

# Apple Cider Vinegar Weight Loss Drinks on Pinterest

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## INTRODUCTION

Apple cider vinegar (ACV), which is made of probiotics, B-vitamins, and polyphenols, is a result of the fermentation of sugar and the sourness of acetic acid (University of Chicago Medicine, 2018). ACV has become widely viewed and purchased as a tool for weight loss, specifically by women, as well as a treatment for a plethora of other health issues including blood pressure, metabolic rates and blood sugar level.

The use of apple cider vinegar has been covered in mainstream media and widely shared on social media yet there is limited evidence of its effectiveness outside of a controlled environment. ACV in a controlled lab environment with diabetic and obese individuals, demonstrated positive, statistically significant results for several health issues, however, these results have minimal evidence for application or effectiveness in regular daily life outside of clinical trials.

Inaccurate or unproven health information is often portrayed on social media, Pinterest specifically, with several other studies examining how these claims are portrayed.

**Pinterest has more than 322 million active users** and is a powerful consumer influence tool. In addition, **40% of consumers claim that information found via social media affects the way they deal with their health**, and 87% of Pinterest users have made a purchase as a result of a pin.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the popularity of Pinterest and an increase of apple cider vinegar drinks being introduced, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

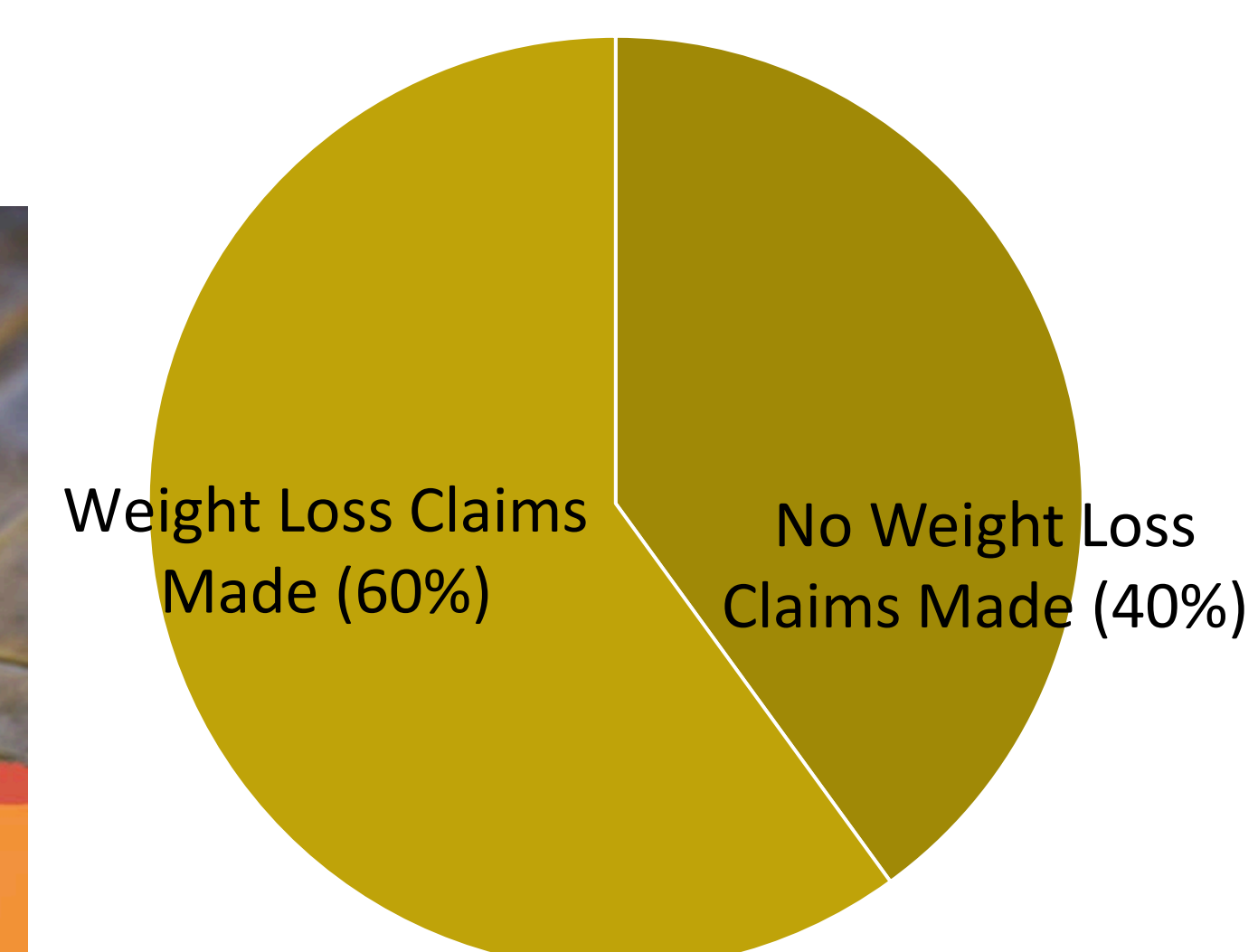
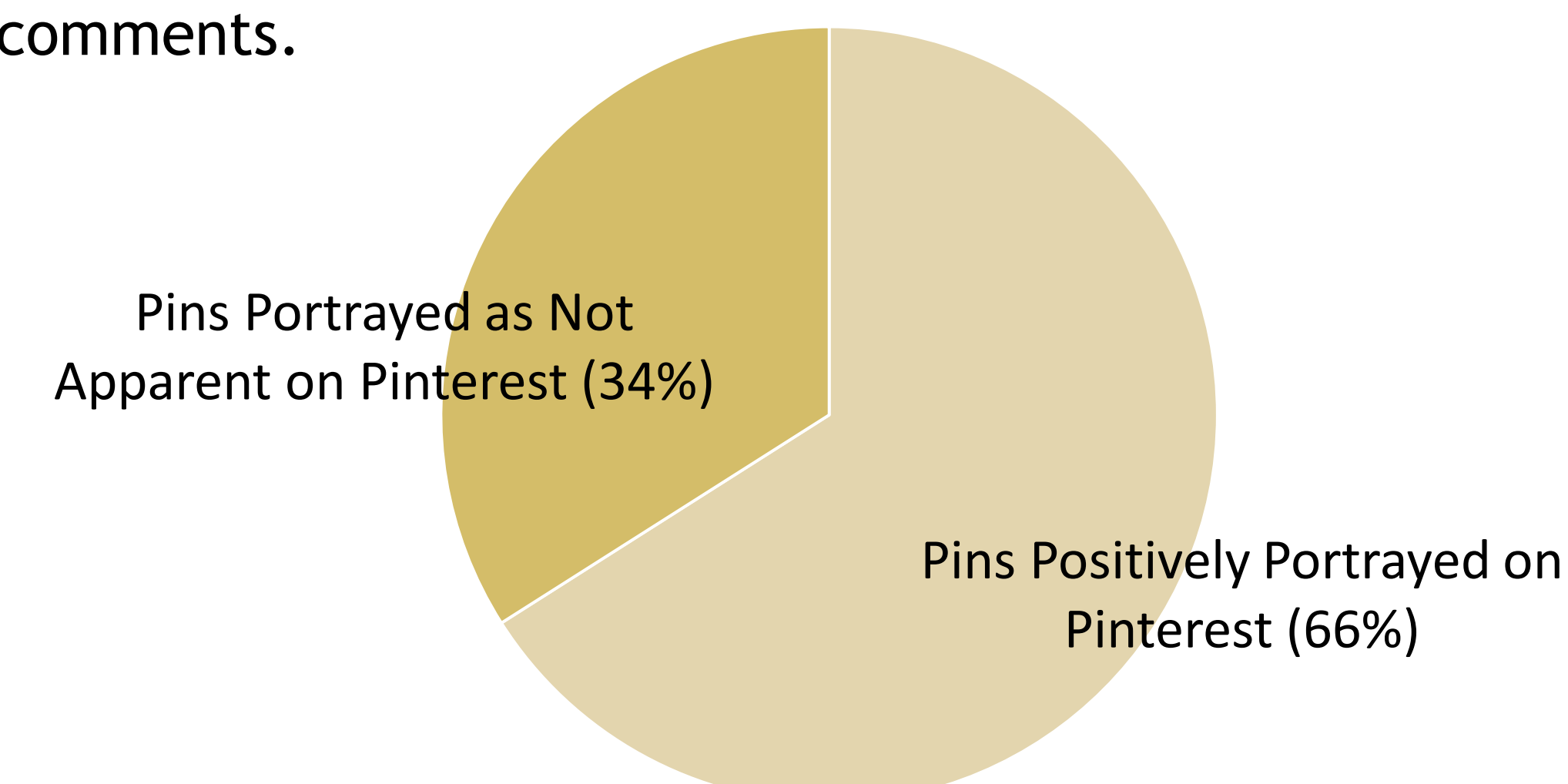
- 1 How are apple cider vinegar drinks portrayed on Pinterest?
- 2 What health benefit claims are being mentioned on Pinterest about apple cider vinegar drinks?
- 3 How do users engage with apple cider vinegar drinks on Pinterest?

