

Bud Light Seltzer Assessment

Bud Light hired pop star Post Malone to help sell a recent product called Bud Light Seltzer. This particular advertisement is likely targeting men and women between the ages of 21-30. They would likely be following the seltzer craze, which has recently been taking over the adult beverage industry as a whole. In the case of this ad, the persuader is trying to convince Post Malone's followers that Bud Light Seltzer versus traditional Bud Light is the way to go. However, did they go about it the right way? Do Post Malone's followers believe that he is actually enjoying a Bud Light Seltzer in his spare time or is he is just being paid to sponsor it? Was the Super Bowl an ideal time to use Post Malone to endorse Bud Light Seltzer, especially when you consider how the advertisement concluded?

The advertisement is in the present tense. You aren't seeing flashbacks of picking up Bud Light Seltzer for a party and you don't see a premonition of disappointed partygoers if you don't pick up Bud Light Seltzer on the way. You just see Post Malone enter a party store to pick up some Bud Light. You are presented with the fact that he had his mind made up before he even entered the store. At the 1-second mark, he asks the store clerk if they have Bud Light, and he is directed to the back of the store. At the 8-second mark, when Post Malone sees that Bud Light made a seltzer, you are transported into his brain where you see a control board with various people that have one similarity to him...the signature facial tattoo. (Bud Light, 2020).

At the 16-second mark, no doubt using his "celebrity" status, he can sample the seltzer without paying for it first. The control board receives reports from the drenched tastebuds at the

20-second mark that read, “tastes great, no Bud Light, just hard seltzer with a hint of fruit flavor,” which is followed by “light and refreshing, it says light and refreshing,” (Bud Light, 2020). I was waiting for the advertisement to lean towards Logos, which is “argument by logic,” (Heinrichs, 2020, Pg. 37). The advertiser could have used calorie count, ranking, or something like that to convince Post Malone to purchase the Bud Light Seltzer instead.

However, despite one of his control board managers thinking he should get it based on the description provided, it is clearly stated at the 26-second mark that “Post Malone doesn’t drink seltzer, we drink Bud Light. Everybody knows that” (Bud Light, 2020). This is about the time that I realized this ad is using Ethos, where the “benevolent persuader shares everything with his audience—riches, effort, values, and mood,” (Heinrichs, 2020, Pg. 74). He shows himself to have “nothing personal at stake.” Whatever decision Post Malone makes at this point, the target audience will likely follow suit so they can feel closer to him. He holds the cards and can decide which ones to play.

We aren’t given any particular reason why Post Malone prefers Bud Light. Is it because of the calorie count? The great taste? We are just told that he prefers Bud Light, which his followers likely drink as well to feel connected to him. Regardless, the argument is definitely in a frame, which is described as “the box that contains an argument,” (Heinrichs, 2020, Pg. 120.) He is debating between two Bud products, not over Bud Light versus Miller Lite or something like that. However, this new scenario puts his credibility as an exclusive Bud Light drinker on the line because he is internally fighting with “trying something new” starting at the 32-second mark.

The store clerk looks visibly concerned at the 40-second mark as Post Malone is being thrown all over the store, knocking over shelves in the process, as he is internally fighting with

making this “important” decision. This is about the time that we are introduced to Pathos, which is “argument by emotion,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 38). As a mother of a young daughter who has seen with the 2015 Disney-Pixar film, *Inside Out*, I was able to understand the method they were using to cause Post Malone’s behavior. At the 45-second mark, the decision is made to get both because “we’re incredibly rich, let’s get both,” (Bud Light, 2020). At the 50-second mark, as Post Malone carries the case of Bud Light and Bud Light Seltzer, he stumbles over the fallen chips and other snack food all over the convenience store floor. He then simply asks store clerk, “got any pretzels?” at the 56-second mark. We are then left with the following at the end of the advertisement at the 58-second mark, “Bud Light Seltzer – Unquestionably Good,” (Bud Light, 2020).

