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Digital alcohol marketing and gender: A narrative synthesis

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Abstract

Issues: Alcohol marketing on social media platforms is pervasive and effective, reaching wide audiences and allowing interaction with users. We know little about the gendered nature of digital alcohol marketing, including how women and men are portrayed, how different genders respond and implications for gender relations. This review aimed to identify how males, females and other genders are targeted and represented in digital alcohol marketing, and how they are encouraged to engage with digital alcohol marketing content.

Approach: A narrative synthesis approach was employed. Academic literature and research reports were searched for studies on digital alcohol marketing published within the previous 10 years with a range of methods and designs. We reviewed the studies, extracted data relevant to gender and synthesised findings thematically.

Key Findings: The review included 17 articles and 7 reports with a range of designs and methods, including content analyses of digital material, interviews, focus groups and surveys. Our analysis identified three conceptual themes that captured many of the gendered results, namely: (i) leveraging a diversity of idealised femininities; (ii) amplifying hegemonic masculinity; and (iii) infiltrating everyday gendered life.

Implications and Conclusion: Alcohol marketing on social media is highly gendered and is designed to embed itself into everyday life in agile ways that reinforce traditional and evolving gendered stereotypes, activities, lifestyles and roles. Gendered engagement strategies are widely used to link alcohol to everyday gendered activities and identities to encourage alcohol purchase and consumption. This marketing normalises alcohol consumption and reproduces harmful gender norms and stereotypes.

KEYWORDS
alcohol marketing, drinking, gender, public health, social media

1 | INTRODUCTION

Alcohol is a widely used drug that serves many purposes for individuals and society. Its meanings and functions change across time, contexts, cultures and societies, alongside normative expectations around who drinks, what they drink and how they drink [1]. However, alcohol has toxic effects on the body and causes harm to the

self and others [1]. Globally alcohol consumption accounts for 3 million deaths each year and contributes to the poor health of millions of people with chronic disease and nonfatal injuries [2]. The harmful use of alcohol accounts for 7.1% of the global burden of disease for men and 2.2% for women [3].

Drinking alcohol is a gendered activity; men are more likely to drink more alcohol and to drink more often than women [3], although gender differences vary over time and between cultures [4]. Drinking alcohol in public, and drinking to intoxication, has traditionally been linked to masculine identities in Western societies [5–7]. The acceptability of drinking also depends on gender; women are often judged more harshly than men when drinking alcohol, particularly if they are drinking heavily [8–10]. Gender also intersects with other aspects of identity in ways that are related to drinking and consumption patterns [11], including with age [7, 12–16], life stage [17], sexuality [18], social class [19] and ethnicity [20]. While women have traditionally consumed less alcohol than men, this gap has been closing in Western societies in recent years [21]. In part this is due to the targeting of women by the global alcohol industry, which relies on expanding markets and increasing consumption to generate profits [1, 8]. This has consequences for gendered harms. For example, in the United States women's high-risk drinking and diagnosis of alcohol use disorders rose between 2001/2002 and 2012/2013, and these increases were larger than the corresponding increases for men [22]. Heavy drinking women have greater physical and mental health consequences from their alcohol consumption than men, with risks increasing more steeply [23–28]. Women also experience harm from men's drinking [29].

The marketing and promotion of alcohol products are key drivers of their consumption [30]. Exposure to alcohol marketing is positively associated with earlier onset of drinking, hazardous drinking and subsequent overall alcohol consumption [8, 31, 32]. Using specific criteria for identifying cause and effect relationships, scholars have concluded there is enough evidence to suggest the association between exposure to alcohol marketing and youth drinking is causal [33]. Exposure to traditional forms of alcohol marketing, which is vast and pervasive, causes young people to start drinking, to drink more alcohol and to engage in binge drinking [33]. People who have, or are at risk of, an alcohol problem are also more susceptible to alcohol marketing [34]. People who are in recovery from an alcohol use disorder note that this marketing may permeate their living environments and trigger relapse [34]. This is of particular concern given that alcohol companies market to—and make the largest percent of their profits from—heavy drinkers [35–37].

Compared to traditional alcohol marketing, we know less about the impact of digital marketing on consumption behaviours, although experts note it may be more influential [1]. This is because digital marketing has extensive reach, engages users and interacts with them, allowing marketers to build brand identities and allegiances. It takes place on mobile devices and platforms that have been designed to use techniques that are addictive (causing compulsive and excessive use) as exposed by tech-insider whistleblowers (e.g., see [38]), including the pull-to-refresh mechanism, the bottomless feed and the auto-play function. These techniques were developed to keep users online and engaged as much as possible, in line with the business model of digital platforms. As Lyons et al. note, social media platforms are particularly insidious, being 'designed to generate, analyse and apply vast amounts of personalised data in an effort to tune flows of online content to capture users' time and attention, and influence their affects, moods, emotions and desires in order to increase profits' [39, p. 178]. Reviews have found that exposure to digital alcohol marketing is associated with higher levels of drinking behaviour in young people [40] and that engaging with this marketing is associated with increased alcohol use [41]. Further, digital alcohol marketing does not occur in isolation. A recent study with Australian adolescents demonstrated that being exposed to alcohol marketing across multiple channels (television, digital and at live sporting events) was associated with increased alcohol consumption [42].

The alcohol industry has long used gender as a way to segment markets and increase sales, and this is apparent in their digital marketing strategies [8]. Research suggests that digital alcohol marketing that engages users and encourages interaction with products and brands influences the views people hold about gender and drinking [43, 44] and the ways in which people construct their gender identities [45, 46]. Gender can usefully be conceptualised as a social construct, with views about femininities and masculinities arising through social worlds. Gendered identities are created, negotiated and reproduced through social life and everyday practices [47, 48], including drinking alcohol [49]. Alcohol marketing 'reflects and impacts how women are viewed, positioned and treated within society' [50, p. 1]. This marketing also targets those who identify with gender diverse minorities, especially in socially liberal environments where there is increased opportunity for commercial gain [51].

Traditional and digital marketing and promotion of alcohol also occur in a largely unregulated environment, primarily due to neoliberal ideology favouring free market approaches [52]. While there are a range of countries, such as Norway and France, that have regulatory restrictions on advertising or marketing of alcohol in traditional media, only a few countries have regulated advertising online or on social media (e.g., Lithuania, Finland). In 2015 Finland extended its alcohol marketing ban to social media with regulations intended to capture content created by both

alcohol companies and consumers [53]. However, rather than legislating against alcohol marketing, many countries rely on alcohol companies adopting voluntary codes of conduct, such as the UK Code of Non-Broadcast Advertising and Direct and Promotional Marketing (the CAP Code), the New Zealand Code for Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol, and the Australian Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code. These codes often seek to restrict advertising of alcohol by reference to sex, sexual success or offensiveness. However, in addition to concerns as to their efficacy, researchers have noted that the codes, may fail to capture user and co-created alcohol marketing content in digital environments [1, 52, 54]. Although the Advertising Standards Board and Australian Beverage Alcohol Code Complaints Panel in Australia have extended their advertising codes to brands' Facebook pages and user-generated content, there remains uncertainty as to how this would be applied [55].

Research on digital alcohol marketing has rarely explicitly theorised gender or examined gender as a key construct, even though gendered marketing has implications for how different genders respond to alcohol marketing, how women and men are viewed, and overall gender relations [8]. The aim of this narrative review is to explore gender within the research that has been conducted on digital alcohol marketing since 2012 and what this means for alcohol consumption, gender and gender relations. Specifically, we aimed to identify how males, females and other genders are: (i) targeted and represented in digital alcohol marketing; and (ii) encouraged to engage and interact with digital alcohol marketing.

2 | METHODS

We undertook a narrative synthesis approach for this review [56], which provides a systematic framework to adopt a textual approach to combining multiple sources in response to a wide range of research questions. This was appropriate given that research in this field has used a range of research designs and data (quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods) which we aimed to 'bring together' or synthesise around our specific research questions [57], using the framework outlined below.

2.1 | Identifying original studies

Studies needed to meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- *Digital alcohol marketing*: Studies on alcohol marketing, promotional, advertising and sponsorship activities on the Internet (including brand websites and blogs) and on social media platforms (including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest) that included some mention of gender.

- *In-depth consideration of gender*: Studies that included analysis of the marketing content and/or engagement by gender, such as analysing how the content differed by gender, or how different gender groups responded to the marketing and promotion. These studies may have had gendered digital marketing as their primary focus, or may have had a different focus yet reported on gender in these ways in their findings. For example, studies may have reported on the gendered nature of marketing content and targeting, breaches of marketing codes in relation to gender, or analysed user responses to alcohol marketing by gender. When it was unclear from the abstract whether there was sufficient consideration of gender, two members of the research team read the full-text, discussed the gender results and made a decision about inclusion.

