

ENGLISH 312 AUDIENCE STATEMENT AND ENTHYMEME COVER SHEET

Audience Statement

My audience is PRO Alcohol

Who is your audience? Why do they find your claim initially unacceptable? My audience will be non-religious undergraduates who are inclined to use alcohol. Many individuals in my audience think of alcohol as a helpful social lubricant that connects them to their peers in an important way.

What does your audience value the most? According to the Pew research center, millennials are optimistic and are unattached from institutions but are highly networked with their peers. They care about family, friends, and fun. They feel entitled to self-defined freedoms, and thus value personal autonomy. As individuals, they want to have families, and succeed in meaningful careers. While they're not overly concerned with finding a guiding philosophy, on the whole they want to leave the world a better place. Lastly, they want to be successful, succeed in school, their careers, and in their families.

What does your audience fear the most? Because millennials to some degree or another feel like they're special they might fear being subjected to rules that would limit their potential and meaning in life. They're fearful of governments, and institutions of power that could take away their freedoms, or limit their opportunities, and they especially don't want to be taken advantage of.

Audience Counterarguments:

But . . . Companies aren't responsible for what their people do, and I'm not responsible for what companies do..

But . . . In Fact, I don't even drink that much, just socially, and it's not like I'm going to get addicted.

But . . . Plus, I drink locally owned craft brews, so I'm not even a part of what "Big Alcohol" does.

Enthymeme

What are the consequences of Alcohol use on Corporate greed-mongering?

Claim: Alcohol use supports corporate greed-mongering.

Because consumption of alcohol allows large multinational conglomerates to take advantage of individuals.

Implicit Assumption: Whatever allows large multinational conglomerates to take advantage of individuals also supports corporate greed-mongering.

Contract Question: How do corporate influences affect our patronage to Patrón?

Student Name

Instructor Name

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Booze, Bucks, and Business

In 2008, half of all beer sales in the United States were from one company—the international conglomerate Anheuser-Busch. Together with MillerCoors, they control 80% of the \$100 billion dollars worth of annual beer sales in our country (Hindy). Last year their political lobby blocked 335 of the 364 alcohol tax proposals across the nation (Povich). But to bring it back to earth, imagine yourself for a moment at a party on a Friday night and look around. You see your friends dancing to the beat; your wingman looks like he's about to get lucky, and by every indication it's time to fill up your red Solo cup. The night is young and is brought to you by Anheuser-Busch: helping you to fit in, feel good, and find friends. On the one hand, it's kinda scary how oblivious we can be to corporate America's shadowy influence in of our lives, but on the other hand, "Free beer is free beer!" Or is that just how they want us to respond—too distracted to see what's really going on? So, this begs the question, how do corporate influences affect our patronage to Patrón?

There's little doubt that Anheuser has given us good times and helped us make great friends, but what about the bar fights, broken homes, and battered women? Do we get to thank alcohol companies for them too? I can almost hear Grandpa's golf buddies scoffing now, "A business can't be held responsible for how hoodlums choose to abuse their products." We could of course do exactly that if the company knew exactly what they were doing, and one might

suspect that Anheuser knows that not every customer will “drink responsibly.” In fact they’re banking on it, knowing full well that some of their customers not only won't drink responsibly, but they can't. According to research on drug and alcohol addiction, 40-60% of an individual’s addictive potential is determined by their genetics (Prescott and Kendler). So it's no wonder that children are 45% more likely to see beer ads than adults are (“Over Exposed”). A child who begins drinking at fifteen or younger is four times as likely to develop a drinking problem later in life than someone who begins drinking in their late twenties. By the time children reach eighth grade, half of fourteen-year-olds have already consumed an alcoholic beverage at least once in their lives (“Underage Drinking”). I don’t think we can pretend that sales strategists at Anheuser-Busch are oblivious of how they entrap their ever-expanding customer base.

