer commercials?

This study sampled advertisements from two beer and two seltzer brands. Bud Light and Coors Light beers are both owned by domestic companies with similar origins. Anheuser-Busch and Molson Coors own a number of America’s most popular “big beer” brands, driving the market and creating many of the industry’s advertisements. Both companies have an essential voice and ability to steer the market’s gender portrayal norms.

The study also examines White Claw Hard Seltzer and Bud Light Seltzer. White Claw is highly regarded as the most popular and pioneer seltzer, often credited for beginning the alcoholic seltzer craze in the summer of 2019 and popularizing the product category. Bud Light Seltzer is the market’s third most popular brand and is notable for its quick popularity, prime-time television commercials, and affiliation with Bud Light beer. The connection between the Bud Light beer and seltzer brands makes for a logical comparison of advertising content and may give insight into how gender representation is depicted across product categories.

The research method used in this article is qualitative content analysis. The television advertisements themselves serve as the content in this study. After an initial viewing of all the available advertisements from between 2016 and 2022, the sample for analysis was reduced to a few commercials from each brand using purposive sampling, meaning that the commercials were selected because they fit the needs of the study (Etikan, 2017). Each ad selected for analysis had actors rather than only showcasing the product. Purposive sampling allows a sample to be selected “based on the judgment of the researcher as to who will provide the best information to succeed for the objective study” (Etikan, 2017). This research method was important for this study’s effectiveness because purposive sampling allows “the ability to compare and contrast, to identify similarities and differences in the phenomenon of interest,” in this case comparing between beer and hard seltzer (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample included four advertisements from Bud Light beer, three from Coors Light beer, three from White Claw Hard Seltzer, and three from Bud Light Seltzer. In total, this research analyzes 13 television advertisements.

Once the ads were selected, each video was watched several times and a narrative description was completed, translating the visual content into words. These descriptions focused primarily on how men and women were depicted. Noted were the relationships between characters, if they had speaking roles, how much of their face or body was shown on camera, their relevance to the plot, as well as additional notes. Content was examined scene by scene, with attention given to spoken dialogue, as well as unspoken body language, camera angles and facial expressions.

After notes were taken on all advertisements, a thematic analysis was conducted, which “provides a comprehensive process for a researcher to identify numerous cross-references between the evolving themes and the entire data” (Alhojailan, 2012, p. 45). Connections and overarching ideas among different commercials were coded. Archetypes and common stereotypes noted in previous literature informed the analysis, but new trends and insights were identified as well.

IV. Findings

In both the samples of beer and seltzer commercials, there are more portrayals of men. However, in each category, there is only one commercial that did not depict a single female. All seltzer commercials have at least one male, while there is one Coors Light beer commercial that features only a woman. The proportion of men to women featured is particularly skewed in the beer ads, especially by the Bud Light beer brand. For example, in Bud Light beer's "Between Friends," no scene features only women, while multiple scenes show only men. In the scenes where women are present, they are in the background, commonly interacting with men (Bud Light, 2017).

Not only are men depicted more in the sample of television commercials, but they are given more prominent roles and speak more often. Men have speaking roles in four of the seven beer commercials, all of which are Bud Light. While the remaining three Coors Light commercials do not have male characters speak, all have male voice-overs at some point during the commercials. Therefore, all seven beer ads feature a male voice. In comparison, only two of the beer commercials, both Bud Light, have a woman speaking. Both women who speak have minimal lines that do not drive the plot forward.

In the alcoholic seltzer commercials, three of the six have men speak and three of the six have women speak. All three of these are the same Bud Light Seltzer ads. While the distribution of character lines has the same ratio for both genders in seltzer ads, an additional two White Claw commercials have male voice-overs at the end. The one White Claw advertisement that does not have any speaking has a song with a male vocalist over the entire commercial. Women with speaking roles in the hard seltzer commercials have longer dialogues than those in the beer ads. Additionally, the two women who speak in the beer commercials are talking to men, yet in the seltzer ads, women talk to each other as well as the audience.

In addition to speaking, commercial characters also communicate with the audience and share their emotions through facial expressions. In television advertisements, these expressions are best understood when the camera zooms in to frame the face close enough for the audience to understand the feeling being conveyed. In the four Bud Light beer commercials, male faces are shown closely in 24 shots. Additionally, Coors Light ads frames 11 male facial expressions. In total, the beer commercials contain 35 close-up shots of men's faces. The Bud Light beer ads only zoom in on two female faces, and Coors Light only has six female facial close-ups. In total, the beer commercials show eight female facial expressions, 27 less than male counterparts in the same sample of seven commercials.

