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AUTHOR Neuendorf, Kimberly A.; Pearlman, Reid A.
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ABSTRACT

Examining responses to print alcohol advertisements, a study questioned whether alcohol advertisers distinguish between "hard" and "soft" liquors (e.g. wine coolers and liqueurs). Subjects, 102 junior and senior high school students in a major metropolitan area, were asked to examine one set of three ads--either hard liquor ads or soft liquor ads (identified as representing the "good food" approach to marketing, presenting the product not as an intoxicant but as something healthy). To isolate responses to the appeal used, as independent of the carry-over effect of product and brand information, each set of ads was also "masked," (brand names, logos, etc. were covered over) creating four exposure conditions: unmasked/soft liquor; masked/soft liquor; unmasked/hard liquor; and masked/hard liquor. After examining the ads, subjects completed a posttest questionnaire measuring attitudes toward the advertised product and perceptions of typical product users. Results revealed that hard liquor ads generated significantly more correct product identifications than did soft liquor ads, and that soft liquor ads were more likely to be mistaken for ads of non-alcoholic food or drink. Hard liquor ads were also assessed as promoting products that should be used by older individuals than the products promoted in the soft liquor ads. No significant differences emerged between soft and hard liquor ads with regard to the images of the typical user. (One figure and two tables of data are included, and photocopies of hard liquor stimulus advertisements, liqueur stimulus advertisements, and 20 references are appended.) (MM)

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Alcohol as Good Food:
Adolescents' Responses to Liqueur Ads

Kimberly A. Neuendorf, Ph.D.

Department of Communication
Cleveland State University
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 687-3994

Reid A. Pearlman

6544 Maplewood Dr.
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124
(216) 442-7400

Paper presented to the Advertising Division of the Association
for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Portland,
Oregon, July, 1988.

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Alcohol as Good Food:
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Kimberly A. Neuendorf
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Abstract

This paper examines responses to several typical print alcohol advertisements by 192 junior and senior high school students in a major metropolitan area. We addressed the question of whether alcohol advertisers draw a distinction between "hard" and "soft" liquor (e.g., wine coolers and liqueurs)--is soft liquor likely to be perceived not as an intoxicant, but as something healthy, i.e., "good food?"

The study utilized a posttest-only experimental design, with a research stimulus of masked (i.e., print ads with product-identifying information blacked out) and unmasked hard and soft liquor ads, and a posttest questionnaire measuring attitudes toward the advertised product and perceptions of typical product users.

Results of ANOVA, regression and factor analyses include the evaluation of soft liquor as healthier, less alcoholic, and appropriate for more youthful drinkers. Strong differences in perceptions of users did not emerge; however, factor structures of dimensions of user evaluation did differ.

Introduction

The use of alcohol by youthful Americans has been of special concern in recent years. Ninety percent of all high school seniors report having tried alcohol, and 40% of male and 25% of female seniors report drinking at least once a week (Mulock, 1985). In marketing alcohol, the advertising professional is placed in a precarious position--claiming to the world at large that advertising does not influence consumption, but rather brand loyalties, while selling advertising services to the client with a claim that the advertising will increase consumption for the brand, at least partly via the initiation of new consumption among the young. And, whether or not advertising is intentionally aimed at adolescents, many are receiving the message--in a survey of 100 children aged 10 to 14, asked to name their three favorite TV commercials, 20% named at least one beer or wine commercial (Neuendorf, 1985).

