



# How Consumers React Toward Gender Stereotypes in Beer Advertisements

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**Abstract.** In China and the rest of the world, alcohol consumption has been rising. According to one survey data from WHO, since 2002, China's beer production ranks first in the world. Having alcoholic drinks is popular worldwide. Advertising of beer products is also diverse. As females have become a great part of the whole alcohol consumer, many companies will focus on women when making target marketing. However, most commercials still take successful men as main characters or invite them to endorse the product. For that, companies try to build a high-level brand image. In this paper, the questionnaire contains an advertisement that challenges gender stereotypes and is designed to test consumers' reactions. It turns out that consumers respond to that type of advertisement positively, so with joyous feelings. Thus, advertising production shall eliminate traditional symbols that represent males or females and diminish criticizing attitudes of the public regarding advertisement. So as to increase the possibility of purchase.

**Keywords:** Gender stereotypes, alcohol advertisements, consumer reactions.

## 1 Introduction

There are many female consumers among all alcoholic drinks consumers. Wine or beer is the first choice of women [1]. Among traditional alcohol advertisements, the main character is male and usually those commercials show the symbol of wealthy men [2]. With advances in social awareness in recent years, more people come to realize implicit gender stereotypes in advertisements. Often, women in commercials carry a sense of sexism [3]. Women should be “gentle”, “obedient”, or “thoughtful” in advertisements, which represents social expectations of patriarchal values [4]. As long as the unequal phenomenon of gender still exists, more likely this tendency will be exhibited in public media, including and not limited to advertisements.

Though women are a considerable part of the alcohol consumption group, there are few advertisements targeted at them. Therefore, this paper attempts to find sexual inequality in advertisements and to reflect the need that those advertisements to be changed. By inquiring target people, the highly educated young people, this research tries to demonstrate that beer advertisements need to adjust to social awareness development and eliminate potential gender stereotypes.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Consumer Behaviors

The study of consumption dates back to the eighteenth century. As local British farmers moved into cities, a consumer society began to emerge. In the nineteenth century, that society became into the eyes of the U.S. and France [5]. Business begins to develop marketing strategies. Especially, advertisement exerts an increasing impact on consumption. As incomes rise, mass consumption has grown significantly. Since the 1960s, the management concept of the enterprise has developed from production-oriented and sales-oriented to marketing-oriented. Consumer behavior research has been mature and many philosophies derive from other behavioral disciplines.

Usually, there are three layers of consumer behavior research, consumer, consumer lifestyle, and consumption. The micro-level factors that influence consumption intention are usually cognition, attitude, and decision-making process. Consumer behavior can be seen in two parts: one is the consumer behaviors; the other is the consumer's purchase decision. Purchasing decisions are the psychological activities and behavioral tendencies of consumers before using and purchasing products and services, which form the consumption attitude. Consumer action is the practical process of purchase decisions. In reality, Engel (1978) puts up with that these two parts of consumer behavior interact with each other and together constitute the complete process of consumer behavior [6]. When it comes to consumer behavior, some scholars focus on the female consumer. Oumlil and Erdem (1997) found that there are significant differences between men and women in self-description and consumption decisions, which indicates companies should exploit different marketing strategies in the aspect of gender [7].

### 2.2 Gender Stereotypes.

Gender stereotype is an important part of stereotypes and it generalizes the traditional traits of male and female. In China, a famous scholar, Qian Yiming, and her colleagues created a scale to measure the influences of gender on gender stereotypes [8]. As an interdisciplinary theoretical model, there are few types of research only about gender stereotypes themselves. But it involves more about other fields. For example, gender stereotypes are deeply used in the field of teaching and media. Research about media often performs media criticism through a social perspective, most of which reveals and criticizes the gender stereotypes in the media. The point is not only on accumulating foundlings of gender stereotypes in China but also on meeting the need to execute the women's movement [9]. In other countries, there is much outstanding research about gender stereotypes. As a branch of stereotypes, gender stereotypes with bias and sexism constitute social psychology. Haines and Lofaro (2016) categorized the theory of gender stereotypes' development from 1989 to 2014. They find that attitudes of the public have been changed a lot but not as great as expected [10]. Combined with Eagly's Attitude model (1989), gender, especially individual gender, is still deeply affected by gender stereotypes [11].