- *Study source*: Published original research articles and research reports. Reports and studies that use the same sample were included if research aims, questions or findings were distinct. Studies and reports were required to be in the English language. Excluded sources were dissertations, editorials, letters to the editor, comments, conferences, presentations and lectures.

- *Timeframe*: Studies and reports published from 1 January 2012 were included due to rapid advances and changes in social media platforms, smartphones and digital technologies since that time, as well as the increase in population use in these devices and technologies.

The following electronic bibliographic databases were searched in June 2023 for peer-reviewed journal articles: Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, Embase (OVID), CINAHL, Cochrane Library, PUBMED (includes Medline) and PUBMED Central. The terms employed in the database searches were:

1. marketing OR promotion OR advertising OR sponsor*
2. alcohol* OR drink* (TITLE)
3. gender OR men OR women OR male OR female OR feminin* OR masculin*
4. digital OR internet OR 'social media' OR 'social networking sites' OR 'SNS*' OR website* OR app OR apps OR YouTube OR Twitter OR Facebook OR Instagram.

The first and second authors conducted the searches that identified 1271 outputs across all databases. All titles and abstracts were read by Kate Kersey and those that were clearly not about digital alcohol marketing and/or did not mention gender were excluded. Duplicates and

systematic reviews were also excluded. Details of the remaining 102 articles were exported to an Excel spreadsheet. The full text of these 102 articles were reviewed by Kate Kersey, who provided 39 articles to Antonia Lyons who also reviewed the full-text for subsequent discussion around whether they met the in-depth gender criteria. Ten articles were selected from this process. To locate relevant research reports in grey literature, both Kate Kersey and Antonia Lyons used Google to search for relevant material, including outputs from researchers undertaking research in this field, governmental and non-governmental websites (including the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Institute of Alcohol Studies and Alcohol Change UK), updates and newsletters. This process led to the identification of seven research reports. Next, Kate Kersey hand searched the references within the identified articles and research reports, checked for subsequent citations and examined systematic reviews on related topics for references (e.g., Noel, Sammartino and Rosenthal [41]; Lobstein, Landon [40]). This led to the identification of a further seven articles. Figure 1 provides an overview of the search, selection and outcomes. Overall, 24 articles and reports met the eligibility criteria, involving 21 unique datasets.

Table 1 provides details about the 17 journal articles and 7 research reports eligible for inclusion, specifically authors,

year, type of publication, location, focus of the research and information on the research design, methods employed, and number and ages of participants (where relevant). Eight of the articles and reports were from Australia and eight from the United Kingdom, with three from India and Australia, three from the United States, one from Finland (covered both Finnish and Swedish social media sites) and one from New Zealand. Eighteen of the studies examined the content of digital and social media marketing and promotion, and 12 also examined user engagement with this content. Eight included interviews or focus groups to explore the nature of, and engagement with, the brand and user-generated content, and two used surveys. Studies often employed a combination of data collection methods. The main social media platforms examined were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The publication dates of the articles ranged from 2014 to 2023 while the data were collected for these studies between 2012 and the early 2020s.

2.2 │ Analytic approach and procedure

The first and second authors recorded the research questions/aims, participants, data and analysis, location of research and digital or social media platform(s) of
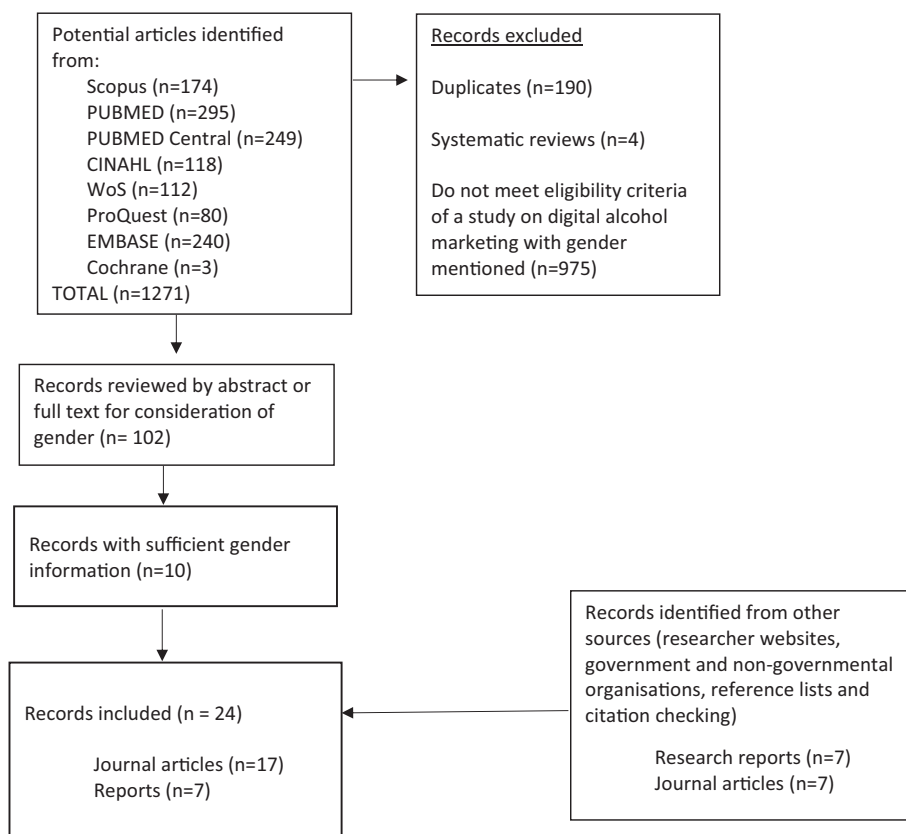
FIGURE 1 Identification, screening and selection of published articles and research reports for inclusion in the narrative synthesis.

TABLE 1 Studies included in the narrative synthesis.

Authors	Year	Publication type	Location	Focus	Design, methods, participants
Atkinson et al. [43]	2014	Research report	UK	Alcohol marketing strategies used by alcohol brands on social networking sites (SNS) and how young people interact with alcohol marketing on SNS	Content analysis of five alcohol brands' marketing on Twitter and Facebook; thematic analysis of 43 young people's Facebook profiles; interviews and focus groups with 16–20 year olds ($N = 70$).
Carah [58]	2014	Research report	Australia	Alcohol brand activity on Facebook. Implications for regulation.	Content analysis of activity of the top 20 alcohol brands on Facebook in Australia.
Carah et al. [59]	2014	Journal article	Australia	How Australian alcohol brands use Facebook to manage their connections with consumers and engage with the mediation of everyday life.	Analysis of Facebook pages run by alcohol brands; interviews with people who consume alcohol and use Facebook ($N = 35$).
Purves et al. [60]	2014	Research report	UK	How brands use SNS and packaging as part of their marketing activities; how users respond to these activities.	Content analysis of six alcohol brands on five platforms; focus groups with 14–17 year olds (eight groups, $N = 48$).
Carah et al. [55]	2015	Research report	Australia	Alcohol brand posts on Facebook and whether they meet regulatory codes. Implications for current regulatory codes.	Review of 40 items of Australian alcohol brand content posted to Facebook.
Mart and Giesbrecht [61]	2015	Journal article	USA	Alcohol products and promotions using the pink ribbon symbol and related materials to associate alcohol brands with breast cancer charities, awareness and survivors.	Review of product websites, press releases, social media posts, news stories and blog posts by industry and non-industry groups.
Carrotte et al. [62]	2016	Journal article	Australia	Patterns of liking and following different types of alcohol marketing social media pages and relationships to alcohol consumption.	Survey of 1001 Australians aged 15–29 years.
Cranwell et al. [63]	2016	Journal article	UK	Portrayal of alcohol content and brands on popular *YouTube* music videos, and meeting industry advertising codes of practice.	Analysis of 49 top UK Top 40 songs and music videos with alcohol content and watched by 11–18 year olds.
Atkinson et al. [45]	2017	Journal article	UK	Official and user generated/industry instigated content on brand SNS profiles and user interaction with brand content; young people's perspectives of alcohol marketing on SNS.	Content analysis of five alcohol brands on Facebook and Twitter. Focus groups with 16–21 year olds (14 groups, $N = 70$).