I’m deeply concerned by the tricks and tactics that big alcohol plays on our kids and those with genetic predispositions. My dad is an alcoholic, and chances are you know someone who grew up in a home like mine; in fact, about 10% of children are living in homes with a parent who has an alcohol problem (“Alcohol Facts”). It’s disturbing to imagine that my dad’s alcoholism is the result of a targeted marketing scheme aimed towards those with a predisposition to addiction. I can’t help but think of what my dad as a teenager imagined his life would be like. No second divorce. No estranged relationships with his kids. Maybe he thought he’d just be a moderate drinker. None of us like to think of the possibility that one day our families will be marred by an uncontrollable addiction, but the truth is that it’s not up to us. Addiction is, in large part, up to what’s hiding in our genes.

Anheuser-Busch couldn't care less about the harm their products have caused my family, and they’re not done trying to hurt it. I’m a part of their favorite demographic: college students. Four out of five of us drink regularly, and half of us are binge drinkers. Under the influence,

we're raped, killed, and abused by Anheuser's intoxicated emissaries. They're the third leading cause of disease and death in the U.S. Their products are the underlying factor in 38% of all academic failures—maybe yours? Health problems associated with booze cost our country more than \$180 billion a year—which is enough money to pay for Harvard's four year tuition for you and your closest 1.1 million Facebook friends. From accidental injury to divorce, the consumption of alcohol seems to be in one way or another connected to almost every financial, social, and cultural problem that our generation is likely to face. As a target group for addiction, overconsumption, and political manipulation we bear a significant responsibility to put alcohol companies in their place and to label them the danger that they really are. ("Alcohol Facts")

Some have suggested that an alternative to alcohol abstinence is to only drink craft beers like Shocktop. Craft breweries try to give you the sense that their locally owned, healthier, and a great alternative for those who oppose the harm caused by companies like Anheuser-Busch. They're hugely popular among younger generations who approach them, sometimes as first time consumers, as a way to connect with their heritage and their friends. However, unbeknownst to their supporters many craft breweries are actually owned by MillerCoors and Anheuser-Busch (Tuttle). Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be any good reason why craft breweries are less likely to target youth and college students. In fact their vulnerability as a small business may give them even greater incentive to lobby their legislators into loosening restrictions on safety and sales.

Then again, maybe neither microbreweries nor alcohol companies are the ones to blame; maybe we are. Not because brilliant marketers have tricked us, but because we know we've been tricked and we still buy a kegger every time we throw a party. If Anheuser-Busch is responsible for the death, disease, and failures brought about by alcohol, then we're at least co-

conspirators. There's really only one solution to the alcohol problem: we've got to opt out. As long as alcohol companies are buying up our politicians like Pokémon cards, then the only real way we can fight back is by not buying what they're selling.

Will that mean that our wingmen won't get lucky? Does it mean that dancing to the beat won't be as fun? Will it mean that our endless stock of red Solo cups will go to waste? Maybe. But then again, maybe not. The reason alcohol makes us feel so good is because it replicates a protein in our brain called GABA, which is responsible for suppressing our overactive nervous system (Nevo and Hammon). The great news is that drinking alcohol isn't the only way to help our brains calm down. Meditation, taking vitamins, yoga, and a host of other healthy all-natural activities have the same overall effect as alcohol does (Streeter et al). So don't worry. We don't need Anheuser-Busch to fit in, feel good, or find friends.

The alcohol industry cares about one thing: their bottom line. They're not worried about the girl who got raped after getting a little too tipsy, and they're not concerned that their ads are reaching fifteen-year-old- future alcoholics. They might feel their duty isn't to them, it's to their investors, and perhaps they're right. So, at some point we've got to take responsibly for what alcohol companies are unwilling to. At some point we've got to take matters into our own hands. If our generation is really set on making a difference in the world, then abstention is what it's gonna take. Plain and simple: alcohol consumption—not just alcohol abuse—hurts us, our families, and our communities. Whether we drink a lot or a little, whether we own a craft brewery or a multinational corporation, the onus is on us. Abstention from alcohol is not just a health choice, and it's not just an ethical one. If our generation is going to tackle the problems that previous ones have left unsolved. We've got to start making some revolutionary changes about how we treat things that harm us.

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