Research documenting the responses of adolescents and young adults to alcohol advertising has centered on hard liquor advertising and, to a lesser extent, beer and wine advertising (Sobell et al., 1986; Aitken, Leather, & Scott, 1987; Atkin, Hocking, & Block, 1984; Neuendorf, 1985; Kohn & Smart, 1987). In general, this research has found a stronger behavioral influence on youngsters than on adults, although the nature of this influence is not agreed upon. A national survey of 665 teenagers, for example, found a significant influence of advertising exposure on beer and liquor consumption (zero-order Pearson correlations of .24 and .41, respectively), but not on consumption of wine; these significant relationships held even when controlling for peer and parental influence,

age, gender and church attendance (Atkin, Hocking, & Block, 1984). On the other hand, Strickland's (1983) survey of 772 "current drinker" teens found that while exposure to alcohol advertising was significantly related to consumption (partial correlation, controlling for age, sex, race and total TV viewing = .32), its effect was eclipsed by that of peer association (partial correlation = .34, reducing advertising's partial to .18).

Of course, consumption is not the only dependent variable of interest for those concerned with how youthful audience react to alcohol advertising. Cognitive and affective impacts are also of interest. Atkin and Block (1981) found that respondents heavily exposed to alcohol ads perceived the typical drinker as more fun-loving, happier and more good-looking. A survey of 100 adolescents found heavier TV viewers to be significantly more likely to think "all people who drink are happy" and "you have to drink to have fun at a sporting event" (Neuendorf, 1985).

The type of appeal used has been identified as an important factor in determining whether youngsters will respond in a positive fashion to the ad, and whether positive characteristics will be attributed to the product and the typical user. Experimental findings of a national study concluded that two types of appeals used widely in alcohol ads--celebrity endorsement and sexual appeals--significantly enhanced a number of adolescents' positive impressions of the ads and the products advertised, but did not correspondingly influence adults' evaluations. In fact, the older the respondent, the more negative the response to sexual appeals (Atkin & Block, 1981).

During the past several years, trade publications have noted an

upsurge in advertising for types of liquor other than "hard" liquor, beer and wine--products such as liqueurs and wine coolers. The former has enjoyed a fairly recent introduction and subsequent expansion in the U.S., and the latter (a combination of fruit juice and wine) has only been available since the mid-1980's. Additionally, liquor manufacturers have experimented with new ways of packaging and mixing "prepared cocktails," blends of premium brands of hard liquor with popular mixers (Jervey, 1985a). Advertising for all these types of alcohol has been criticized as appealing to very youthful audiences.

Advertising Age noted Bailey's first new advertising campaign for its Irish Cream since its introduction in the U.S. five years earlier (Jervey, 1984a), in part as a reaction to the new competition generated by ice-cream-maker Haagen-Dazs' introduction of a cream liqueur to the market. The new Bailey's campaign linked the product with Santa Claus (Jervey, 1984b). W.A. Taylor's new campaigns for Drambuie and Tia Maria liqueurs in 1985 were designed to "appeal to a new generation of cordial/liqueur drinkers," according to Taylor's advertising manager (Jervey, 1985b, p. 39).

One important aspect to the marketing of these "soft" liquors to youthful audiences is their association with or identification as "good food"--rather than positioning the product as an intoxicant, something that will make the user feel good and/or help the user enjoy the camaraderie of others, the advertiser images the product as food, something that will taste good to the user, and perhaps even be healthful for the user. For example, L'Orangerie, a bottled mimosa cocktail containing orange juice, triple sec liqueur and champagne, was introduced

in 1985 as the "perfect brunch concoction;" a TV spot showed syrup poured over French toast, with voiceover, "French toast and mimosa, a continental blend of ingredients." (Jervey, 1985a, p. 59) Wary of this non-alcoholic approach, NBC in 1985 refused to air certain wine cooler ads that did not clearly indicate that the product was alcoholic (Lowry, 1985).

The "good food" theme emerges in direct counterpoint to the typical "lifestyle" appeals used to promote hard liquor--including themes of sexuality, emotionality and sociability, and power (Nathanson-Moog, 1984). Atkin and Block (1981) found the most common appeals in TV and magazine alcohol ads to be social camaraderie, escape, romance, and elegance. Finn and Strickland (1982) identified the major appeals of camaraderie, relaxation, and humor. While intoxication is not the explicit goal of these appeals, none of the promised gratifications is inconsistent with state of intoxication--the "good food" appeal is inconsistent with intoxication, however.