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Year	Publication type	Location	Focus	Design, methods, participants
Niland et al. [64]	2017	Journal article	New Zealand	Young adults' interactions with alcohol marketing from within their own social networking practices.	Interviews and 'go-along' online navigation of Facebook pages and sites ($N = 7$).
Noel and Babor [65]	2017	Journal article	USA	Alcohol advertising on Facebook and regulatory compliance.	Thematic/content analysis of 50 Budweiser and Bud Light ads posted on Facebook within 1 month of the 2015 NFL Superbowl.
Griffin et al. [44]	2018	Research report	UK	Alcohol brands', bars' and clubs' social media marketing practices. Young people's engagement with this marketing. Implications for regulation.	Content analysis of 419 social media posts by 5 alcohol brands and 3 venues. Focus groups with 17–19 year olds (11 groups; $N = 53$) and interviews ($N = 22$).
Gupta et al. [66]	2018	Journal article	India and Australia	Marketing strategies used by Indian and Australian alcohol brands and extent of user engagement on YouTube.	Content analysis of 10 alcohol brands' marketing activity on YouTube each in India and Australia and level of user engagement.
Gupta et al. [67]	2018	Journal article	India and Australia	Types of marketing techniques used to facilitate user engagement on popular Indian and Australian alcohol brands' Facebook pages.	Content analysis of 10 most popular alcohol brands on Facebook in India and Australia.
Jones et al. [68]	2018	Journal article	Australia	Young women's understandings of, and interactions with, an advertising campaign for a pre-mixed alcohol product.	Twelve focus groups with 72 women aged between 15 and 25 years.
Purves et al. [69]	2018	Journal article	UK	Young people's use of alcohol brands to develop desired identities and how alcohol consumption extend to young people's profiles on social media.	Focus groups with 14–17 year olds (eight single-sex groups). Thematic analysis of three alcohol brands' activity on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
Roberson et al. [70]	2018	Journal article	USA	Effects of peer and alcohol marketing content on social media on drinking behaviours, drinking norms and permissive attitudes towards drinking.	Survey of 682 college (university) students aged 18–22 years.
Westberg et al. [79]	2018	Journal article	Australia	Alcohol brands use of sport in their communication activities on social media.	Content analysis of social media activity of major alcohol brands sponsoring the AFL, the NRL and Australian cricket.
Alcohol Programs Team at the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA and Cancer Council WA [71]	2019	Research report	Australia	How the alcohol industry targets women.	Thematic analysis of alcohol marketing on Facebook and Instagram that targets women; content identified

TABLE 1   (Continued)

Authors	Year	Publication type	Location	Focus	Design, methods, participants
					through industry trade publications and online news sites.
Gupta et al. [72]	2019	Journal article	India and Australia	Techniques that alcohol brands use to facilitate user engagement with Twitter content and user engagement across India and Australia.	Content analysis of 10 alcohol brands' Twitter activity; brands with highest number of Twitter followers in India and Australia.
Kauppila et al. [73]	2019	Research report	Finland and Sweden	Industry interactions with consumers on social media; tactics to appeal to young consumers; prevalence of user reactions to marketing; breaches of self-regulatory codes/2015 Alcohol Act	Content analysis of social media posts of 38 alcohol producers in Finland, 52 in Sweden, (2740 posts).
Pettigrew et al. [74]	2020	Journal article	Australia	Differences in alcohol ads across different media (tv/cinema, online, print, out of home and radio) and how individual ads contain multiple themes.	Content and thematic analysis of 628 alcohol advertisements.
Atkinson et al. [50]	2022	Journal article	UK	Extent and nature of gendered alcohol marketing content on Facebook and Instagram.	Analysis of 20 alcohol brands social media posts ($n = 2600$) over 18 months.
Atkinson et al. [75]	2023	Journal article	UK	Ways that women who do not drink alcohol negotiate their identities around alcohol marketing	Interviews with 15 women non-drinkers; analysis of Instagram posts by women non-drinkers over 12 months (1640 posts).

interest. We extracted pertinent data from papers providing evidence of digital marketing that represented, targeted and engaged consumers by gender. Where available, we also included how this varied by other markers of identity, such as class, age, ethnicity and/or sexuality. Table 1 provides the key details of all studies, while the Appendix also provides an overview of the studies' aims and key findings. The extracted details were subject to a thematic analysis [76] and the analytic work was led by the first two authors. Semantic (descriptive) and latent (interpretative) codes were developed from the data, using the descriptions and analyses of the data contained in the articles, as well as team members' broader knowledge of the theoretical approaches to this area of work. Ideas and conceptualisations around digital alcohol marketing, gender, and the gendered nature of marketing identified in the studies were discussed with all the authors in ongoing team meetings. Results across the studies were synthesised into broader conceptual

categories around gender, interrogated further through discussion and written summaries, and refined.

At times, latent codes (e.g., gender and identity) were used in cases where the author(s) did not explicitly discuss gender in this way in their work. As the analysis developed it focused in more depth on the gendered nature of brand digital marketing content, promotions, engagement strategies and user interactions, working towards conceptualising the findings in coherent ways to identify how males, females and other genders were targeted and represented in digital alcohol marketing and encouraged to engage and interact with this content.

3 | FINDINGS

The studies described in the 24 articles and reports examined a wide range of online alcohol marketing content, and identified many strategies that alcohol companies

and brands employ to encourage user engagement and interaction, as shown in Table 1. With the exception of work by Atkinson et al. [50, 75] which explored masculinities and femininities in relation to alcohol marketing, researchers did not explicitly theorise gender in their work. Rather, gender was assumed to be binary (only males/females were identified and discussed) and something that is taken-for-granted. Most of this research employed quantitative, content or thematic analysis techniques, to compare differences by gender, including how gender was represented differently in marketing content, and how different genders responded to marketing content.

We used the gender lens outlined in the introduction for this analysis. This led to the identification of three main conceptual themes that captured many of the gendered results reported in the research papers and reports. These were: (i) leveraging a diversity of idealised femininities; (ii) amplifying hegemonic masculinity; and (iii) infiltrating everyday gendered life. These themes are described below with examples from the research reviewed.

3.1 | Leveraging a diversity of idealised femininities

Online marketing of alcohol products that targeted women drew on a range of femininities, including those aligned with idealised traditional femininities (such as being nurturing, attractive, heterosexual, passive, vulnerable and virtuous) and more contemporary femininities (such as exhibiting independence and female empowerment) [49]. Postfeminism captures the idea that neoliberal economic and political factors have shaped idealised femininities so that they are aligned with notions of being economically independent and successful, displaying sexual agency, being assertively attractive, and having individual choice, freedom, and responsibility for decisions and behaviours [50, 77]. These notions were deployed in various ways within alcohol marketing content, demonstrating the fluidity and agility with which alcohol marketing traverses a range of idealised ways of being a woman.

Marketing drew on such feminine ideals through using content that was colourful (often pink but also other bright colours), stylised, pretty, appealing to looking and feeling good and attractive. The research identified how alcohol products were being developed for the female alcohol market specifically with social media marketing in mind. The Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA and Cancer Council WA [71] noted that 'The pink trend is in full swing' with the development and promotion of pink alcohol products designed for 'Instagrammability'. Pink drinks have driven growth in the female market, as noted in the National Liquor News in September 2019:

> 'Pink gin ... is the Instagram-friendly version of a flavoured gin that channels the vibe of rosé into spirit. It's more about colour than flavour, but that distinct pink has already proven hugely successful'. [71]

Online marketing of alcohol products that have been developed, packaged and marketed to be feminine, including ready-to-drink (RTD) spirits, cocktails, wines and certain spirits, reinforces ideas around alcohol and femininity. In addition to the drink being pink, feminine alcohol products have pink and pretty packaging, they tend to have flavours that are sweet and fruity, and they often draw on ideas of slimness and body image. Packaging often explicitly mentioned low calories, and used names such as 'Skinny', and slimmer cans, appealing to feminine desires to be thin and attractive. As noted by Atkinson et al. [50], while women may reject such overt associations with 'girliness' and 'pretty' products, such products now hold postfeminist appeal to women who have reclaimed womanhood as an expression of independence and empowerment.

Digital alcohol marketing linked alcohol products to fashion, make-up and other traditional female interests, and was portrayed 'as much an accessory as a drink' [71]. It drew on celebrity endorsements, and often was linked to feminine accessories such as make-up and clothes. One Vodka Cruiser (RTD) advertisement on Instagram asked 'How was your date? A total waste of make-up #VodkaCruiser', reinforcing the link between the RTD and traditionally feminine products and practices [71]. Marketing also represented alcohol products as healthy and better for you [71] drawing on ideas that link femininity to concern for health and wellbeing [49, 78].

The research showed the relevance of how alcohol marketing and brands represented and allowed the performance of gendered identities. Social media enabled brands to develop gendered brand personalities to project brand values and appeal to target audiences [60]. For example, Budweiser's 'personality' was masculine in nature whereas Smirnoff projected an identity that was female, using 'the silly puns [female] friends might make when chatting to each other' [60]. Engaging with particular brands online, and drinking particular alcohol products, was a way to signify and perform a gendered identity that was appropriate for people's age and class. In Scotland Purves et al. [69] found that drinking cocktails and spirits was seen as more feminine, and Malibu was viewed by young people as a drink for females in their late teens or early 20s, and one that reflected higher

socioeconomic status. In contrast, WKD (a vodka-based RTD) was seen as a 'cheap' product aimed at inexperienced drinkers, females, gay people and very young (even underage) people, inconsistent with a classy, mature female identity. However, some research highlighted young people's scepticism about 'classy' portrayals, such as a group of 18-year-old females discussing a Lambrini (a relatively cheap pear cider) advertisement who said that 'nobody drinks like that, you neck it from the bottle … you drink it to get wasted, they make it look classy and glamorous when it's really people drinking to get out of it' [44].

