Ingroup associated product marketing: The case of alcohol advertising

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One of the most prevalent marketing strategies is to create a “brand community” in which a product’s consumers feel as though they form a cohesive group with the product’s manufacturer and the other individuals who use the product. Because of the efficacy of this strategy, many companies actively work to associate their products with existing social groups, attempting to join the group and thereby “convince” its members that it is normative for them to use and enjoy the product. Although prevalent across companies and product types, this strategy may be particularly problematic when used by alcohol manufacturers. This talk will briefly highlight the ways in which alcohol marketers use this strategy and discuss our emerging program of research that investigates the problematic downstream consequences of such behavior. In particular, we will focus on the ability of the feelings of trust and safety that are experienced in the presence of ingroup members to transfer to the advertised product, thereby making a relatively dangerous product be perceived as safer than it would under other circumstances.