

Women in the Advertising Industry

Advertising is defined as the activity or profession of commercializing products and services in a way to create a want and a need. But what exactly is advertising doing to this society? “The most potent influence adapting and changing habits and modes of life, affecting what we eat, what we wear, and the work and play of the whole nation,” as a free society we all are exposed to hundreds of advertisements every day (Creedon). Advertisers use any and every technique to get their good or service to sell. This is why it is important to see that advertising effects gender, specifically women, and in and of itself is also gendered; this will be easily proven by showing the societal effects of the alcohol print advertising industry, stereotypes commonly displayed, how western culture of advertising has spread worldwide, and also how advertising has evolved throughout the decades.

Advertising is a very powerful tool that has the ability to shift people and nations in different directions. The task of the advertiser is to expose viewers to their product in a way that makes their product look unbeatable. How do companies do this? They set unrealistic standards for all different kinds of people to live up to. By setting these “fads,” the advertisers have all the power in the world and can sway most anyone into purchasing their commodity. There is so much pressure in our societies now for those who are not willing to pay the price for the new goods, as they face discrimination from being in certain groups.

But is that all advertising is doing, running a business? No, they are actually setting standards for certain kinds of people. These are what we call stereotypes; advertisers throughout history have used these stereotypes to try and appeal to people, thereby gaining more of a consumer base. Stereotypes range anywhere from geographic location to age, skin color to

gender, or even from the things we do to the things we think. One of the most affected of these groups is women. Women have so many stereotypes that are displayed everyday through the media that society has actually grown accustomed to the way our media thinks women should live.

Contrary to what most of the population thinks, globally it is the women who usually make the private consumption decisions. If you factor in the 'stay-at-home mom' factor it becomes more obvious because they are supposedly in charge of the nurturing; cooking meals, cleaning, and laundry. So naturally, these types of products advertisements are directed more towards the females instead of the males. According to Creedon, author of women in mass communication, women in most every culture make the majority of consumption decisions for their own families, meaning advertisements are more directed toward them. In fact, in most cases of advertising towards women, a young classy looking lady is most likely to be pictured. This young lady will be shown giving her seal of approval to the product because if one owns that product they will be one step closer to being *that* girl.

With most forms of advertisements, the companies want the viewer to get caught up in the moment so that they feel some sort of attachment. Since print advertising is very two-dimensional and is only capturing one moment in time for each ad; the companies have to find a way to extend that moment on to the viewer and make them envision themselves in that situation (Goffman). Thus, the beauty myth is a very powerful tool used in advertising; it is all about stereotypes and trying to be and capture the look of something that isn't the true person inside; "She is athletic, but she never sweats. She is beautiful, but she wears no makeup. She is breathtaking, but she need not try..." (Creedon). These stereotypical statements tend to hold true in most everyone's version of beauty. Now ask the question, how realistic is this? Working hard

without perspiring, beautiful in every situation? This is straight out of fantasy. Anything seen as masculine in our society, in the example of perspiring, will be immediately rejected from our own perceptions of the beauty myth.

As stated in *Women in Mass Communication*, there are five levels of sexism commonly found in advertisement: “Put Her Down” advertising, “Keep Her in Her Place” advertising, “Give Her Two Places” advertising, “Fully Equal Acknowledgement” advertising, and “Non-stereotypical Advertisement.” “Put her down” advertising includes the common stereotypes of dumb blonde, scared little girl, or even as a sex object; these qualities that are being represented make us think of women as being less than a person. ‘Keep her in her place’ advertising focuses more on the strengths and capacities of women as a whole; like the traditional “womanly” roles: wives, mothers, teachers, nurses, and clerks. ‘Give her two places’ advertising shows us women who go above and beyond their expected roles in society, such as a woman lawyer who works a full day and still manages to have food on the table at home for the husband. ‘Fully equal acknowledgement’ advertising is basically the same as ‘two places’ except in the aspect that housework and mothering are not important to them. And finally ‘non-stereotypical’ advertising is shown when men and women alike are shown to be both superior to each other in some aspects and inferior to each other in some aspects, and are not judged by sex. The level of sexism that appears most in advertising is the ‘Keep her in her place’ advertising and this is why our society has grown to accept these stereotypes of “womanly” roles.