Female friendship and drinking with female friends were other key parts of marketing targeting women and often included depictions of young women drinking in all female groups, at home in the domestic sphere [44]. Atkinson et al. [50] noted that 'wine and gin brands addressed women through a feminised language of friendship, with words such as *"besties"*, *"bffs"*, *"the girls"*, *"girlfriends"*, *"sisters"*, *"queens"* and the *"ladies in your life"* being used to promote feelings of bonding and solidarity and to encourage group drinking'.

Equality and feminist ideas were used in online marketing to encourage the uptake of traditionally masculine brands such as beer and whisky. An advertisement by Guinness used pictures of the Japanese Women's Rugby Team accompanied by the phrase 'Watch the inspiring true story, and raise your next Guinness to the pioneers of women's rugby'. Similarly, a Jack Daniels post of two identical whisky bottles marked as 'HIS' and 'HERS' with the tag line 'This International Women's Day, let's remember that the bar's always better when it's well balanced' was noted as a way of framing women drinking like men, using notions of equality to encourage consumption [50]. Findings also highlighted that alcohol marketing not only drew on feminist notions of equality and independence, but also aligned products with women's causes, such as Absolut Vodka's 'Sex Responsibility' campaign about gender inequality and charitable collaborations to raise awareness of domestic violence [50].

Findings also highlighted how brands used post-feminist ideas around empowerment, fun, pleasure, experimentation and sexual agency to promote alcohol purchase and consumption [50, 75]. This marketing reinforced more permissive drinking norms for women. Associating alcohol with sexual agency by women was also identified in contemporary YouTube music videos. For example, references to specific alcohol brands in Beyonce's videos were linked to her sexual activity and getting out of control after drinking to intoxication [63].

Although not frequent, some of the data included the objectification of men as physically attractive and muscular, with women invited to be the on-looker rather than the object (e.g., [58]). For example, a Midori post of a picture of the actor Paul Walker asked women if they would like to share a drink with him [55], appealing to a more assertive sexually agential femininity. Users interacted and posted comments such as 'yummy, he's sucha hottie'. Female marketing of this nature was observed as less aggressive or menacing than its masculine counterpart [55]. However, Carah et al. [55] noted that user-generated comments by women (e.g. 'I'd drink the Midori to get the nerve up to talk to such a man and then sleep with him Obviously'), could breach self-regulatory codes that prohibit implying that alcohol could lead to sexual success.

Finally, we noted that almost all the marketing content targeted to women appeared to be focused on younger females, with very little targeting women at midlife or older women. However, a recent study with 15 non-drinking women aged 25–50 years (mostly in their 30s) who did not drink alcohol showed that they were very aware of alcohol marketing more generally, and particularly the ways that marketing messages aligned drinking alcohol with femininity [75]. These women also discussed the feminine trend of 'Mummy wine culture' on social media encouraged by alcohol marketing, that linked drinking alcohol as a way to cope with the stresses of motherhood, juggling multiple domestic and career responsibilities, and mental health issues.

3.2 | Amplifying hegemonic masculinity

Alcohol marketing targeted at men appeared to be less diverse than marketing targeting women in these studies. This marketing primarily drew on notions of dominant, hegemonic versions of masculinity: patterns of social practices that represent idealised ways of being a man which allow men to retain dominance over women and subordinated masculinities [48]. Marketing therefore included representations of (or implied ideas about) heterosexuality, dominance over women, strength, being successful, assertive and independent, as well as particular masculine activities and lifestyles (e.g., being a sportsman or sports fan) [49]. The starting point for this marketing was that 'real men drink' [63] and associating drinking particular products with national masculine identities. For example, Gupta et al. [66] highlighted how Bundaberg aligned content with everyday conversations of working class males in Australia on YouTube to enhance its authenticity and credibility: 'Men like us like Bundaberg rum', 'Men like us like craftsmanship', 'Men like us like rummanship' and 'Men like us like witmanship'.

Sport was a key theme in alcohol marketing targeted at men. Watching sport as a leisure practice, having a

favourite team, being a football fan, and playing sport were all used to link products with masculine identities. In Australia, brands used Facebook and Twitter to link their products with sport, national identity and male gender, as well as engagement strategies such as 'It's not Super Saturday unless there's a [alcohol brand name] in your hand! Who's your team?' to target and engage male consumers [79]. Particular alcohol products were also targeted at men [43, 58, 60], including products that were already aligned with traditional forms of masculinity, such as beer and whisky. Products and their packaging appeared to portray masculine values in a way that appealed to men, such as aligning with men's preference for simple, non-fussy marketing of beer cans [60].

Some marketing designed to appeal to men drew on sexualised imagery, text or the objectification of women. This included sexually suggestive posts, images and photos (e.g., of women who are depicted as attractive, in bikinis or few clothes, sexually available). Some articles explicitly discussed this type of marketing in terms of breaches of alcohol marketing codes. While the wording varies across countries, alcohol marketing codes generally prohibit content that associates alcohol consumption with sexual success or is offensive, anti-social, or linked with 'tough' behaviour. Posts that represented sexual success always implied heterosexuality with women the object of male attention [55, 58, 63, 66, 67, 72]. Some early work from Australia (e.g., [58]) highlighted how users' posts on Facebook pages in response to alcohol promotions or marketing—which were often linked to particular events or national holidays—were demeaning, sexist, misogynistic and crude in a way that went well beyond marketing codes and guidelines. For example, responses to the Facebook post of 'Jim Beam and Fridays go together like _____ and _____' included comments such as 'tits and ass' and 'women and kitchens'. The following post by Wild Turkey (bourbon whiskey), 'Some say Wild Turkey is too strong. We have something for them. It's called a juice box. Bird up', led to some user responses that belittled men who did not conform to hegemonic masculinities, for example, 'give the softs the bird and tell them to man the f...k up' and 'not for girly men'.

Cranwell et al. [63] highlighted a number of YouTube videos which clearly showed alcohol products that were linked with male power and the explicit objectification of women which would be likely to breach UK self-regulatory codes. An international comparison of alcohol advertisements on Twitter and YouTube in 2016 found little evidence of sexist or objectifying content in Australia but many examples in India [66, 72]. For example, in India Kingfisher (beer) uploaded videos on YouTube showing the making of 'KF swimsuit special calendars' with female models in swimming costumes, Bacardi posted 'Bacardi beach' videos with similar content, while White Mischief (vodka) posted images and videos of attractive women lying by a pool drinking vodka, with the tagline 'We're naughty, we're fun and we're here to put you in the mood for mischief [wink emoticon]' [66]. Gupta et al. noted these differences may be due to the limited regulation of digital alcohol marketing in India.

Findings also linked alcohol use with sexual success. Advertisements for Bud Light during the 2015 NFL Super Bowl were considered to violate guidelines by using images of highly attractive women to suggest that consumption would have positive social, physical and sexual consequences for men [65]. For example, one advertisement included a photo of Nicki Minaj with the phrase 'Nicki Minaj don't want none unless you got #Budlight, hun' [65]. However, Atkinson et al. [50] observed a shift away from the objectification and sexualisation of women in alcohol advertising on Facebook and Instagram in the UK in 2020, as well as a decrease in gendered banter that was derogatory to women. They also noted that there was little evidence of breaching restrictions on objectification and sexual stereotypes in marketing codes.

Many studies identified the use of humour in marketing content and particularly in strategies used to elicit user engagement by men [43, 64, 73, 74]. Humorous content often drew on ideas around 'laddishness', 'blokeyness' and gendered banter, that is, playful conversation usually between men characterised by teasing, insults, sexist jokes and competitiveness [80]. This was apparent across most platforms, obtained high levels of user engagement and was shared widely among male friends. At times humour was employed as a way to deflect potential accusations of sexism (or racism, or other forms of harmful content), including the use of ironic constructions [58, 59, 74]. This kind of content sometimes portrayed excessive alcohol consumption, and users were encouraged to engage by sharing stories about their own or others' drunkenness and heavy drinking antics (e.g., see [58]). Funny videos and memes (humorous images often with captions that are designed to be spread online) were highly popular, and some research demonstrated how these were not viewed as alcohol marketing but rather as funny content to be shared with friends. For example, in a New Zealand study, a male participant showed researchers a funny YouTube video about a Carlsberg stunt in Belgium and explained that he did not view this as 'advertising' but rather amusing content that he shared with friends to get a laugh [64].

Overall, strategies aimed at male consumers often employed humour or notions of excessive drinking and hegemonic masculinity to encourage engagement. The ability of users to engage online with brands through likes, comments and shares allowed for the amplification of hegemonic masculinities inherent in brand positioning.