To that end, advertisers have seemed to downplay the role of alcohol in the marketing of "soft" liquor, almost to the point of obscuring the product identification. (See, for example, the peach schnapps and Irish cream ads in Appendix B.) Advertisers may be fearful that negative connotations associated with "alcohol" may overwhelm their "good food" appeal.

The emphasis in this study is on a cognitive processing approach to belief and attitudinal effects; cognitions and affect associated with a product are likely to be consistent with images from mediated messages (including advertising) and real-life experiences with that product. The marketing of alcohol is a unique case in that the product has clear

deleterious effects on the user, especially when used in amounts that would please a sales manager (see Atkin, Neuendorf, & McDermott, 1983, for a discussion of appeals to excessive consumption). Thus, negative images are possible for young people via contact with alcohol abuse in real life; at the same time, positive images prevail in advertising and are also common in entertainment media content (Neuendorf, 1985).

"Category prototypes," cognitive constructions compiled from the various experiences one has with some referent (e.g., alcohol), have been identified for personality types as well as for objects in studies of social cognition (Reeves, Chaffee & Tims, 1982). And, affective evaluative dimensions for such people-types will vary with the processing goals of the audience (i.e., why they attend to and interpret the message). In this study, cognitive/affective evaluations of both the product and of persons related to the product (the "typical user") were measured.

Given the dearth of research examining youths' reactions to "new" types of liquor (i.e., "soft" alcohol), and the expansion of marketing in this vein by the alcohol industries, we pose a research question:

How do 1) masking (deleting) product identifications in a print ad and 2) type of alcohol advertised (i.e., hard liquor or "soft" liquor) impact on affective evaluations of the ad and the product, and cognitive perceptions of the typical product user?

Methods

The study utilized a posttest-only experimental design to manipulate a) type of liquor advertisement (hard or soft liquor) and b) availability of product and brand information.

Three hard liquor ads were selected for presentation to adolescents, one each representing the common hard-liquor appeals of romance/sex, friendship/camaraderie, and prestige/elegance (Atkin & Block, 1981). These print ads were selected from a collection of several dozen ads appearing in general interest magazines during the period from late 1985 through early 1986. Similarly, three liqueur ads were identified as representing the archetypical "good food" approach to the marketing of soft liquor. These selection processes were conducted by a graduate research methods class; consensus was achieved on the typicality of each ad before inclusion in the study. All six advertisements utilized in the study are included in Appendices A and B.

In order to isolate responses to the appeal used, as independent of the carry-over effect of product and brand information, each ad was then masked--brand names, logos, photographs of bottles, and all other references to a specific product and brand were concealed by covering with black paper. This manipulation thus created four exposure conditions: unmasked/soft liquor; masked/soft liquor; unmasked/hard liquor; masked/hard liquor.

Subjects were 102 junior and senior high school students in a major metropolitan area. Half were attending an inner-city school and half a suburban school. Fifty percent were male, and 44% were non-white. Ages of the subjects ranged from 11 to 19, with a median age of 14.9 years. Administration of the study was done on an individual basis--with random assignment to condition, each subject was asked to look over one set of three ads, taking their time, and paying attention to "whatever information is available in the ads." (This final caveat was included to

let subjects in the masked conditions know that nothing was amiss.)

After examining the ads, each subject filled out a posttest questionnaire that asked, open-endedly, "what products were being advertised" in the ads just seen. This question was later coded for the number of correct responses (maximum 3) and the number of "good food" errors (e.g., "It was advertising chocolate milk"; maximum 3).