The United States of America is one of the most prominent advertising countries in the world. Being that as it may, our western culture has dispersed among the world and contributed to the other continents and their advertising efforts. The ideas of western patriarchy and western feminism have spread and become ideas known around the world in the advertising community.

Naturally cultures influence other cultures and they either accept or reject the new ideas and options. This is called cultural imperialism, and since the United States is so successful in its advertising efforts the world has adopted the influences of western culture (Creedon). In fact, America is such a prominent force in advertising and media that it has reached third world countries as their source of media and entertainment. In these places it is cheaper for most places to buy TV access from other countries rather than produce their own stations. These third world countries have not taken steps to limit transnational company activity, and in this way stereotypes of western culture are not only being spread to even the most remote reaches of the earth, but also reinforced.

Frustratingly, advertising is a profession that is almost completely dominated by men. Women have a very miniscule role in the entire advertising industry, so women's input for research and development has been, and still is, going unrecognized. This is also the reasoning behind all of the negative stereotypical ideas being put into society on a global level. This glass ceiling effect is seen around the world with few exceptions. It ranges from women participating in 0 percent of the creative advertising process in Egypt, to 58 percent of the creative advertising process in Greece (Advertising Educational Foundation). The rates of women participation vary from country to country, but one thing remains consistent: the objectification of women.

The lowest average participation for women in the creative advertising process is the continent of Africa. This is because a large percent of Africa is underdeveloped and the parts that are developed have a massively patriarchal system of male rule. Of all the countries in Africa, South Africa is by far the most developed and has the most female participation; it ranks in the top fifteen of all countries with a 26.3% women participation rating (Advertising Educational Foundation). This means that horizontal segregation levels are at more of an

equilibrium than most other countries. Horizontal segregation is the glass ceiling effect we see in most occupations worldwide. Looking at Figure 1.1, it is noticeable that this lady is sitting in a very feminine position that both displays the curves of her body and adds a sense of depth and frailty to her essence which is a form of subordinate posture (Vintage Ad Browser). Also there is a theme of sexuality and objectification as a sex object because she is wearing very short shorts and her bra is showing. This gives the male audience a sense of lust towards this image, and ultimately this is the reason why this product gets sold.

Similarly to Africa, Central America is not a prominent country in the advertising industry. A lot of the influences from the United States seep down into these countries, so we find a lot of the same objectifications and ideology. Mexico is among one of the lowest female participation ratings with a rating of 5.3% women participation (Advertising Educational Foundation). In the geographic location of Central America, there is no outlier like South Africa in Africa; they are mostly poor countries that have a 94% or more male dominant advertising industry. In countries such as this, there are even fewer opportunities for women to progress to a stature above a common laborer. They are not respected and it shows through their country's advertising companies. Though female objectification is less than present here, Figure 1.2 will illustrate the true participation of women in the advertising workforce. The advertisement is all men and it is clearly stating that men are the best, most powerful beings in this world. Along with the slogan of "a legend can never be brought down," it tells us that legends are men only because men are the only thing pictured. A drink made by men, for men.

Moving southward into South America is the next geographically lowest percent of female participation. They average below 10% female creative participation. Brazil is a increasingly sexualized geographic area. Brazil attracts many tourists to the country through two

main sources, the Amazon and the huge coastline with many nude beaches. So, of course they should advertise it. With not many women in the advertising process, 7.9%, Brazil crudely depicts women and displays them as mere sex objects and nothing else (Schroeder and Borgerson). As shown in Figure 1.3, they include a flowery border with some natural limes along with the theme of their nude beaches. Pictured is a woman standing in a stomach corset barely covering her breasts and exposing as much skin as possible. This objectifies women and sets an unrealistic standard that women must have huge breasts while maintaining a slim waistline as well as the fact that if men drink that particular beer they will get women just like the one depicted. In a sexualized society like Brazil, why would anyone drink anything less than from a company that links sexuality with their product.