### 2.3 Gender Stereotypes in Advertisements

Several studies have shown that gender stereotypes in advertising are prevalent in many countries. Grau and Zotos (2016) exhibited various gender stereotypes in the advertisement from different countries [12]. This survey analyzes the placement and content expression of different media in different regions. It turns out that gender bias is excessively common. Although the social status of women has made great progress in the past, mass media including advertisements still have explicit and implicit gender stereotypes [13]. In detail, women usually appear at home or in the kitchen in certain situations where they need to serve others [14]. Meanwhile, males usually appear as dominant, and females are subordinate.

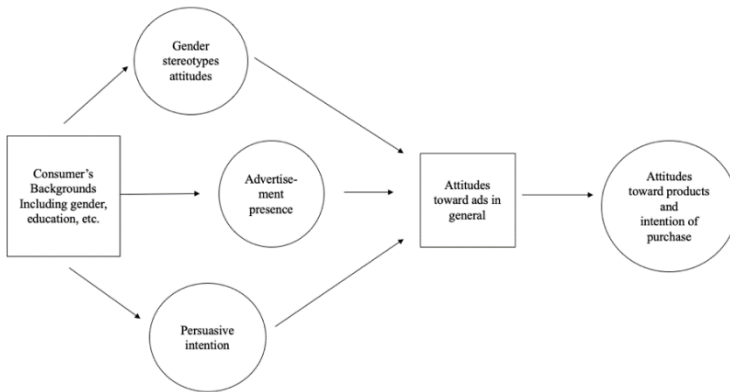
Furthermore, some advertisements frequently express an image and physical affiliation. As all known, Goffman (1979) argues that women are often depicted lying down on the floor or in bed [15]. Photography uses some techniques to depict women's body curves. Besides, women smile more often than men in advertisements [16]. Attenborough (2014) puts up with that in Britain, high-rated Christmas advertisements often feature women as protagonists. It gives women the innate tasks that they should be responsible for all the chores during Christmas [17]. This is regarded as obligated work for women. In recent years, the fact that men should do chores becomes invisible in commercials. Hence, it is easy to say explicit or implicit gender stereotypes are general.

In China, not many pieces of research are relevant to the female character in advertisements. A few studies discuss gender power relations in drinking cultures. Through content analysis of people's image and dialogues in magazines, it says that unequal gender relationship still has an influence on drinking attitudes and behaviors [18]. Yet they do not involve female images in alcohol advertisements. Studies specifically on females in advertisements are relatively more in Australia and Japan. L Cobbaert (2019) analyzes women's image in Australian advertisements of recent years, which shows that women are regarded as an accompanying character for men [19]. Also, it shows that the male gaze in commercials does not abate.

Given that there are few research on gender stereotypes in China, this paper attempts to find the relation between existing gender stereotypes in advertisements and consumer reactions. Aiming at the relation, some conclusions and suggestions will be presented in this paper.

## 3 Methods

Based on the literature review, this paper attempts to explore the relationship between gender stereotypes in advertisements and consumer reactions, and then build an accordant framework. (Figure 1) In the model, "gender stereotypes attitudes", "persuasive intention", "advertisement presence", "attitudes toward advertisements in general" and "attitudes toward production and intention of purchase" are the five factors measured by the questionnaires, which form the consumer reactions. Among them, traits of consumers such as "gender", "educational background" and "age" are uncontrollable factors, i.e. covariate, but still will affect how the audience fills in questionnaires.



**Fig. 1.** A research framework

According to Elaboration Likelihood Model, consumers' level of knowledge about the product affects their understanding of advertising intent [20]. Among those factors which affect women's understanding of feminism, the educational background is significant [21].

Based on Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia's theory, men and women react differently to gender profiling in advertising [22]. Gender stereotypes in advertising create criticizing attitudes. With feminism developing and publicizing, it is widely believed that novel gender portrayals are more acceptable than traditional gender symbols [23]. To be specific, to measure gender stereotypes in advertisements and to assess profiling, the questionnaire contains a detailed commercial [24]. The commercial is from Heineken, aired in 2020, which advocates challenging outdated men's and women's choices.