In a series of Likert-type questions, subjects were also asked whether they would have a good time using the product, whether it would be healthy to use it, whether it would be dangerous to use it, and whether the ads made them want to use the product. (These measures are intended to follow the Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) dimensions of evaluation, potency and activity.) A series of ten semantic differential items tapped the subject's perception of the "typical user of the product." (See Table 1 for question wording and semantic differential pairs; previous work by Atkin and Block (1981) identified the salient dimensions used here.) Questions were also asked about the subject's typical weekly media habits, own and parental liquor consumption patterns, and demographics.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) assessing the importance of 1) type of liquor advertised (hard vs. soft), and 2) masking of product/brand identification in determining adolescents' responses to alcohol ads.

Table 1 about here

Hard liquor ads generated significantly ($F=4.48$, $p=.04$) more correct product identifications than did soft liquor ads--indeed, unmasked hard liquor ads generated an average of 1.64 correct IDs (out of 3 possible) per respondent, while unmasked soft liquor ads generated only half that average (0.85 correct IDs per respondent). Not surprisingly, masking either type of ad resulted in a significantly lowered correct product identification rate ($F=41.11$, $p<.01$).

Soft liquor ads were much more likely to be mistaken for ads for a non-alcoholic food or drink ($F=77.93$, $p<.01$)--in fact, those seeing unmasked soft liquor ads misidentified an average of nearly one (0.88) out of the three ads as "good food." Masking made a significant incremental impact on "good food" errors. Those exposed to masked ads were nearly three times as likely to make such errors ($F=53.81$, $p<.01$). And, there was a significant interaction on "good food" mistakes between soft/hard differences and masking, such that masking a soft liquor ad seems to have a much greater impact than masking a hard liquor ad. This significant interaction is diagrammed in Figure 1.

Figure 1 about here

Masking the ads had a significant effect on all four product evaluations: Masked ads were seen as promoting products that promised a greater chance of a "good time," products that were healthier, products

that were less dangerous, and more desirable to use. A couple of key differences between soft and hard liquor ads were also identified: Soft liquor was deemed significantly healthier to use than hard liquor, and "unmasking" the soft liquor ads did not result in a strong drop in desire to use the product, as it did with hard liquor ads.

Hard liquor ads were assessed as promoting products that should be used by older individuals than the products promoted in the soft liquor ads. Interesting, when both types of ads were masked, the soft liquor ads still were seen as more youth-oriented than the hard liquor ads (appropriate for a person 10.4 years of age, as opposed to 14.2 for hard liquor), providing some evidence that the appeal is indeed more youthful.

No significant differences emerged between soft and hard liquor ads, however, with regard to the images of the typical user. Masking the ads did leave an impression of a significantly happier, more intelligent, and more sober user, indicating that knowledge of the alcoholic nature of the product does bring with it some negative "baggage."

To explore this attribution process a bit more, a multiple regression was conducted, predicting overall positive perceptions of the typical product user (created as a summative index of the seven valence-laden semantic differential pairs--i.e., sober-drunk, male-female, and young-old were not included in this index). A hierarchical order was followed, entering experimental manipulation variables first, followed by immediate perceptual reactions to these manipulations, followed by individual-differences factors that might further explain user perceptions. Table 2 presents the results of this hierarchical, forced-entry regression.

Table 2 about here

While it explained 21% of the variance in positive perceptions of users, the total equation was non-significant ($F=1.5$, $df=13,70$). Two individual predictors contributed significantly: Masking of the ads resulted in significantly more positive overall perceptions of users ($r=.26$, $\beta=.43$); lower self-reported parental alcohol consumption added a significant increment to positive perceptions ($r=-.25$, $\beta=-.27$).