Next up on the list is the continent of Asia. Asia is a vast land that contains many countries and a wide variety of female participation. On average the continent of Asia has approximately a 20% female participation rate. Their advertisements have not been affected as much as other areas of the world, but some western influence from the United States has traveled over. China in particular is one of the better countries when it comes to female participation going above the average up to 26.3% (Advertising Educational Foundation). To find the true underlying meanings of the advertisements from China took a much deeper analysis approach. As shown in Figure 1.4, there is a figure that appears to be half man and half woman. The man is colored in a more masculine dark lighting and the female is left in a more feminine white lighting. Shown is the man turning his head towards the viewer showing that he is protected and protective; while the woman is exposing her neck, which is a form of subordination. This is because she is showing her weaker more vulnerable side, a side that needs protection from the

man that is dominating her in the picture. As displayed in this advertisement, if you are a man drinking this product you will be “man enough” to protect those females, around you.

North America has very strong influences upon the rest of the world, the average between the United States and Canada in female creative participation is 25.4%. Canada being the lower of the two is next to be analyzed. Canada has a 23.1% female participation rating and has almost exactly the same style as the United States, but there are some slight differences (Advertising Educational Foundation). In Figure 1.5, it is shown that it's a “girly sleep over,” which is a typical heterosexual man's fantasy, so it is playing on the sense of lust. Also to add to this, a lot of cleavage is being shown and they have weak stances, both being forms of subordination, which leads the viewer to think that the women pictured needs a man to help support them and protect them. This advertisement suggests that if women drink this product they will have a more than joyous time.

A geographic area that takes an entirely different approach to drinking is the Oceanic area. New Zealand specifically launched a series of drink responsibly advertisements that have good effects on a society dominated by alcohol but also bad effects by reinforcing negative views of what is thought to be negative feminine qualities. Even though New Zealand has a rather high female participation rating, of 25.4%, they still reinforce the negative stereotypes and ideology of women (Advertising Educational Foundation). Figure 1.6 shows a man that must have just woke up from a massive hangover. In the advertisement the man has a bra drawn on him with the phrase “Be the artist, not the canvas,” displayed over top of him. This reinforces the thought that a man being anything but manly is just wrong in society; any feminine qualities will get him to be ostracized and ridiculed. According to the Licensed Withdrawal principle, as outlined by Erving Goffman, the man is being shown to be emotionally detached from reality

and very remorseful of his actions. In this way, the advertisement is playing on the part of the males mind that he does not want to be as low stature as a woman.

Europe is generally one of the better countries when it comes to female representation in the advertising industry. On average they have about a 30% creative female participation rating. In fact the highest rating comes from the country Greece where women actually make up 58% of the creative participation on advertising projects; the women in this society actually outweigh the men. Most all of the alcohol ads from Greece contain some type of wildlife representation of their product, so there is little for analysis. From a country not so far away, Italy, there is much to be analyzed as the rating is more in the norm of 35.2% (Advertising Educational Foundation). Regarding Figure 1.7, many things pop out right away. The frailty of the women is noticeable; this is the feminine touch technique (Goffman). Also notice the sexual innuendo of the bottle going up her dress and probably further; in this respect it leads consumers to think that if they drink this product they will be able to not only get a woman like this, but will think this woman is both a standard of beauty and a object of sex.

Last but not least, the United States is a country where the advertising industry has grown tremendously in the past century. Through the ages, we have seen much transformation of gender roles, stereotypes, and the downgrading of women as a whole. Women have been seen to have the same qualities as a man in recent years, and there have been steps made to try and break through the glass ceiling that has been placed in many industries. In a study done in 2013 of women's creative participation in the advertising industry, the United States was ranked 11th with a rating of 27.7% (Advertising Educational Foundation). Since this study was conducted, greater strides have been made in the chase for equity. In fact, since the 1950's the number of female participants has been rising steadily. Also with the change in employment diversity at

these advertising corporations, the views of women in advertising have changed as well. As an industry it is easily said that the advertisements have gotten much more sexualized, women are objectified and used as marketing tools more, and companies are using fantasy against Americans.