3.3 | Infiltrating everyday gendered life

The digital marketing content in the studies, some of which is outlined in the previous two themes, frequently drew on gendered everyday activities and gendered lifestyles in an attempt to engage more closely and intimately with consumers than is possible through traditional marketing. The nature of social media platforms allows algorithmically derived and delivered personalised (advertising) content to users, a process which takes gender of the user into account. For example, alcohol companies often used sport to associate a brand with hegemonic masculinity and appeal to men [44, 55, 58, 65–67, 72, 79] while they used specific lifestyle interests to appeal to women, such as friendship and socialising, wellness, self-care, weight management, fashion and motherhood [43, 44, 50, 71]. This included online marketing offering consumption suggestions, such as cocktail or food recipes, at particular times of the day [60, 67, 68, 71, 72].

Digital media allowed alcohol companies to 'talk' to consumers through the use of cultural references and gendered imagery and language [60]. Early work showed how Facebook enabled alcohol brands to be incorporated into the mediation of people's everyday lives, associating drinking with certain times and gendered places/everyday practices (such as having a drink on a week night, at the end of the week or public holidays) [58]. Brands also started conversations on social media to encourage interaction with consumers, allowing users to be involved in the marketing and promotion of alcohol products through likes, comments, posting pictures and shares. Carrotte et al.'s [62] survey with over 1000 young adults in Australia found that males were more likely to like or follow alcohol marketing on social media than females. Alcohol brands drew upon 'authentic' gender identities (ones that are 'real', 'true' and 'trustworthy') and gendered behaviours by posting questions that encouraged users to respond and share aspects of their lives and views. For example, Baileys posted that there may be 'therapeutic benefits' from consumption, eliciting 165 comments in response that supported this notion, such as 'very, very true' and 'school holiday sanity saver!!' [55].

A successful engagement strategy identified across the studies was integrating and tying brands into gendered real-world events or activities. Marketing that targeted women linked the product to feminine-oriented events (such as fashion shows and friendship get togethers). For example, Malibu used social media posts at specific times to link weekends with alcohol and to elicit responses from female users who shared their drinking activities, such as pre-loading; 'Girls we need these! To start the night' [60]. In contrast, marketing targeting men was often linked to sporting events, either directly through sponsorship which was shared online or even simply associating a product with an event without official links. For example, WKD released a new 'Brazilian' beer during the 2014 World Cup held in Brazil even though it was not an official sponsor [43]. Across different studies, social media users explained that they engaged more with alcohol marketing when it was tied to real-world events, bars and venues and activations. One US study found that engagement with alcohol marketing on social media was more strongly associated with alcohol consumption for women compared to men, and this was partially through permissive drinking norms [70].

Marketing also linked brands to charity activities, such as Fosters' sponsorship of Movember, 'a health campaign aimed at raising awareness of cancer and mental health among males, in order to associate the brand with masculinity' [45]. Similarly, some studies identified alcohol products seeking to associate themselves with breast cancer awareness and charities, using the pink ribbon symbol to align themselves with women's wellness. Mart and Giesbrecht [61] found 17 examples of products associating themselves with pink ribbon content, including products specifically designed to be inviting to women for this purpose such as 'Hard Pink Lemonade, beer (PYNK Ale, Althea and Saison de Rose); wine (RELAX Pink, Happy Bitch, ONEHOPE, Global Journey and Cleavage Creek); and spirits (Support Her and Chambord vodkas)'.

Overall, evidence suggested diverse gendered strategies for getting users to engage with alcohol brands and products. Although a small number of participants were critical, wary or explicitly resistant to alcohol content marketing on social media, this was less likely when it provided valuable information about events, was linked to gaining something (e.g., through competitions or knowledge) or generated user posts and shares [44, 64, 75].

4 | DISCUSSION

These findings highlight that the marketing of alcohol in digital spaces and on social media is highly gendered. This is especially so in the engagement strategies employed by alcohol companies, which are successful at embedding alcohol brands into everyday gendered activities and lifestyles. Consumers create gendered identities through routine online interactions and engagement with alcohol marketing content, which normalises alcohol within everyday life. Our findings show that a wider and more diverse range of femininities were drawn on to market to women compared to masculinities, and that

postfeminist representations that embrace traditional feminine ideals, contemporary aspirations of empowerment, and more modern ideals of consumerism and agency were identified more frequently in recent studies. By designing a range of different products associated with both traditional and contemporary femininities for the growing female market, alcohol companies can attract new consumers [71]. Such segmented marketing strategies are intensified by the agile way in which digital media can link products to various everyday feminine practices (e.g., cooking, socialising), interests (fashion, wellbeing) and desires (independence, empowerment), further normalising drinking and consumption, thereby increasing sales and profit.

Some alcohol marketing reinforced the notion that transgressing traditional gendered expectations is possible for women through the excessive consumption of alcohol, and other marketing linked gender equality with specific alcohol products. However, linking alcohol marketing to both traditional and more contemporary femininities reinforces the gender order by establishing representations such as seeking approval from men, or life in the domestic sphere, as something that women choose [81]; such representations do not disrupt or unsettle current systems of gender relations or structures, such as patriarchal dominance in economic, social and domestic spheres. Recent research by Atkinson et al. [82, 83] demonstrates how the ways in which women identify with varying class, sexuality and feminist identities will influence how they engage with alcohol marketing relating to 'feminine interests' (such as pink products or calorie claims), highlighting the tensions and opportunities for alcohol marketing seeking to appeal to different groups of women.

Narrow depictions of masculinity tended to be hegemonic and aligned to traditional notions of what it means to be a man, what men like, and what they do. As the female market has grown, together with innovative product development and diverse marketing, it may be that more traditionally masculine products such as beer are being marketed with more extreme portrayals of (tough, strong) masculinity to separate them from other alcohol products that are associated with women (such as cocktails) and enhance their appeal to men.

Alcohol companies' engagement with users online also allowed men to amplify hegemonic masculinity through strategies such as asking them to complete sentences on Facebook pages, or post at real-world events with hashtags. In this way users could say things that were aligned with hyper-masculine behaviours, including posts that were derogatory and demeaning about women, that celebrated excessive consumption and reinforced traditional masculine identities. Humour was used frequently in engagement strategies that targeted males,

encouraging men to respond in humorous ways using lad culture and aggressive forms of masculinity. Humour can function to dampen counter-arguments and enable people to assimilate associations without question [74]. In postfeminist culture, humour and particularly irony, are employed to excuse sexist, misogynistic content and the objectification of women [84, 85]. Using tongue-in-cheek humour and knowingness, this content can dismiss ideas of political correctness particularly around feminism and gender equality. The objectification, sexualisation and humiliation of women on Facebook and Instagram were not as evident in more recent studies, perhaps partially because of the #MeToo movement that gained popularity in 2017 and brought increased attention to sexual harassment globally [86]. There are also commercial incentives for alcohol corporates to align themselves with women's interests [50]. However, there were still examples of sexualising and objectifying women in alcohol promotion and marketing in the studies and on platforms that host different styles of content (e.g., music videos on YouTube), warranting further research on this topic.

We did not identify much alcohol marketing aimed at older women in the studies. This was surprising given the growth in these markets, and the success of the alcohol industry in positioning alcohol as a key coping tool for mid-life women and mothers [17, 87], notions that were resisted in a study with sober women in the United Kingdom [75]. There was also little content that included representations of people from diverse gender groups, ethnicities, sexualities and backgrounds. A recent scoping review on alcohol marketing to sexual and gender minorities concluded that there was little research on digital alcohol advertising to these groups. However, it noted evidence of prevalent marketing to sexual and gender minorities and opportunities for less direct forms of marketing through user-generated content on social media [51].

Gender representations remained largely binary and heterosexual, reinforcing ideas about relations between men and women underpinned by sexual attraction. Nevertheless more recent marketing targeted at women drew on ideas around social justice, Pride and equality (e.g., [50]). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube were the main social media platforms investigated in the studies. Other platforms may contain more diverse marketing strategies and appeal to more varied gender identities due to their user-base. Platforms vary by user gender; for example, in the United States in 2022, Pinterest's users were 70% female, while Twitch's were 71% male [88]. It would therefore be valuable for future research to examine alcohol marketing across a range of platforms with differentiated markets.

Representations of gender fluidity and diverse sexualities, as well as alternative gender identities, may

increasingly appear in digital alcohol marketing as alcohol companies appeal to—and target—a wider range of consumers (e.g., see Emslie et al. [18] and Whiteley et al. [51]). Such targeting is possible with the increasingly automated algorithmic alcohol marketing tools used by social media platforms [89]. Marketing campaigns on social media platforms use algorithms and large data sets to identify and target highly differentiated market segments [89]. This personalised content may be more effective, being tied much more fully into the users' lives.