Discussion

This study identified some intriguing differences in youth perceptions of hard and soft liquor advertising. And, masking all brand and product information in the ads also had significant impacts on responses. While this artificial masking may at first glance seem a unique but unrealistic way to assess "appeal-only" responses, it may in fact approximate the selective attention processes that ordinarily constitute advertising exposure, especially among the young. Zillmann and Bryant (1985) see selective exposure as deliberate behavior aimed at holding control over perceptual events; this view would support the validity of an appeal-only approach, in that one engaged in magazine reading would not typically seek out product information, and might in fact actively try to avoid it. Indeed, indicative that such selective processes are occurring is the finding that when product and brand information about soft liquor is available, it is often ignored--those

adolescents exposed to unmasked soft liquor ads (and instructed to pay attention to whatever information was available) averaged nearly one good food error every three ads.

The soft/hard liquor comparisons were interesting: As advertised in the "typical" ads chosen for this study, soft liquor is healthier and appropriate for a younger clientele. It promises just as good a time as hard liquor, but is at the same time just as dangerous to use. "Unmasking" the soft liquor ads (i.e., adding to the basic appeal information about product and brand) did not reduce adolescents' desire to use the product, as it did with hard liquor. Hard liquor ads were more often correctly identified, and less often mistaken for promotions of non-alcoholic consumables, notably in the masked conditions. Whether this stems from greater familiarity with hard liquors by the subjects or from concerted efforts by advertisers to mislead potential soft liquor consumers, cannot be determined here.

A number of strong differences in product image were found in this study, but such differences were not matched by differences in typical user image. Schema differentiation by type of liquor and presence/absence of product and brand information seems to be limited to product constructs, with little differentiation among constructs in a "user schema." This may actually be an artifact of the design, given that the three soft ads are all free of human models. Indeed, the multiple regression analysis found that type of liquor (hard vs. soft) did not predict positive perceptions of the typical user--users of both hard and soft liquor are viewed similarly across a number of evaluative dimensions. Access to product/brand information did make for a more negative

perception; the only other significant predictor was parental consumption--having parents who drink more heavily predicted a more negative impression of users. Thus, past personal and mediated experiences with alcohol seem to have colored adolescents' images of typical alcohol users.

The nature of these images has not been fully explored in this study. A pair of post hoc factor analyses may help shed light on what types of user images are salient for adolescents: Submitting all ten user evaluation dimensions to an orthogonal factor analysis resulted in rather divergent results for those exposed to soft and hard liquor ads. For those exposed to unmasked/soft liquor ads (n=22), four factors emerged, to which we have given these tentative titles: Status Drinker (items with factor loadings greater than .50: pleasant, intelligent, successful), Hedonist (rich, happy, sexy), Party Girl (popular, female), and Mainline (old, sober). For those exposed to unmasked/hard liquor ads (n=24), three factors emerged: Status Drinker (successful, intelligent, pleasant), Yuppie (sober, young, happy, pleasant), and "GQ" (sexy, rich, male).

While the small sample sizes for these factor analyses do not allow generalizations, the differences found between hard and soft liquors do prompt us to propose further research that will explore these user images in more detail. We propose, in light of this evidence, that exposure to ads may be more likely to affect the dimensions by which adolescents evaluate typical users than to affect the valence of evaluations.

In general, this small study has supported the notion that alcohol marketers are indeed "imaging" liquors in a way that is substantially different from the typical ways in which hard liquor is promoted. And,

adolescents seem to be responsive to these differences. Many of these differences hold even when youngsters are aware of the brand and product-- i.e., adolescent response differences are not confined to cases in which only the appeal is apprehended. At the same time, this study has shown that adolescents are not wholly naive, but do carry with them information from prior ad exposure and personal familial experience, by which attributions about the product and the typical user of that product are made.

Unmasking these liquor ads may be viewed as introducing such product/brand based "baggage"--images and affective evaluations that are stimulated by introduction of a known stimulus. "Soft" liquor carries with it less baggage, both in terms of media exposure (its marketing is a fairly recent phenomenon) and in real life (e.g., adolescents would be unlikely to have long experience with parents intoxicated on liqueurs or wine coolers). Hence, marketers have the opportunity to create images for the product and the typical user that are novel.