In the 1950's, times were different than they are today. Figure 2.1 illustrates that the perception of beauty and fashion were completely different. The women all must look "classy" by doing their hair and wearing skirts and dresses, along with having a thin waistline. Of the five levels of sexism, this is easily identified in the "Keep her in her place" category (Creedon). The women are serving and taking care of the men, which show their womanly roles as wives. Also the men are being portrayed on a larger scale than the women, and the women are always on a lower level than the men; which is a clear statement being made of male superiority and subordination. The men are pictured larger and higher to be seen as the protector and provider for the women, thus if you drink this beer you will be a protector and a provider.

The transition from the 1950's to the 1960's brought about little change. Late in the 1960's the advertisement companies thought that showing a little more skin on the models would be a good selling feature-this was the start of a revolution. As shown in Figure 2.2, the man is bigger and taller to suggest--male superiority, the woman is shown in pigtails with flawless skin to suggest the feminine touch, the man is wearing all of the medals from the text which shows functional ranking, and the woman is bending her knee in a playful way to attract the viewer's attention to her body (Vintage Ad Browser). The text has the woman yelling in a way that promotes her to be innocent and have the "scared little girl" effect, which is under the "Put her down" level for the 5 levels of sexism (Creedon). With so many things going on in this

advertisement it appeals to many categories of people and could represent a numerous amount of things to anyone.

Not much changed from the dawn of the 1960's to the 1970's, but some advertisers tried to present their audience with a motherly and religious effect. Figure 2.3 has many similarities to many biblical paintings and can easily be interpreted by the brain as something that goes with the consumer's morals. Family ties appeal to a large group of Americans, especially the bonds between a mother and child, this aspect appeals to the viewers sense of emotions by using pathos. Advertisements like this one fall under the category of "Keep her in her place," because the woman is showing a traditional womanly role such as mothering (Creedon). By trying new techniques such as this, the advertisers were able to get a grasp on how different groups of people react to these different advertisements.

The 1980's brought about a new era of advertising; this era is known for its advertising style of "selling sex." Sexual appeals were made more prominent, and advertisers started making the models sex icons rather than actually promoting their product. As shown in Figure 2.4, the words exemplify the most sexual parts of the female anatomy. Budweiser made it so that their label was the clothing on these females. So in the heterosexual male mind, if the label is taken away the clothes are also removed. The advertisers show only the parts of the women that appeal to the male audience as sexy: the long legs, the butt, the cleavage, and the curly long hair. A big part of advertising in this era was the beauty myth, or the perception the average man had on beauty. Advertisers took the stereotypes of the most beautiful features on women and used them to sell their product; sex does sell.

A decade later in the 1990's, the sexual content of the advertisements remained constant. One of the few things that changed was the amount of clothing that models had on and the parts of the body that the advertiser was focusing on. As displayed in Figure 2.5, it is just a section of a woman in very suggestive lighting, lighting usually found in that of a strip club. The woman is of course wearing a corset to exemplify the curves of her body, and the ties are in the shape of a bottle to signify the alcoholic beverage. Subliminal messaging is a huge part of advertising and Figure 2.5 is clearly stating to untie the corset to get the good stuff.

A great deal has changed in the years to follow: less clothing, more radical senses of reality, digital imaging and Photoshop. Figure 2.6 and Figure 2.7 are that of the same in regards to sexuality and intimacy. The newest phase of advertising is to get the viewer really fantasizing about the product. In Figure 2.6 the women in bikinis are staring seductively into each other's eyes, this is to get the consumer wanting more and thinking about their product for even longer. Whereas Figure 2.7 is showing a view of a woman that is sexual in the fact that most of her breasts are revealed. In this figure there are multiple triangle shapes that are pointing to the man's sexual organ: Inseam of his pants, her feet, her chin and her eyes. The man is also on top of her to show complete dominance (Vintage Ad Browser). These are just another two examples of why sex sells.

The history of advertising has proven to reform the entire concept of gender by placing societal standards and limitations. This affects women more so than men because women have so many more incredibly high expectations to fill. If a woman from a 21st century advertisement was seen in the United States of 60 years ago, they would be thought to be harlots and nothing more. How is it that we can call this sexuality a beauty standard in today's day and age? It is simply because of the constant reinforcing of stereotypes year after year, and it does not stop

there; when something new was introduced to the advertising world it was overused until it was a commonality.