The findings of this review highlight the need for effective regulation in restricting gendered alcohol marketing in digital spaces. This marketing may cause harm to all genders through using harmful gender stereotypes and reinforcing unequal and unhealthy gender relations, and creating and sharing content that sexualises, objectifies and demeans women (and increasingly men). The latter content is of particular concern as it can undermine initiatives to prevent violence directed towards women and minority genders [90]. The UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct and Promotional Marketing (the CAP Code) seeks to restrict offensive content on gender and gender assignment (as well as sex and success in the alcohol specific code) and proscribes using 'gender stereotypes that are likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence'. However, it is unclear if this phrasing would cover alcohol marketing that co-opts a range of feminine and masculine representations (traditional, subordinate, contemporary, agential) to promote alcohol beverage products, especially given the variable success in upholding such complaints in Australia [71].

Self-regulatory codes (supported by alcohol companies) have had little success in ensuring compliance. They rely on consumer reporting [73, 90] which means that the content has already reached its target audience as reports are always retrospective. Further, enforcing marketing codes and regulation in digital spaces is challenging, given the vast amount of content, including user-generated content and algorithmic personalisation of content [73]. The world-leading 2015 Finnish amendment to its *Alcohol Act* that sought to regulate the use of user content in alcohol marketing has encountered issues in determining what activities are caught (e.g., which user posts), what this means for platforms premised on content-sharing, and how they operate in global environments [73]. The increased use of influencers both in marketing their own and other's products also raises questions as to the extent to which such activities are covered by regulatory schemes and codes [50].

There are limitations to this narrative synthesis. While many studies explored digital alcohol marketing, most did not theorise or include gender in any meaningful way, leading to a relatively small number of studies included in this review. We may have missed some relevant studies because only articles/reports written in English were included. The location of the studies was homogenous, from mainly Western countries (e.g., Australia, UK, USA). The research designs varied, and involved both online content analysis as well as interviews with users; they also included analysis of social media sites, posts, tweets as well as website content. This made synthesising findings challenging, especially when research perspectives and paradigms varied [57]. Nevertheless, this narrative synthesis demonstrates that alcohol marketing on social media is highly gendered and embedded in everyday life and reinforces traditional gendered stereotypes, activities, lifestyles and roles. Engagement strategies are widely used to encourage consumption, in ways that affect gender identities, relations between genders, and views about gender. This pervasive marketing normalises alcohol as ordinary, common and routine, and reproduces harmful gender norms and ignores the structural causes of alcohol-related harm [50].

There are significant opportunities for research on a broader range of existing and emerging social media sites. The studies in this review primarily focused on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Other platforms such as TikTok, SnapChat, Twitch and Discord may illuminate other ways in which alcohol companies represent gender and engage with users given the ages and markets targeted by these apps. There has been some emerging research on TikTok but without commentary of differences between genders [91, 92]. Future research could also usefully focus on the experiences of social media users who engage with online marketing content, given its ability to engage with consumers in multiple and ephemeral ways, leveraging processes of gendered identity creation [93]. Marketing may impact in unintended ways depending on users' age, class and ideas of what it is to be masculine or feminine. How gendered digital marketing varies with other aspects of identity such as sexuality, ethnicity, age and class should also be explored, with a recent scoping review highlighting how alcohol marketing appropriates imagery from gender and sexual minority groups and seeks to create an impression of solidarity and common cause between alcohol companies and these consumers [51].

Innovative and interdisciplinary approaches and methods would be valuable, such as digital ethnography to explore personalised marketing content that appears within users' social media feeds. As alcohol companies continue to innovate their social media approaches in line with developing technical abilities, it will become increasingly important for researchers and policy-makers to understand and investigate non-traditional and targeted digital

marketing strategies. In particular, more work is required on the role of social media influencers who use platforms to promote their own and other's alcohol products. Finally, future research could beneficially determine the extent and reach of gendered digital marketing in emerging alcohol markets such as Asia and Africa [94], where regulatory limitations may be less stringent. This research needs to explore the ways in which alcohol companies are using idealised gendered lifestyles and identity representations to engage specific emerging markets, such as young women in India, for whom drinking alcohol has been heavily proscribed until recently [95].

The digital marketing efforts of large multinational alcohol companies have co-evolved with the growing technical capacities of social media platforms [93]. Digital marketing is frequently no longer clearly identifiable as branded communications, but is embedded, dynamic and rapid [46, 96], blurring the lines between user-generated and commercial content [93]. This kind of marketing and promotion flies under the radar of public scrutiny [93] and is largely unable to be regulated within existing frameworks [89, 97, 98]. Social media provide users with many benefits, including sociality and identity-construction processes, but do so within largely unregulated digital environments that are designed solely for profit-making. This allows the unfettered marketing and promotion of products that are damaging to health, including alcohol [39].

The World Health Organization has identified restricting alcohol marketing as one of the three most cost-effective measures to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm [99] and has recently highlighted the importance of gender-responsive approaches to alcohol control policies [100]. This review highlights the importance of employing gender transformative approaches when developing policy as marketing approaches often target specific genders and reinforce harmful gender norms and relations [100–102]. With the proliferation of smartphones and the ability for social media marketing to engage users in more personal and intimate ways than ever before—across borders and nation states—we need to work towards regulating all alcohol marketing on social media platforms globally [103] and ultimately ban digital alcohol marketing to reduce the acceptability of alcohol in everyday life. This would reduce targeting alcohol products to women, as well as to newly developing gender fluid markets, vulnerable consumers and those in unregulated markets, so that the health of all genders can be improved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Each author certifies that their contribution to this work meets the standards of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
None.

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APPENDIX

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES AND KEY FINDINGS INCLUDED IN THE NARRATIVE SYNTHESIS

#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
1	Atkinson et al. (2014) Research report UK	To explore the key features of contemporary social networking sites (SNS) alcohol marketing strategies used by alcohol brands popular among young people. To examine how young people interact with and interpret contemporary alcohol marketing strategies on SNS, and what role marketing and branding play within their drinking cultures and individual and group identities.	Content analysis of 5 alcohol brands' digital marketing on Twitter and Facebook (FB). Content and thematic analysis of 43 young people's FB profiles. Interviews and group discussions with 70 16– to 20–year-olds (32.5% male).	All 136 posts depicting people had men included, with 91% depicting men only and 9% depicting men and women. Humour used on both platforms, including gendered 'banter'. All users had more interaction with event and venue marketing than alcohol brand marketing. More female than male users (76%) tagged locations and venue/event photos. Participants saw and chose alcohol drinks and brands as associated with symbolic gendered meanings and lifestyle associations. Drinks and brands represented different masculinities and femininities, as well as different ages and social classes, and provided an opportunity to associate or disassociate with different groups. Uploading images associated with certain brands was valued by young women.
2	Carah (2014) Research report Australia	To map the extent of alcohol brand activity on FB in Australia. To examine how the alcohol industry is using social networking platforms to create valuable brands by providing an overview on the types of activities brands undertake, and the types of interactions this is generating. To outline the implications this has for how alcohol marketing is conceptualised and regulated.	Content analysis of the activity of the top 20 alcohol brands on FB in Australia.	Alcohol industry continuously posts extensive content that encourages and stimulates ongoing interaction with consumers. Gendered content was evident in some activities: 1. *Asking consumers to interact.* more involvement from one gender than the other depending on alcohol type, for example, Jacob's Creek wine mostly engaged females and by asking about rules of male rituals some beer and spirits' brands associated with Aussie masculine identities. This led to comments such as how 'Aussie' and blokey they are, expression of bawdy and sexist sentiments, bravado, sense of humour,

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				demeaning, menacing and violent comments directed at women. Posts and products also associated with gendered cultural practices, for example, sport, shopping, fashion, sex and popular culture, reflected in response posts. Pages targeting women occasionally objectify men and those targeting men regularly demean women.
				2. *Activations.* Evidence that these are gendered such as XXXX (beer brand) Gold's XXXX Island aimed at male identity and pastimes; Jim Beam Party Crew with female promotional models' pictures.
				3. *Offering consumption suggestions.* These were highly gendered, such as cocktail suggestions for women.
3	Carah et al. (2014) Journal article Australia	To examine how Australian alcohol brands strategically employ FB to manage their connections with consumers' identity practices and engage with the mediation of everyday life.	Analysis of FB pages run by alcohol brands in Australia in 2011 and 2013. Further analysis of 3 brands (Smirnoff, Jagermeister, VB). Interviews with 35 informants who consume alcohol and use FB.	Alcohol brands use FB to enhance and extend connections between the brand and gendered cultural identities by discussing cultural practices such as sport, music, popular culture and pastimes. For example, VB (beer) consumers promote hegemonic masculine identities in response to FB questions evident in misogynistic content, sincere and ironic constructions of masculinity, saying things the brand can imply but not say, and judging and evaluating friends who have embarrassing 'unmasculine' online identities. The intervention of women allowed for displays of aggressive masculinity and misogyny as defenders of the brand.
4	Purves et al. (2014) Research report UK	To explore how brands use SNS and packaging as part of their marketing activities and how users respond to these activities.	Content analysis of alcohol products on five platforms—FB, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Tumblr. Six alcohol brands—Budweiser, Bulmers, Dragon Soop, Malibu, Smirnoff and WKD.	Brand personality was constructed through cultural reference, use of imagery and language designed to appeal to a particular gender or age group. This was also reflected in packaging. Brand personalities can be masculine (Budweiser), feminine (Malibu and Smirnoff), or appeal to both genders (WKD).