Post Malone appears unphased that he was just thrown about. “Cicero claimed that humor was one of the most persuasive of all rhetorical passions,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 39). You could tell that this ad was made for younger people who would find humor in the situation. For some bizarre reason, someone getting hurt (even cartoonishly) can be found humorous and keep people watching. The target audience also feels comfortable that he was able to decide, even though it still goes against what they know him for. “To move people away from their current opinion, you need to make them feel comfortable with you,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 49).

From what I gathered, inductive reasoning, which is “taking specific cases and using them to prove a premise or conclusion (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 139), is present here. This could be, “Post Malone and other artists like him drink Bud Light.” My reasoning for this observation is because I see Post Malone try the seltzer before deciding to purchase it. Since seltzers appeal more to women, this ad is using emulation, which is when you “view it as an emotional response

to a role model,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 93.) This could be, “Post Malone drinks Bud products and I (a man) should drink all Bud products too.”

If I am speaking based on my personal opinion, I don’t think this is a quality persuasive message. It doesn’t give you the impression that he really decided because he still chose to pick up a case of Bud Light as well. We are told around the 43-second mark that Post Malone is rich and can afford to get both. How exactly does this help his likely lower-income followers want to follow suit? Not everyone can just buy two cases of beer at once. The two main control board operators appear bratty and not willing to come to a compromise. This is more like a fight than an argument. “You fight to win; you argue to achieve agreement,” (Heinrichs, 2020, Pg. 17). The two main control board operations are literally fighting like children over which beverage is superior, even though they just tried Bud Light Seltzer a few seconds ago and have been loyal to Bud Light. It isn’t until the female control board operator interrupts their squabble and offers the compromise to get both. The question is who really won here? Post Malone’s “brain” didn’t find the seltzer that intriguing to cause him to switch over to Bud Light Seltzer.

Another elephant in the room is that this advertisement was featured during the Super Bowl, to a larger audience than just Post Malone’s followers. “Decorum that works for one persuader may not work for another—even in front of the same people,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 48). How convincing is Post Malone really to middle-aged and the elderly that have been enjoying Bud Light for years, especially since Post Malone decides to buy both and isn’t swayed enough to purchase Bud Light Seltzer on its own? Having Post Malone sample Bud Light Seltzer was a smart move because the advertisement was using induction and that “works best when you’re not sure your audience shares the same commonplace,” (Heinrichs, 2020, pg. 146).

It almost gives the impression that he will enjoy the Seltzer first and then finish off the night with “old trusty,” Bud Light. Unless his followers are purchasing Bud Light Seltzer for humor purposes, I don’t think they will 100% convert over to Bud Light Seltzer in the long run. The closest we get to Logos in this ad is a quick visual of the Bud Light Seltzer cans at the 59-second mark where viewers can see the alcohol content and calorie count (5% ABV, 100 calories) (Bud Light, 2020).

This ad may have been good for a few laughs during the Super Bowl, but that’s really about it. Once the “seltzer craze” eventually ends, Bud Light will continue to maintain its status. Over time, many adult beverage companies have tried to think outside the box and release unique products to help boost their image in the eyes of the younger generation. However, I think that during this seltzer craze, the ad is causing is trying to “make your audience feel powerful ... give them a sense of self-control,” (Heinrichs, 2020, Pg. 102). The audience gets to decide for themselves whether or not Bud Light or Bud Light Seltzer is better and still feel a connection to their celebrity representative. For those willing to try something new, this advertisement made them feel like it was ok.

In the long run, though, I say stick to what you know unless you can really prove that this new product is superior in some way to the established alternative. If you have to buy both, then you really haven’t convinced me that you know what you’re talking about.

Works Cited:

Bud Light. (2020). *Bud Light Seltzer Ad featuring Post Malone*. [Television commercial]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqe_bMdzrDA.

Heinrichs, J. (2020). *Thank you for arguing. What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson can reach us about the art of persuasion*. Random House, NY.

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