Gender has been shaped by the societal effects, common and overused stereotypes, and the western influence that the United States has spread worldwide. Advertising as a whole has obtained a gender in and of itself through placing stereotypes to individual and groups of people. These stereotypes strayed from the path of staying just among the advertisements; they permeated the line between fantasy and reality and became such a real part of everyday life. Not only everyday life just for our country but for others as well because the United states has had such a drastic affect on the neighboring lands, and the facts still remains that there is always time to correct these tiny errors that generations before us has created. In respects to the future, the United States should be hopeful that we can both learn the ways of Greece and reach a point where women could actually outweigh men, and attain a way to unlearn the classic stereotypes we associate with everyday life.

Figure 1.1 – South Africa

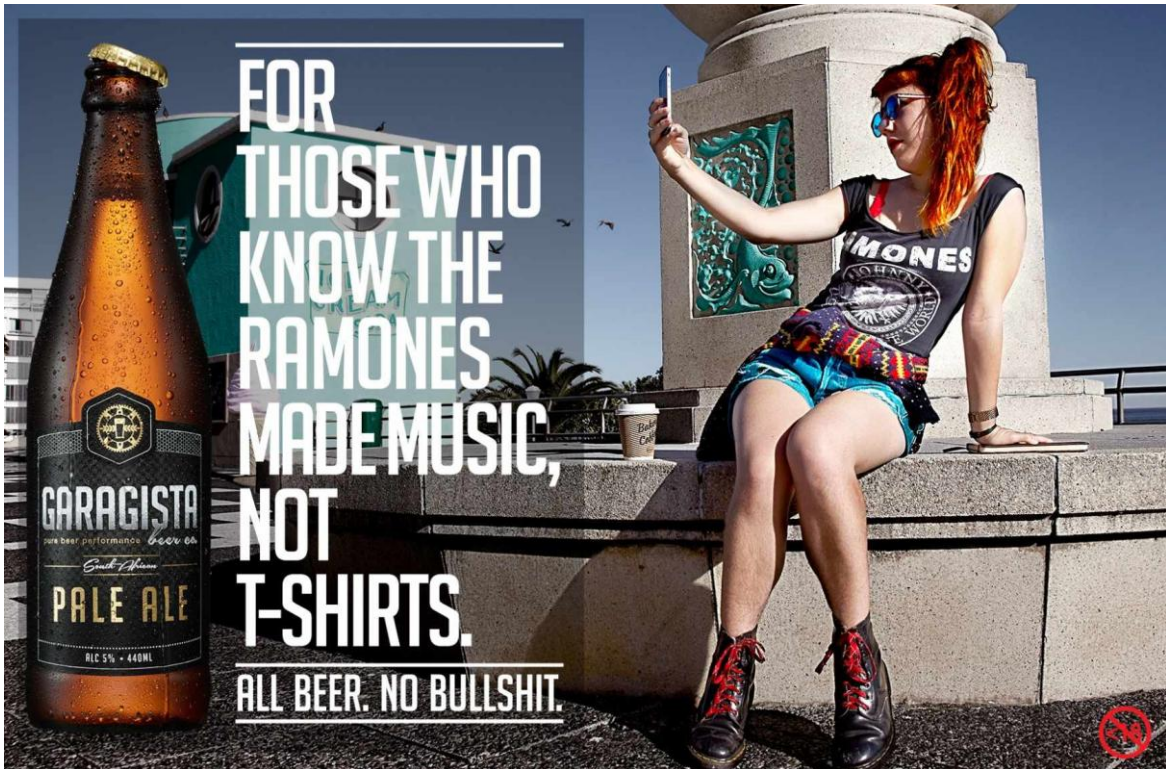


Figure 1.2 - Mexico