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#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
			Eight focus groups each with six participants aged between 14 and 17 (analysed with grounded theory).	Associations with everyday activities and other brands were gendered. Focus groups highlighted gender in direct responses to the brand, self-presentation and in using the brand as a platform for conversation.
5	Carah et al. (2015) Research report Australia	To identify if content posted by alcohol brands to FB meets regulatory codes and whether current regulatory codes are appropriate for regulating alcohol brand activity on FB.	Review of 40 items of Australian alcohol brand content posted to FB in 2012.	Regulatory breaches relating to gender included: sexist and degrading sentiments, often with violent or menacing undertones, and content implying that alcohol consumption is associated with sexual prowess. Most examples related to men (e.g., beers, spirits). Asking users to complete sentences elicited highly sexist, degrading, offensive comments, vilifying women, sometimes referencing violent sexual acts and gendered stereotypes about women being objects, submissive or domestic servants. Only two brands targeted women; one had comments that sexualised and objectified men but with no violence or menace. One targeted middle-aged women (Baileys) linking it to identities and therapeutic benefits.
6	Mart and Giesbrecht (2015) Journal article USA	To document alcohol products and promotions that use the pink ribbon symbol and related marketing materials that associate alcohol brands with breast cancer charities, awareness and survivors.	Review of official product websites, press releases and posts to social media platforms such as FB, Twitter and Pinterest, along with news stories and blog posts from industry and non-industry organisations.	17 examples of marketing using the pink ribbon and related content. Promotional content contained alcohol product connections to related breast cancer survivors; brand engagement with celebratory breast cancer survivors; alcohol sponsorship of breast cancer fundraising events; use of social media for user engagement (e.g., user uploaded photos); and sexually oriented content.
7	Carrotte et al. (2016) Journal article Australia	To describe patterns of liking and following different types of alcohol marketing social media pages, and determine if these are related to patterns of alcohol consumption.	Survey of 1001 Australians aged 15–29 years (72.2% female, 26.96% male, 0.4% transgender, 0.3% other, 2 unknown).	Males were significantly more likely to be fans of beer, alcohol brands in general, alcohol retailers and alcohol marketing pages in general. 'Liking' or following an alcohol marketing page was significantly associated with male gender.

#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
8	Cranwell et al. (2016) Journal article UK	To describe the portrayal of alcohol content in popular *YouTube* music videos. To explore the lyrics and visual imagery of songs and musical videos and to examine if branded content contravened alcohol industry advertising codes of practice.	Thematic analysis of 49 top UK Top 40 songs and music videos previously found to contain alcohol content watched by British adolescents aged between 11 and 18 years. Inductive thematic analysis	Alcohol content was associated with sexualised imagery or lyrics and the objectification of women. Mixture of traditional and non-traditional roles of masculinity and femininity represented. Alcohol was used to conceptualise male power and associated with objectification of women, and attributed to male sexual process or success. Female drinking was associated with traditional femininities and portrayed as masculine and deviant, but also non-traditional notions of femininity that binge drinking is associated with pleasure and fun. Associations with females as sexually agential, powerful and confident were also evident.
9	Atkinson et al. (2017) Journal article UK	To provide a systematic analysis of official and user generated/industry instigated content on brand SNS profiles and user interaction with brand content. To highlight young people's perspectives and experiences regarding alcohol marketing on SNS.	Content analysis of five popular alcohol brands' SNS marketing and user-interaction on FB and Twitter (Smirnoff, Budweiser, Strongbow, Fosters and WKD) Inductive thematic analysis of semi-structured group interviews (*n* = 14) with young people aged 16–21 years (*n* = 70).	Marketing of brands on FB used gendered lifestyle associations (e.g., football) (*n* = 96, 22%) and the depiction of drinker prototypes. All posts (30%, *n* = 136) that depicted a person presented men; women were not depicted as protagonists and when they were depicted (3%, *n* = 12) they were shown with men. Humour as gendered banter used on FB (13%, *n* = 56) and Twitter (10%, *n* = 15). Gendered sponsorship of health campaigns, for example, Movember associated Fosters with masculinity. Young people appeared to be influenced in product choice by gendered lifestyle and cultural meanings presented within brands, connotations of masculinity and femininity, and maturity. For example, young women paid attention to aesthetics of drinks and associated 'nice' and 'pretty' drinks with femininity. Embedding beer brands in cultural activities such as sport reinforced brands as masculine or 'lads' drinks. Ability to engage with branded event marketing also

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#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
				allowed young women in particular to document their participation in night-time economy.
10	Niland et al. (2017) Journal article New Zealand	To provide an in-depth examination of young adults' interactions with alcohol marketing from within their own social networking practices.	Thematic analysis of online FB interviews with four females, three males, including 'go-along' online navigation of FB pages and sites.	Evidence of gendered drinks (Vodka cruiser discussed by females) and associations with hegemonic masculinities and masculine interests: (i) male participant showed YouTube video with gendered humour about a Carlsberg stunt in Belgium of tough-looking men in cinema, which he didn't view as 'advertising' but funny user-generated content that he shares with friends; (ii) male participant showed a music festival page branded with Jim Beam, using sexual innuendo with scantily clad female revellers and reference to 'hotties'; (iii) female participant showed the Tui page liked by her friends that deliberately targets young men with sexist, off the wall, laddish humour.
11	Noel and Babor (2017) Journal article USA	To evaluate alcohol advertising on FB for regulatory compliance and thematic content.	Analysis of 50 Budweiser and Bud Light ads posted on FB within 1 month of the 2015 NFL Superbowl. Code violation scoring and thematic content analysis.	Code violation rate was 82%. More than 50% of ads violated the guideline against social, physical and sexual consequences of alcohol use. At least 50% of ads contained male characters adventure/sensation seeking or referenced sports. Analysis highlighted a high prevalence of content that may be attractive to young men, including adventure/sensation seeking, sports and partying.
12	Griffin et al. (2018) Research report UK	To review current social media marketing practices aimed at young people by bars and clubs as well as alcohol brands. To investigate how young people below and above legal age for purchasing alcohol engage with social media marketing by brands and venues.	Mixed-methods content analysis of 419 social media marketing posts by five alcohol brands and three venues on Twitter, FB and Instagram in 2016. 11 focus groups ($n = 53$) 17–19 years approx. 22 individual interviews with laptop to look at social media marketing posts.	Themes in social media posts by brands and venues included male and female consumers, associations with sex and links to interests (including gendered interests such as sport). Males and female consumers represented differently in posts, those aimed at women (e.g., Malibu and Lambrini) associated with dieting or depicted white, young,

#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
				heterosexual women drinking in all female groups in the domestic sphere.
		To assess the effectiveness of the current Code of Practice for regulating social media marketing.		Participants in focus groups, particularly older respondents, saw ads as lacking in authenticity—group of females commenting on Lambrini ad says nobody drinks like that, 'you neck it from the bottle … you drink it to get wasted', they make it look classy and glamorous when it's really people drinking to get 'out of it'.
13	Gupta et al. (2018a) Journal article India and Australia	To examine and compare the types of strategies used by marketers on Indian and Australian alcohol brands with the greatest YouTube presence, and the extent to which users engage with these strategies.	10 alcohol brands each in India and Australia with the greatest YouTube presence on basis of subscriptions. Number of videos, view per video and type of content were collected for each brand. inductive coding.	A range of marketing strategies was utilised by brands in both countries. Common strategies included time and event specific drinking, sponsorship of music, fashion and sporting events, and competitions and giveaways. Included examples indicated gendered approaches, such as appealing to masculine or feminine interests.
				Australian brands were more likely to portray heritage and tradition appealing to Australian masculine identities by aligning with the everyday conversations of working class males (e.g., 'Men like us like Bundaberg rum', 'Men like us like craftsmanship',).
				Four Indian brands published posts containing sexually suggestive content. This included Kingfisher 'KF swimsuit special calendars', 'Bacardi beach' videos and White Mischief content of attractive women in revealing clothing lying by a pool and drinking vodka with suggestive tag lines.
14	Gupta et al. (2018b) Journal article India and Australia	To investigate the extent of user engagement with alcohol brand content	10 most popular alcohol brands on FB in India and Australia based on the number of 'likes' for each official brand site. Metrics collected related to number of likes, frequency of posts made by alcohol marketers on their brand websites and the resulting	Brands sought to align and embed themselves with users' interests through posts, including with memes to add humour and 'savviness'. Also promoted brands at cultural, music, fashion and sporting events.
		To examine and compare the types of marketing techniques utilised to facilitate user engagement on popular Indian and Australian alcohol brands' FB pages.		Some posts included sexually suggestive content (e.g., White Mischief posted images of women in revealing clothing at brand-

