

ARE DISTILLED SPIRITS BEING PROMOTED TO YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN ADULT DRINKERS VIA ASPIRATIONAL BRAND MARKETING? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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[dx.doi.org/10.18374/JIMS-14-3.3](https://doi.org/10.18374/JIMS-14-3.3)

ABSTRACT

There is growing evidence that suggest that distilled spirits and mixed drinks are the alcoholic beverage of preferences of young adults. Because of the prevalence of alcohol consumption of distilled spirits, this study was conducted to explore brand preferences among African-American college students and to ascertain if alcohol beverage advertisements on the digital/social media site YouTube influenced this drinking behavior. Results revealed three primary findings: 1) spirits were the drinks of preferences, 2) students often pooled resources to purchase distilled spirits and finally 3) males preferred darker spirits. Analysis of the survey instrument revealed that the top five ranked alcohol brands on the basis of self-reported consumption for females and males. Students were willing to pay more for their favorite alcohol brands ($p < 0.01$) and were more likely to request their particular brand by name when purchasing an alcoholic beverage ($p < 0.01$). Analysis of the prices of the aforementioned brands in the state controlled stores (ABC) indicated that all but one brand cost more than the average price within that particular distilled spirits category. Advertisements (the top brand identified by students) revealed that those ads featuring American cultural icons appeared to connect the brand to the fulfillment of an emotional need such as aspirations.

Keywords: *Alcohol, Brand Preference, Advertising, Aspirational marketing, Young Adults, College Students, African-Americans, distilled spirits*