The external validity of this study may be called into question, given the non-random selection of advertisements as stimuli. However, all ads were taken from national, general interest magazines that are widely available in the home--e.g., Cosmopolitan, Time, People, Glamour, Playboy. Even in the case of the most provocative of these, Playboy, a substantial portion of its readership has children under 18 living at home (46%; Simmons, 1985). And, the most popular magazines for parents of 12-17 year olds all accept liquor advertising (TV Guide, Readers Digest, Parade,

Sunday¹; Standard Rate & Data Service, 1988). Adolescents certainly have the opportunity for exposure, and it seems likely that where advertising images are not contradicted by negative information from real-life sources, positive impressions of a potentially hazardous product will prevail.

¹Parade is read by 33% of those with children ages 12-17; Sunday by 28%; TV Guide by 26%; and Readers Digest by 25% (Simmons, 1985, pp. 68-71). Only Readers Digest has acceptability criteria--it does not accept advertising for tobacco products.

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Table 1
 Manipulation Effects on Product Evaluations and
 Perceptions of Typical User

Dependent Variable	UnS mean	MS mean	UnH mean	MH mean	SOFT F	MASK F	INTEP F
Correct product identifications	0.85	0.07	1.64	0.21	4.5*	41.1**	2.0
"Good food" identifications	0.88	2.37	0.12	0.50	77.9**	53.8**	21.2**
(1=STRONGLY DISAGREE, 5=STRONGLY AGREE):							
"I would have a good time using these products."	2.96	3.30	2.44	3.33	1.6	16.2**	2.4
"It is healthy to use these products."	2.54	3.63	1.63	3.42	8.1**	51.9**	3.4
"It is dangerous to use these products."	3.08	2.00	3.00	1.67	1.2	25.0**	0.1
"These ads make me want to use the products."	2.72	3.00	1.96	3.00	3.7	10.2**	0.9
How old should a person be before they use these products? (YEARS)	18.9	10.4	21.4	14.2	8.2**	48.1**	0.5
The typical user of these products is (1 to 5):							
happy-unhappy	2.76	2.52	2.76	1.96	1.5	4.7**	0.2
unsuccessful-successful	3.28	3.31	3.08	3.54	0.0	0.7	0.3
sexy-not sexy	3.56	3.04	3.24	3.17	0.1	0.3	1.1
stupid-intelligent	3.20	3.40	2.68	3.63	0.2	7.6**	2.3
rich-poor	2.60	3.00	2.68	2.79	0.3	1.2	0.7
unpopular-popular	3.17	3.08	3.40	3.52	3.3	0.2	0.1
sober-drunk	3.22	2.63	3.20	2.04	2.4	11.5**	2.0
male-female	3.04	3.15	2.88	2.96	1.1	0.3	0.0
annoying-pleasant	3.08	3.23	2.76	3.38	0.0	3.1	0.7
young-old	3.20	2.73	2.63	2.75	1.2	0.6	1.4

Table 1, cont'd.

* - $p < .05$

** - $p < .01$

NOTE: Abbreviations for the four treatment conditions are:

UnS = Unmasked, Soft liquor (n=26)

MS = Masked, Soft liquor (n=27)

UnH = Unmasked, Hard liquor (n=25)

MH = Masked, Hard liquor (n=24)

Other abbreviations are:

SOFT = main effect for Soft vs. Hard liquor

MASK = main effect for Masked vs. Unmasked ads

INTER = interaction effect for SOFT and MASK

Table 2
Multiple Regression Predicting Overall Positive
Perceptions of Typical User