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#	Authors publication year type of publication location	Research questions/aims	Methods and analysis	Findings relating to gender
			comments from fans, and messages relating to responsible drinking.	sponsored events; Budweiser posted images of women wearing swimsuits by pool enjoying beer), providing the opportunity for users to post similar comments. Links with gendered interests of sporting events and demonstrations of cocktail and food recipes (e.g., Smirnoff cocktail, Baileys cheesecake) apparent.
15	Jones et al. (2018) Journal article Australia	To explore young women's understandings of, and interactions with, an advertising campaign for a pre-mixed alcohol product that appeared to be promoting pre-drinking.	Thematic analysis of interpretations of messages communicated of 12 focus groups with 72 women aged between 15 and 25 years in Melbourne.	The participants viewed the advertisement as having visual appeal, describing it as pretty, cool, fun, arty and happy. Older participants commented it would be more appealing to younger girls. Women saw the target audience to encourage pre-drinking as young (including underage) women.
16	Purves et al. (2018) Journal article UK	To explore how alcohol brands are used by young people to develop their desired identities and how these acts of consumption extend to young people's profiles on social media.	Thematic analysis of 8 single-sex focus groups with young people aged 14–17-years-old in Central Scotland. Thematic analysis focussed on three alcohol brands (Budweiser, Malibu and WKD) on FB, Twitter and YouTube.	Gender and age, socio-economic status and sexuality were important aspects in young people's views on drink and brand acceptability and appeal. Young people aged 14+ were selecting products to portray a drinking identity that was appropriately aligned to their gender and sexuality. Budweiser seen as having strong male associations and targeted to the male football fan, as well as mature middle-class drinkers. Vodka was associated with immaturity and working-class binge drinking. Malibu viewed as for female in late teens early 20s and also reflected higher SES. WKD was seen as for females, younger kids, lower SES and non-heterosexuals. Drinking cocktails and spirits seen as more feminine. Participants were keen to associate themselves with the mature, middle-class drinking culture personified by some brands, while simultaneously distancing themselves from immature drinking practices or gender-inappropriate ideals associated with others.

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17	Roberson et al. (2018) Journal article USA	To examine the direct effects through social media of: (i) peers; and (ii) alcohol marketing on drinking behaviour, and the indirect effect of peers and alcohol marketing through drinking norms and permissive attitudes towards drinking.	Survey of 682 college (university) students aged 18–22 years old.	Greater engagement with alcohol marketing related to perceiving more drinks consumed by others. Peer influences have a greater impact on drinking behaviour for men compared to women. Marketing receptivity has a greater impact on drinking behaviour and permissive drinking attitudes in women compared to men. The authors argue that this may be related to 'the ever-changing marketing strategies used by alcohol brands such as active lifestyles, low calorie, weight control, health claims'.
18	Westberg et al. (2018) Journal article Australia	To examine how alcohol brands use sport in their communication activities on social media.	Content analysis of social media activity of major alcohol brands sponsoring the AFL, the NRL (including the popular 'State-of-Origin' matches between the states of New South Wales and Queensland) and Australian cricket during the latter part of 2013 and throughout most of 2014.	Four sport-related social media strategies were identified which act as 'calls to action' to encourage consumers to engage and interact (competition, collaboration, celebration and consumption) with alcohol brands, often involving co-creation of content and social activation. These strategies were strengthened by drawing upon themes of identity (e.g., sport, nationalism, male gender) and camaraderie to resonate with the consumer. For example, asking questions like 'Who's your team?' or 'Who are you tipping to lift the trophy?' Message narratives also tapped into gender, particularly the ideals of masculinity, given the strong male skew of the sport audience.
19	Alcohol Programs Team at the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA and Cancer Council WA (2019) Research report Australia	How does the alcohol industry target women?	Industry trade publications and online news sites searched for references to women and females, from this identified a list of alcohol brands and then official FB and Instagram pages were searched for examples of ads aimed at women. Thematic analysis of digital marketing targeting women.	Three themes identified: (i) 'The pink trend is in full swing': the development and promotion of pink alcohol products; (ii) 'As much an accessory as a drink': links alcohol products to fashion, make-up, or other stereotypical female interests and/or activities, or promotes products as a lifestyle choice;

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				(iii) 'Better for you alcohol choice': marketing that promotes alcohol products as being lower in calories or 'better for you'. Inappropriate alcohol promotions, targeting young women, using health-related claims such as low sugar, low calorie, natural ingredients. Creation of new products, lifestyle messages underpinned by gender stereotypes, messages of empowerment, offers of stereotypical feminine accessories.
20	Gupta et al. (2019) Journal article India and Australia	To evaluate the techniques alcohol brands use to facilitate user engagement with content on leading Indian and Australia Twitter brand pages and the extent to which users engage with this content in these two countries.	Content analysis of 10 alcohol brands with the greatest Twitter presence in India and Australia based on # of followers. Number of tweets, photos and videos were collected and the type of content noted for each brand between 1 January 2016 and 29 February 2016.	In India brands used more sexually suggestive content (e.g., Sunburn Music Festival with models in swimming costumes and asking for selfies to appear with models in calendar); Australian brands drew more on notions of heritage or tradition. Brand sponsorship also differed across countries and was gendered, such as sponsorship of sport, music and fashion, consumption suggestions, competitions, giveaways, memes.
21	Kauppila et al. (2019) Research report Finland and Sweden	To examine the prevalence of user reactions to marketing, whether marketing breached self-regulatory codes or 2015 Alcohol Act, how the industry interacts with consumers and how they appeal to young consumers.	Content analysis of social media posts of 38 alcohol producers in Finland, 52 in Sweden, in January 2014, January 2016, January 2017 (2740 posts).	FB most important platform 2014–2016. Marketing that appealed to youth included humorous posts, sport-related posts and those linked to gender such as beer breaking down traditional gender roles, sexualised bodies. Marketing that was specifically targeted at women related to products or events for women (e.g., introducing a special beer for International Women's Day and a brewing course for girls)—although only nine posts were interpreted as targeting solely women.
22	Pettigrew et al. (2020) Journal article Australia	To undertake an analysis of alcohol ads across a broader range of media (tv/cinema, online, print, out of home and other [radio]) to determine whether specific themes are more commonly used in particular media categories.	628 Australian alcohol advertisements were coded according to media used for dissemination and themes known to be attractive to children and young people or problematic in other ways (humour, sport, mateship/friendship, manliness, value for money, buying	The largest proportion of ads were in the out-of-home category (41%), followed by the online category (27%). Within the online ads, humour was present in 24% of ads, followed by value for money (18%), sports (22%) and bulk purchases (14%). Humour often co-occurred with themes related to gender, including 59% of ads with a sexual attraction

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			in bulk, partying, sexual attraction and adrenaline activities).	theme, 40% of ads depicting mateship/friendship, 31% of ads depicting manliness and 27% of ads with a partying theme.
23	Atkinson et al. (2022) Journal article UK	To identify the extent and nature of gendered alcohol marketing content on FB and Instagram paying attention to how women were targeted, represented and engaged to encourage alcohol use.	Analysis of 20 alcohol brands social media posts ($n = 2600$) over 18 months.	Drinking was presented as a feminine practice and an important component of 'doing' a combination of traditional, post-feminist and feminist femininities. Women were assigned a range of gender roles that acknowledged their individual pleasures and achievements, and traditional gender roles and stereotypes were both reinforced and rejected to promote alcohol use. No sexualising/demeaning women was evident, rather a shift to feminist and equality messages which may appeal to a wider range of women, including those embracing feminist identities. Similar strategies were used to target men and women, but content was distinct and highly gendered.
24	Atkinson et al. (2023) Journal article UK	To explore how women who do not drink alcohol manage and negotiate their identities in contexts where alcohol products are marketed as a defining feature of feminine identities.	In-depth interviews with 15 women. Instagram content produced by women in the sobriety community over a 12-month period (1640 posts), text analysed thematically.	Being sober gave the women a heightened awareness of how marketing dominates everyday life, and alcohol marketing was described as 'omnipresent', in multiple places and formats (including online). Marketing that linked alcohol to feminine identities of mother, female friend and the empowered woman was challenging for participants. Participants reworked their performance of femininity as sober women by drawing on traditional notions such as control and respectability as well as newer postfeminist notions such as empowerment and independence.