
HUMOUR IN ADVERTISING

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Abstract: Advertising can be used to create brand images and symbolic appeals for a company or brand. There are many components in advertising. Humour is one among the popular and eye-catching tool to reach the mass. Advertisers use this strategy to attract customers to their product. The key to funny advertising is assuring the humour is appropriate to both product and customer. This study gives a broader perspective about humour in advertising. The main objective of the study is to analyse why have the recent past humorous advertisements failed to gain attraction. This paper is an overview of Humour in Advertising which also covers topics like its impact on sales, target audience of it, products which suits humorous advertisement, advantages and dis-advantages of humour in advertising, types of humour used, and future implications in humorous advertisements.

Advertising: The term 'Advertising' is defined as any paid form of non-personal communication about an organisation, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor (Belch). It is considered to be one of most powerful tool of marketing. To be in specific, Advertising is a part of the promotional mix. Companies spend a huge amount of money in advertising, since it is a very cost effective method of communicating with large audiences. PepsiCo spends nearly US\$1263.4 (Million) only in advertisement. What is funny to one individual can be uninteresting or even irritating to another. Commercial and print ads use some form of appeal to reach potential customers. Advertisers use appeal to influence a customer to purchase a product or support a cause. Appeals speak to an individual's need, wants or interest. The most common advertising appeals include use of fear, humour, rational, sex or bandwagon propaganda.

The hard-sell and soft-sell approach used in advertising demonstrate two very different ways of selling product, based respectively on extolling benefits or provoking subtle emotional responses. No right or wrong way exists to present a product because the success is always measured by consumer response. If customers purchase more product because of the urgency of a hard-sell advertising campaign, then that advertising client is more apt to use that approach in the future. Understanding how each advertising approach operates will help you determine which one is right for your business.

Introduction:

Humour: Humour appeals make consumers laugh and create an emotional link with the product. A well-executed creative humour appeal enhances recollection, evaluation and the intent to purchase the product. Advertisers link the product with the humour. For example, a humorous insurance ad hits the mark when the humour shows the consumer why having insurance is beneficial. Using humour at the expense of one group may lead to resentment. Senior citizens may resent a product that

portrays them as grumpy, while women may refuse to purchase a product that portrays them as overbearing. Humorous ads work best with established and commonly purchased products such as cell phones, fast food and alcoholic beverages.

Humours make the ads more memorable and tend to be more impactful. Humour is a common element in soft-sell advertising, according to the "Advertising Age" website. Humour is used to get the consumer's attention without being too direct in the sales pitch. The

advertiser is using humour to associate a positive feeling with the product. The approach looks to entertain the viewer rather than make the viewer feel like she is watching a commercial. Though manipulation checks are made to ensure humorous treatments are rated as funnier than serious versions of the same advertisement, experimenters have implicitly assumed that all subjects exposed to a given humorous commercial will perceive it as equally amusing.

Types of humour: The mechanisms that govern humour can be grouped into three broad categories: affective, cognitive and interpersonal. Affective mechanisms provide a safety valve for forbidden feelings so that humour is seen as a healthy adaptive behaviour. Cognitive mechanisms are related to message structure. Things like incongruity, rhetorical irony, mere surprise or inconsistency can provoke humour. Interpersonal humour reflects the social context in which humour occurs. Humour, for example, may be the result of feeling superior to others (jokes, puns, and so on are used to evoke such a feeling).

There are several approaches to humour. It includes exaggeration, comparison, slapstick, sarcasm, pun, understatement & irony.

Humour's link to the brand: When companies strive towards gaining brand identity and brand image, humour in advertising has got the power to improve brand recognition. People pay more attention to a humorous commercial than a factual or a serious one, opening themselves up to be influenced. Humorous advertisements create an easy approach vibe towards the product. Humour as such is a complex topic that has been under experimentation by advertisers in several dozen studies over the past years. Humour can be a great differentiator for any product.

Underlying this popularity is the belief that humour improves advertising effectiveness. Still unresolved is whether humour can improve audience comprehension and subsequent recall

of a commercial message. Still there are several unanswerable questions under this topic. Generalizations about humour and its effect are fraught with pitfalls (Stewart-Hunter). Therefore some of the appropriate questions are

- Does it have the impact on sales?
- What communication goals are likely to be achieved through the usage of humour?
- Do all products work well with humour advertising or is there any product specification? 4. For what audience is humour most appropriate?
- Does humour make advertisements more effective?

Humour has the ability to break down barriers, push boundaries as well as provide a simple level of enjoyment. It must relate directly to the business. Choice of media can have a substantial influence on the effect of the humour, because humour may be perceived differently depending on whether the medium is public or private. Online ads are a great example of ads which are generally initially viewed privately. But when the most successful online ads go viral, they can enjoy a very public life; this is a consideration when you intend your ad to go viral (although it is always worth remembering that only a small proportion of ads achieve this).