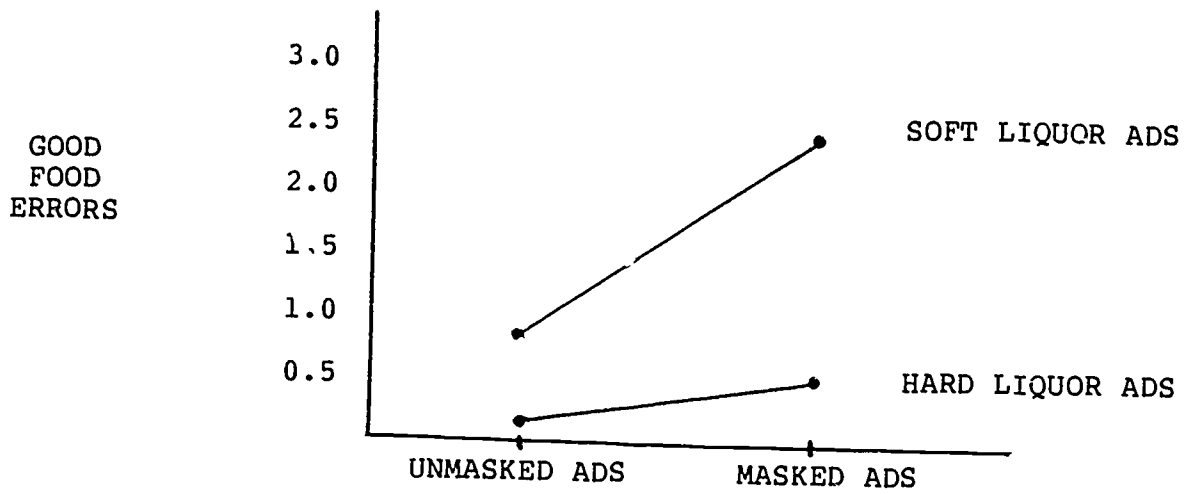
Independent Variable	Zero-order r	beta	R ²	R ² block	Equation F (df)
Masking of ads	.26**	.43*			
Soft liquor (vs. hard liquor)	-.10	-.05			
Interaction of MASK & SOFT	.25**	-.05	.08	.08	2.4(3,80)
Correct product identifications	-.16	.04			
"Good food" identifications	-.01	-.28	.10	.02	1.7(5,78)
Non-white race/ethnicity	-.06	-.03			
Weekly magazine reading	-.06	-.02			
Daily TV viewing	.01	.01			
Daily radio listening	-.05	-.08			
Parental alcohol consumption	-.25**	-.27*			
Gender (maleness)	.07	.03			
Age	-.16	-.20			
Alcohol consumption	-.01	-.01	.21	.11	1.5(13,70)

* - $p < .05$

** - $p < .01$

Figure 1

Significant Interaction Between Type of Liquor and Masking in the Prediction of "Good Food" Errors



APPENDIX A
HARD LIQUOR STIMULUS ADS



Friends are worth Smirnoff.

When the friends are close and the mood is right, the party starts in the kitchen. And, of course, Smirnoff Vodka is there. Because nothing but Smirnoff makes drinks that are as light and friendly as the conversation. Crisp, clean, incomparable Smirnoff.

Friends are worth it.





"I could go for something Gordon's"

The possibilities are endless

Did anyone dare tell Antonio Stradivari
he could speed up production, if he stopped fiddling around?

No one can turn up the speed of
a master craftsman's hands.
Or shorten the time needed to make a great Scotch.
That is why it takes twelve long years to create
Johnnie Walker Black Label.
It has every right to be expensive.

Johnnie Walker
Black Label Scotch
12

APPENDIX B
LIQUEUR STIMULUS ADS

There's only one thing that
tastes more like a fat, juicy peach
than Original Peachtree Schnapps.

DEKUYPER ORIGINAL PEACHTREE[™] SCHNAPPS
Straight, rocks, or with soda. Bite into one today.



31



Kahlúa & Company

variations on a most versatile liqueur

Kahlúa Glazed Turkey

Kahlúa Pecan Pie

Kahlúa Candy Yams

Classic Kahlúa

Kahlúa & Coffee

Therese Cognac

Kahlúa Black Russian

Passo