## METHODS

Using the search terms, "apple cider vinegar weight loss drinks," researchers sampled every fifth pin to collect 200 relevant pins. A codebook was developed, pilot tested, and used for this study using code categories from previous health-related Pinterest studies.

## RESULTS

Of the 200 pins, the majority of pins (66%) positively portrayed the effectiveness of apple cider vinegar drinks for weight loss, and 36% contained images of a drink. Weight loss claims for specific pounds lost were made in 60% of pins, however the majority of those pins did not present a specific amount of pounds that will be lost from drinking apple cider vinegar. In addition, a time frame for weight loss promised was only present in 15% of pins. In this sample of pins, 6% of pins had comments.



## CONCLUSION

Social media is a powerful source of health information, however, there is evidence of misleading and potentially dangerous weight loss methods being propagated. This study revealed widespread interest and acceptance of insufficient weight loss drink information. We identified two key takeaways:

- 1 Due to lacking regulations on Pinterest, false information about the effect of apple cider vinegar can be shared. While apple cider vinegar has been shown to aid in weight loss, it was done under controlled conditions and this is not what Pinterest is portraying.
- 2 The inaccurate portrayal of apple cider vinegar for weight loss could have negative effects on body image for those exposed to these potentially hazardous weight loss methods. The unrealistic promises of pounds lost in very short time frames, such as losing 10 pounds in 3 days and burning fat without having to do any e, can result in a warped sense of reality in terms of losing weight. This particularly applies to young women, who for most of the pins pulled in this study were the target audience.

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