From Friestad and Wright's Persuasive Knowledge Model, when individuals are confronted with persuasive messages, they likely tend to activate and execute strategies designed to defend against the persuasive messages [25]. Yet the understanding of the intent of advertisements, especially the persuasive intent, is an important part of the theory. In the experiment of Rozendaal (2013), with the development of advertising concepts, people would also think more critically about advertising [26].

Krugman argues that consumer perception of a product or brand can be influenced by advertising. After watching advertisements again and again, if consumers are less engaged, their attitudes toward advertising will also change. Besides, consumers with a strong sense of presence experience rapid changes in perceptions and beliefs about advertised products. This certain change can lead to different behaviors [27]. The sense of presence in advertising usually lies in the fact that the advertisement creates a real on-the-spot feeling [28]. Consequently, a stronger presence likely brings better attitudes toward advertisements, products, or brands.

What's more, Vanwesenbeeck and others deem that individuals can be persuaded by advertisements simply because receiving information makes them happy, which results in purchase intentions or behaviors [29]. It is safe to infer that audience will have a

comprehensive judgment after considering multiple factors, including attitudes toward products and purchase intentions.

In summary, five hypotheses are exhibited as follows:

H1: Consumers' educational is significantly correlated with attitudes toward gender stereotypes in advertising.

H2: Consumers' attitudes toward gender stereotypes are positively correlated with their attitudes toward the advertisement in general. To be specific, in this context, attitudes toward gender stereotypes refer to the level of recognition on the commercial's contents and on what level respondents agree or disagree that advertisements challenge gender stereotypes.

H3: Consumers' understanding of advertisement persuasive intent is positively correlated with attitudes toward advertisement.

H4: Consumers' senses of advertisement presence are positively correlated with attitudes toward advertisement.

H5: Consumers' attitudes toward advertisement are positively correlated with their attitudes toward the product and consumption intentions.

This paper uses non-probability sampling method and has gathered 344 questionnaires. In the original plan, samples should be more than 300, and the amount of valid samples is 327.

## 4 Data Analysis

### 4.1 Sample Analysis

The amount of valid samples is 327. After organizing, Table 1 is present below:

**Table 1.** Respondents' background

Category		Numbers	Percentage
Gender	Male	145	44.3%
	Female	182	55.7%
Educational background	High school and below	43	13.1%
	Undergraduates	261	93.0%
	Graduates	23	7%
	18 and below	21	6.4%
Age	19-25	172	52.6%
	26-35	122	37.3%
	36 and above	12	3.7%
Frequency of alcohol drinking in latest week	None	84	25.7%
	No more than 3 times	186	56.9%
	Almost once a day	50	15.3%
	More than once a day	7	2.1%

Whether purchasing this product	Yes	171	81.3%
	No	55	18.7%

From the Table 1, it demonstrates a macroscopic result that there are some groups with major data. Though the ratio of men and women is not perfectly even, it still is suitable to develop an exploring research. The present ratio tallies with facts that most surveys end up with more women samples. As for educational background, the majority is the undergraduate. Most of respondents age from 19 to 35, which conforms to original prediction. Meanwhile many of them have a pattern of drinking alcohol. In addition, a minority has never purchased this beer product before.

## 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

“Gender stereotypes attitudes”, “persuasive intention”, “advertisement presence”, “attitudes toward advertisements in general” and “attitudes toward production and intention of purchase”, those five factors are measured by standard scale. Also, from 1 to 5, Likert scale respectively represent from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Persuasive intention	3.79	0.79
Advertisement presence	3.88	0.77
Gender stereotypes attitudes	3.83	0.73
Attitudes toward advertisements in general	3.76	0.77
Attitudes toward production and intention of purchase	3.82	0.80

Based on Table 2, the mean of all five factors is bigger than 3, which refers to slightly higher than the median. Among them, advertisement presence has the biggest average number. Given that the smallest standard deviation is gender stereotypes attitudes, it displays that samples fall in a similar interval.