Conversely, White Claw Hard Seltzer shows eight close-up male and 12 female faces. Bud Light Seltzer zooms in on 25 male faces and nine females. Together, the sample of hard seltzer commercials contains 33 male and 21 female close-ups. While there are more male facial expressions due to Bud Light Seltzer's large number, there are only 12 more men's expressions shown, a significantly smaller skew than in the sample of beer advertisements.

In addition to the number of portrayals, the different alcohol categories also feature the genders doing different activities. Men in beer commercials are depicted golfing, partying, at sporting events, eating exotic cuisines, boxing, biking, riding bulls, and even brewing beer, in addition to several other "masculine" activities. In these same commercials, women are shown talking to men or silently nodding along, often only depicted by the back of their heads. The Coors Light advertisement "Whatever Your Mountain" shows women doing physical activities, yet depicts them doing yoga and running, while their male counterparts participate in more extreme, adrenaline-inducing adventures (Coors Light, 2016).

Traditional, stereotypical gender archetypes continue to apply, particularly in beer commercials. Bud Light beer's "Dilly," has a clear depiction of the "loser" archetype. In the advertisement, villagers present the king with presents, usually Bud Light, until one man brings mulled wine instead. The king and queen as well as the court look outraged as this "loser" stumbles over his words, attempting to explain that his offering is generous. The king orders a large male guard to show the loser to the "pit of misery," and the court toasts with their Bud Lights as he is escorted out (Bud Light, 2017b).

Another example of a "loser" shown by Bud Light beer is in their commercial, "Ghost of Spuds," in which the ghost Spuds MacKenzie, a dog used in a 1980s Bud Light campaign, visits a man sitting alone at home. When asked why he is there, Spuds responds, "my soul can't rest when people don't drink Bud Light with friends" (Bud Light, 2017b).

While the sample from Coors Light contained less explicit examples of the loser archetype, the brand still incorporated similar messages into its advertisements. In the Coors ad, “The Official Beer of Going Golfing Just to Drink Beer,” a man is shown missing the ball on a golfing chip. It then reveals that he is holding a Coors Light in one hand and the club in the other. He then makes the shot and is immediately congratulated by his friends, all of which are also holding Coors (Coors Light, 2019a). None of the White Claw ads contain a “loser,” however, some of the Bud Light Seltzer commercials do. The most exaggerated example among the Bud Light Seltzer sample is in the advertisement, “Inside Post Malone’s Brain,” in which actors play different parts of musician Post’s body. The main control center calls down to the spleen, an older man sitting alone in a dark basement, before deciding they do not need to talk to him. The ad alludes to the fact that the spleen is never talked to as he yells out in desperation, begging for socialization and pleading to be a taste bud, a group of muscular men who get to enjoy the seltzer (Bud Light Seltzer, 2020).

The concept of “buddies” also continues to hold true, as the individuals with the products are always shown socializing, while those who doubt the alcoholic beverages are depicted as loners and “losers.” While appearing more frequently in the beer sample, the taste buds in “Inside Post Malone’s Brain” prove to be an example of how this concept is also portrayed in seltzer advertisements.

While women have very few speaking roles in the beer commercial sample, the archetypes of “hotties and bitches” can still be identified. In the seven beer ads, the two women who speak are both “bitches.” In the “Ghost of Spuds,” a female voice calls, “SPUDS!” from off-screen and he responds, “ugh my ex gotta go!” before disappearing (Bud Light, 2017b). In many of the beer ads, women are shown silently talking or dancing with men, serving as “hotties,” who are one-dimensional characters existing for the enjoyment of men but not driving the plot. While Coors Light features the only ad in the sample without a male, the commercial centers around a woman taking off her bra after a long day of work (Coors Light, 2019b). The camera lingers over her body, zooming in as she slips off her high heel shoes and follows the bra, rather than her face, after she flings it across the room. The woman also does not speak during this commercial.

Only one woman in the seltzer sample could be categorized as a bitch and while the ads follow many women, the camera tends to focus more on their faces than bodies. The women depicted in both White Claw and Bud Light Seltzer advertisements often do not align with traditional ideals of feminine beauty as much as in the beer commercials. Women in seltzer ads have a variety of body shapes and hair lengths, colors, and textures. In seltzer advertisements, women are shown doing activities such as playing volleyball or painting with men and are shown buying their own seltzer products. Women in seltzer ads appear to have more autonomy and exist with men opposed to for men.