Figure 1.3 - Brazil

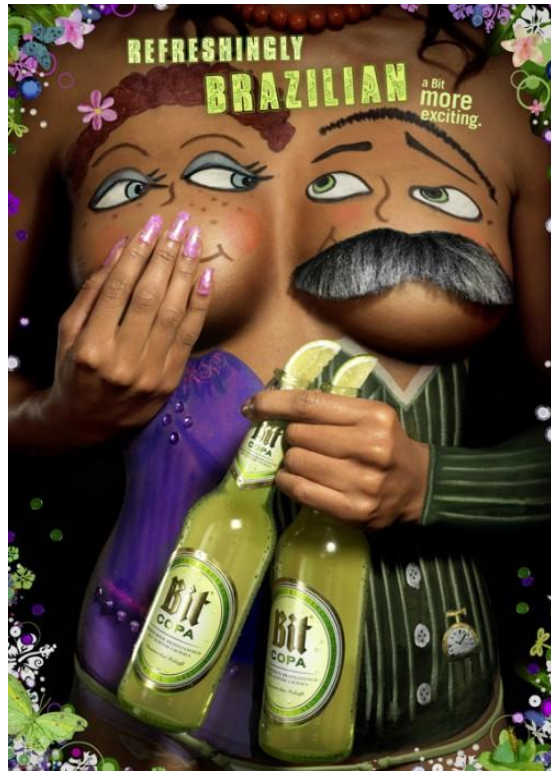


Figure 1.4 – China



Figure 1.5 - Canada



Figure 1.6 – New Zealand



Figure 1.7 - Italy

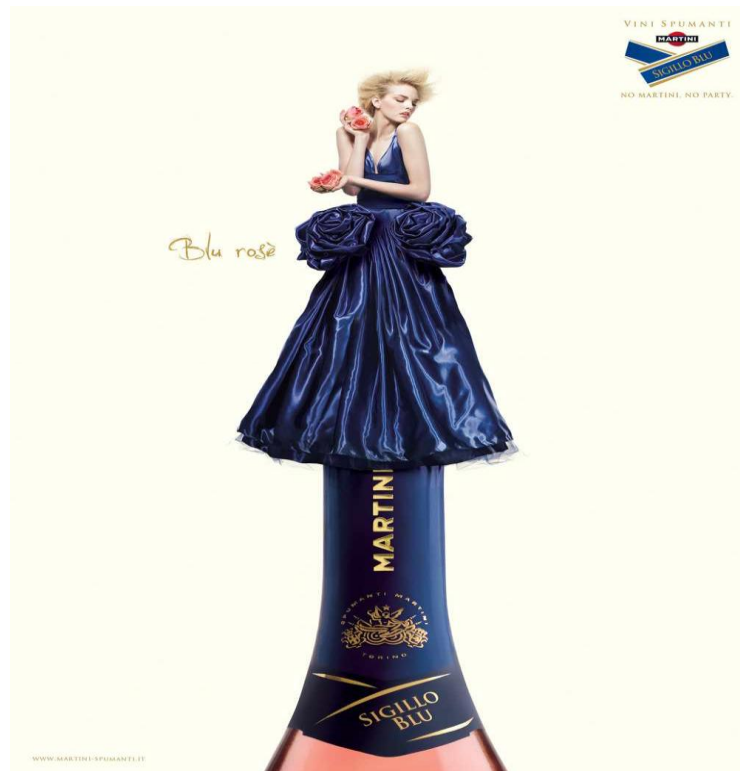


Figure 2.1 1950's



Figure 2.2 1960's



Figure 2.3 1970's

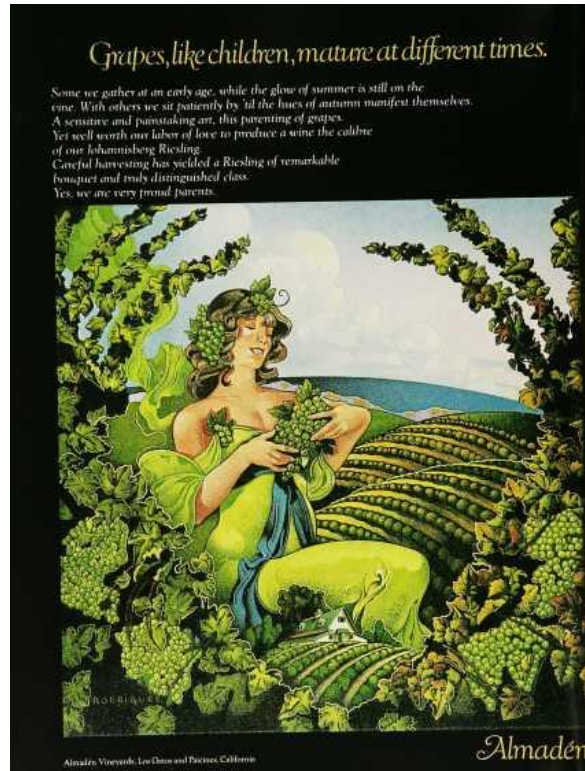


Figure 2.4 1980's

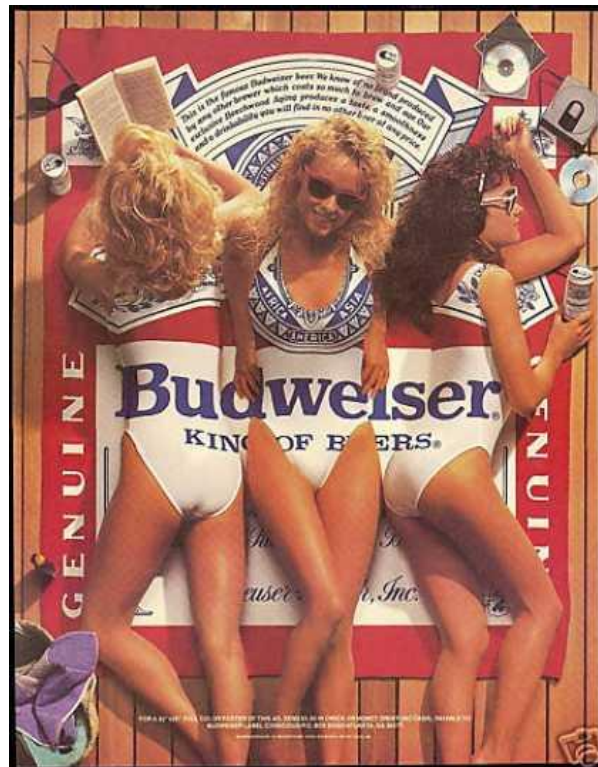


Figure 2.5 1990's



Figure 2.6 2000's

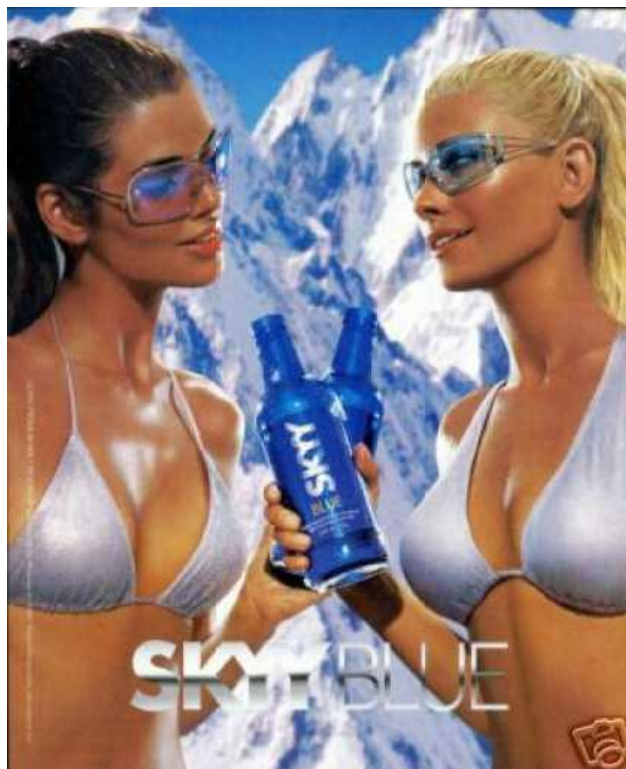


Figure 2.7 2010's



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