## 4.3 Reliability And Inter-construct Correlations

**Table 3.** Reliability analysis

Variable	Items	Alpha
Persuasive intention	4	0.722
Advertisement presence	4	0.754
Gender stereotypes attitudes	7	0.835
Attitudes toward advertisements in general	4	0.718
Attitudes toward production and intention of purchase	4	0.798

Before performing correlation analysis, reliability analysis performs first on each variable with different items. All values of Cronbach's alpha are above 0.7 (Table 3), which means these items can be combined into one variable.

This paper uses the Pearson correlation coefficient to verify the relationship between the two variables and results are shown in the Table 4.

**Table 4.** Correlation statistics

	Persuasive intention	Advertisement presence	Gender stereotypes attitudes	Attitudes toward advertisements in general	Attitudes toward production and intention of purchase
Persuasive intention	1				
Advertisement presence	.756**	1			
Gender stereotypes attitudes	.759**	.838**	1		
Attitudes toward advertisements in general	.736**	.778**	.822**	1	
Attitudes toward production and intention of purchase	.773**	.819**	.824**	.796**	1

\*\*Significant at the 0.01 level.

According to Table 4, “gender stereotypes attitudes”, “persuasive intention”, “advertisement presence”, “attitudes toward advertisements in general” and “attitudes toward production and intention of purchase” have significant correlations. That all the values are above zero means they do have certain positive correlations. However in Pearson coefficient variables are more likely to exhibit some significant relations. In order to further verify hypotheses, One-way ANOVA test is illustrated following.

#### 4.4 Hypotheses Tests

**Table 5.** One-way ANOVA Test

Educational background	High school and below	Undergraduates	Graduates	F	P
Gender stereotypes attitudes	3.49±1.18	3.89±0.61	3.78±0.81	5.715	0.004

**Table 6.** ANOVA Result

	DF	MS	F	Sig.
Between-group	2	2.986	5.715	0.004
Within-group	324	0.522		

One-way ANOVA is performed to test the relation between “educational background” and “gender stereotypes attitudes”. From Table 5 and 6, consumers’ educational background has the significant relation with gender stereotypes attitudes ( $F(2,324)=5.715, p<0.01$ ). In other words, one’s diploma will affect whether they can recognize gender stereotypes in advertisements. In summary, Hypothesis 1 is verified.

**Table 7.** Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized regression coefficient		Standardized coefficient $\beta$	t	P	Collinearity diagnostics	
	B	SE				tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.208	0.126		1.654	0.099		
PI	0.199	0.047	0.204	4.227	0.000	0.376	2.659
AP	0.216	0.058	0.216	3.750	0.000	0.263	3.795
GSA	0.511	0.061	0.487	8.419	0.000	0.261	3.834
	R <sup>2</sup>					0.716	
	F					274.343	
	P					<0.001	

Dependent variable: Attitudes toward advertisements in general

PI: Persuasive intention  
 AP: Advertisement presence  
 GSA: Gender stereotypes attitudes

To build the theory model (Figure 1), by performing linear regression, the results are exhibited in Table 7. The value of degree of fitting is bigger than 0.6 ( $R^2=0.716>0.6$ ), which shows how well these three variables of the model fit the dependent variable. The result elaborates that about 71.6% of “attitudes toward advertisements in general” data are fitted by these three factors. There is no collinearity between variables ( $VIF<5, t>0.2, F(3,323)=274.343, p<0.001$ ). The coefficient  $\beta$  is above 0, which reflects that three variables have a positive correlation with the dependent variable. In other words, if one understands persuasive intention more actively, perceives advertisements' presence more strongly, and has more positive attitudes toward gender stereotypes, they will have better attitudes toward advertisements in general. Meanwhile, the value of P is below 0.05. It validates that four variables have certainly significant correlations. Because all three coefficient values are above zero (PI(0.204), AP(0.216), GSA(0.487)), Hypothesis 2, 3, and 4 receive supports.