V. Discussion

In both beer and hard seltzer television commercials, there are stereotypical gender portrayals and a disproportionate representation of men. However, these patterns are far more common among the sample of beer advertisements. The difference in men and women with speaking roles was greater in beer commercials, suggesting the industry is more comfortable displaying that men have the dominant voice in society. As research has found that advertising not only reflects values, but can mold ideals and behaviors, the beer industry suggests that men should be in power while the seltzer sample advocates for a more equal distribution (Hall & Kappel, 2018).

Additionally, while both product categories show more male faces than female, the seltzer industry has a significantly more even ratio. White Claw Hard Seltzer even depicted more women’s facial expressions than men’s expressions in the sample. Showing facial expressions highlights emotions, allowing the audience to connect to the characters and understand what they are thinking and feeling (Hellman et al., 2018). Therefore, the seltzer sample displays the value of women’s minds, while the beer industry largely continues to focus on the beauty of their bodies.

The beer sample continues to enforce the ideas of losers, buddies, hotties, and bitches. While some of these archetypes can also be found in the seltzer sample, particularly the idea of buddies (as alcohol advertising is inherently social), only one seltzer ad displayed a loser or bitch, as opposed to nearly all the beer commercials. A Bud Light Seltzer ad showed a man in a towel holding a seltzer while a woman waved

flirtatiously. This scene, as well as the casting of less traditionally feminine women, shows an effort in the industry to flip traditional gender roles (Bud Light Seltzer, 2021a). The loser archetype is prevalent in the beer commercials, perpetuating the idea that to be successful in love, friendship, and athletic pursuits, a man must drink beer. Men are also discouraged from showing emotion; two men in Bud Light beer ads are shamed for sharing their feelings and encouraged to share affection through beer rather than words. The beer sample supports the idea that to be masculine one needs to drink beer with friends and participate in the appropriate activities shown in the advertisements such as paintball, bull riding, clubbing, flirting with women, and watching sports. The beer sample reduces women to silent props or occasional intrusive obstacles to men's enjoyment and beer consumption.

While the seltzer sample still depicts a disproportionate gender representation and some stereotypical portrayals, the product category shows more themes of equality. Men and women are shown doing the same activities and women are shown buying products, and therefore driving the plot. Women are in scenes alone and their faces and emotions are often highlighted. Women in seltzer ads are shown to have a greater sense of autonomy and larger personalities. They are not only shown talking to men, rather they appear to take charge in activities and relationship dynamics. These findings are consistent with Contois' suggestion that "the alcohol industry has historically been one of the most gendered (and sexist) sectors in this space. Hard seltzers represent somewhat of a departure and have become a potential opportunity for gender-inclusive marketing" (Contois, 2022).

VI. Conclusion

This research was conducted with a sample of 13 television advertisements from two beer brands and two seltzer brands. To get a more accurate representation of both industries' advertisements, a larger sample size of both commercials and brands would be needed. Additionally, while selecting both Bud Light beer and Bud Light Seltzer allowed a look into the differences and similarities in gender portrayal in beer versus seltzer ads regardless of company ownership, having two brands from the same corporation could have altered the results.

The television commercials were chosen with the criteria of brand and an air date after 2016; however, a more holistic selection process based on commercial content could have been used. While purposive sampling was relevant for this study design, the research method is sometimes coupled with bias. This research was also only conducted by one researcher, leaving room for additional bias. Having more researchers from diverse backgrounds and of different genders code and analyze the research may have yielded different results. As this research is qualitative, observations and findings, as well as sample selection are somewhat subjective. Having more researchers participate in thematic analysis of the content would also aid in finding more themes that the researcher may have not identified.

Understanding that similar gender portrayals and stereotypes are present in modern beer commercials and alcoholic seltzer advertisements helps demonstrate how television commercials are both reflections of society and have the potential to mold values, beliefs, and behaviors. The archetypes of losers, buddies, hotties, and bitches are more common throughout beer commercials, indicating that the new, more gender-neutral product of alcoholic seltzer also brings a new area of advertising that is closer to overturning these longstanding stereotypes. The more equal display of female faces in hard seltzer commercials suggests that the entry of this new product to the market brings a change of gender ideals with it. The hard seltzer industry is more eager to show female faces, which translates to highlighting women's intelligence and emotions rather than just their beauty and bodies.

Women in television seltzer advertisements are more likely to speak, have conversations without men, and have autonomy over their lives and decisions, and these themes are likely to be reflected off the screen. As advertising is closely tied to the values of the larger society, the fast-growing popularity of seltzer brands suggests that culture may similarly be shifting.

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