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The Influence of Advertising on College Students' Alcohol Consumption

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Abstract

Alcohol misuse is a serious problem on college campuses (Batts, 2015). Media and advertisements play an enormous role in what students know about alcohol as well pose a huge influence on students' willingness to drink (Gentil, 2002). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), within those who abuse alcohol, men are more likely to drink than women. In the past month, about 58% of men admit to drinking alcohol and about 23% will binge drink at least 5 times a month. During times of binge drinking, men will have 8 drinks on average during one binge. I hypothesize that college students who view advertisements for drink specials consume more alcohol than students who view advertisements for non-drink specials and men will consume more than women.

The target population for this study are Dominican University of California students who are at or above the age of 21. Approximately 100 students completed an anonymous online survey will either view a series of drinking advertisements or a series of food advertisements. Then, students from both groups completed a survey about their planned alcohol consumption at the advertised establishments.

It is expected that students who view drinking advertisements will plan to consume a larger amount of alcohol than students who view food advertisements. Among those students who consume alcohol, men are expected to consume more than women. Because advertisements play a large role in influencing college students' decisions, drinking advertisements make consuming an excessive amount of alcohol look normal. It is portrayed as normal behavior during a college career. However, if advertisements focus on consuming a moderate amount of alcohol, moderate drinking will be viewed as a normal behavior, rather than excessively drinking. If altered, media and advertising can influence college students in a more positive light.