**Table 8.** Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized regression coefficient		Standardized coefficient $\beta$	t	P	Collinearity diagnostics	
	B	SE				tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.717	0.134		5.369	0.000		



GSA	0.827	0.035	0.796	23.731	0.000	1.000	1.000
	R <sup>2</sup>					0.633	
	F					563.175	
	P					<0.001	

Dependent variable: Attitudes toward production and intention of purchase

Furthermore, to complete the theory model, linear regression continues. Based on Table 8, the value of degree of fitting is still bigger than 0.6 ( $R^2=0.633>0.6$ ). This process manifests that “attitudes toward advertisements in general” fits 63.3% of “attitudes toward production and intention of purchase” data. While there is no collinearity and coefficient  $\beta$  is above 0 ( $VIF<5$ ,  $t>0.2$ ,  $F(1,325)=563.175$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Accordingly, if one’s general attitudes toward advertisement are better, then one’s attitudes toward products will be more positive and the probability of purchase is higher. Individuals once have assured perceptions about products, they are willing to consider buying them. Considering the value of significance is less than 0.001 and the coefficient beta is above zero ( $\beta=0.796$ ), there are positive correlations between “attitudes toward advertisements in general” and “attitudes toward production and intention of purchase”. Overall, the results are supportive of Hypothesis 5.

Table 7 and 8 to some extent indicate the causal relationship between these variables. However, some data fall in only one or two intervals, which might lead to there being no other better or worse model. The value of significance has not changed obviously when it comes to more variables are added into linear regression analysis. This part will be elaborated in the following section.

#### 4.5 Covariates

**Table 9.** Covariates

Covariates	Variables	Sig.
Gender	Advertisement presence	0.215
	Persuasive intention	<0.01
Educational background	Advertisement presence	0.17
	Attitudes toward advertisements in general	0.388

In this paper, “gender” and “educational background” are included in the theory framework. Organized results are in Table 9. From the table, there is no significant correlation between “gender” and “advertisement presence”. No significant relations are found between “Educational background” and “advertisement presence”, nor with “attitudes toward advertisements in general”.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Key Findings

This paper evaluates consumer responses based on gender stereotypes in beer and related advertisements and then comes to the following conclusions.

Firstly, consumers' educational background affects whether consumers recognize gender stereotypes in advertisements. Changing some ways of persuasive expressions in advertising is beneficial, therefore more people can realize that they used to overlook gender stereotypes. The idea of challenging gender stereotypes will spread to more groups.

Secondly, "persuasive intention", "advertisement presence", and "gender stereotypes attitudes" are essential factors in deciding whether consumers have the purchase intention. Results have shown that there are positive correlations among those factors. When the audience understands the persuasive intent of the advertisements and feels immersive, their judgment of advertisements will be more positive.

Thirdly, "gender stereotypes attitudes" and "attitudes toward advertisements in general" are positively correlated. Considering the development of social awareness, not only women but also some men have been advocating feminism and the equality movement. When the audience finds no implicit or explicit gender stereotypes, they make better judgements in advertisements. Otherwise, the audience will have negative feelings and criticizing attitudes.

In addition, "attitudes toward advertisements in general" and "attitudes toward production and purchase intention" are positively correlated. When the audience finds advertisements more acceptable, their attitudes toward products will be more active, and they will be more likely to purchase the product.

Overall, females have become an increasing part of alcoholic drinking consumers, including but not limited to beer commercials should conform to the tendency of social awareness. Especially the whole processes of advertisement production need to be improved and scrutinized where there is some sensitive content. Overall, expressing the intent to respect women's choices and to change gender stereotypes can give consumers desirable experiences and stronger motivation to purchase.

### 5.2 Limitations

Admittedly, there are some limitations to this paper. Firstly, the results of this research do not reflect all possible scenarios. In the real world, consumers' judgments about alcohol advertising are not only influenced by the portrayal of gender roles in advertising, but also by poster design, consumer habits, and brand preference. Therefore, some factors are not thoroughly considered.

Secondly, there are 327 valid samples. This amount is not big enough to draw further conclusions. Some covariates data falls in only one or two intervals, which leads to that those data cannot be analyzed as consecutive data. Hence, after performing linear regression, no more accurate models appear. In future research, samples need to be collected more, and the original settings of demography variables need to improve.

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