Advertisers must remember that while making the customer laugh, they have to keep things interesting, because old jokes die along with their products. Henceforth the way humour should be handled also matters. Here comes the picture of 'type of humours'.

Humour should not be the only form of advertising a company's product. Particularly when the company sells out a very specific product, they need to give customers valuable purchasing information and specifics, but without hitting them over the head with it.

Another point to consider when using humour in advertising is that different things are funny to different people. Humorous advertisements are often expensive because they have to be

constantly changed. Humour has the power to enhance positive attitude towards a brand and engage with a broader audience.

Consumer behaviour towards humour:

Humour has a universal language. It doesn't need degrees in obscure languages, hardly ever in Clinical Psychology and it is one of the few devices used to make people smile and think at the same time. Humour has been widely used in advertising. However, while humour has attained popularity in advertising, its use is continuously being debated. There is a son for this debate is that there are a number of both positive and negative effects, which can be attributed to the use of humour.

Occasionally adding humour into the equation when its least expected can be a great way to show customers that you care not just about their individual satisfaction. The reason why many advertising and marketing experts suggest you do use humour is because it's fundamental to forming positive relationships. We buy from people we like, and humour is the easiest and fastest way to get there.

Humour Commercials and Negativity:

Remember, humour commercials aren't really about advertising humour at all. Humour is not, and never has been, a magic wave of increasing numbers of humorous advertisements that may lead one into overstating the case for humour in advertising. It is important to understand that humour can be appropriate and effective in some situations and not in others. If humour is not projected in relation to the brand, you will run the risk of people having a great laugh and enjoying the advertisement, but completely failing to recall what the product service was. When humour exceeds it can maximise entertainment but the product identity get submerged.

Reasons for failure of humour advertisements

- Too much of product messaging
- Do not focus on product recall
- Too much product promotion

- Lack of proper target market
- Immeasurable and unrealistic expectations
- Lack of variety
- No linkage to the brand and advertisement

Usage of humour in advertising effectively:

Advertising has a great influence on our lives. Today's advertisements also inform and guide many of the important decisions we make. The way advertisements are affecting and shaping our attitude, lifestyle and culture are too many to tally. (Berger, 2001) Businesses spend lots of money every year to create humorous prime time TV advertisements because advertisements practitioners believe that humour is an effective means to gain attention in advertisements. According to Weinberger and Gulas (1992) while the use of humour is high, the efficiency of humour as a communications device remains uncertain. It attempts to delineate its impact; humour has proven to be very elusive. Any campaign you work on has the objective of selling. But if you break down the process, sales never come first.

Best examples of humorous advertisement of recent past – PNB Paribas, Godrej DVD Player, Fevicol, Glycodin, McDonald, Greenply plywood, Airtel Internet – FB, The Hindu, Anchor toothpaste, Pepsi, Bingo, Kurkure etc.

Emotional branding with humour: Emotional branding is the most powerful tool we have at our disposal as ad copy writers. It is how we take humorous advertisements and make them into the best television ads we can make. Emotional branding takes advertising humour and gives it substance, because what is humour in advertising without something to go along with it to give it substance? In reality, advertising humour is nothing more than negative emotions made socially acceptable by emotional branding. The funniest commercials are actually the ones that embody some of the nastiest emotions we are capable of feeling. When you look at the goals from an emotional branding point of view, you realize that humour in advertising is nothing more than a way to make the negative emotions we feel every day more

socially acceptable. So find out what your customers really hate the most and throw those things into your humorous advertisements to truly endear yourself to the customer.

Persuasion of humour in advertising: Humour in advertising is pervasive, cutting across all media and numerous product categories (Catanescu & Gail, 2001; Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell & Parsons, 1995). The impact of humour in advertising has received considerable attention in the marketing and advertising literature, but findings are often inconsistent and much remains unclear (Cline, Altsech & Kellaris, 2003; Smit, Van Meurs & Neijens, 2006; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Studies tend to address one or more of four themes that revolve around the impact of humorous versus non-humorous ads. Much remains to be learned about when humour in advertising is appropriate and effective. Some of the most successful advertising campaigns over the years involve humour.

Conclusion: Humour in advertising tends to improve brand recognition, but does not improve product recall, message credibility or buying intentions.

Prior investigations of the impact of humour on advertising message comprehension have

generally found humorous commercials to be more effective than comparable serious messages.

Examination of broadcast and print advertising suggests that humour is a widely accepted form of commercial appeal.

Studies have shown that 94% of advertising experts see humour as an effective way to gain attention. Today around half of all the ads globally make use of humour.

55% of advertising research executives believe humour to be superior to non-humour in gaining attention.

Done right, it achieves success. Doing it right means not only engaging the prospect but getting them to remember the product.

Humour may be addictive. Scientists tell us that humour blocks stress hormones and stimulate endorphins or other chemical reactions and produces euphoric effects similar to mood-altering drugs.

Humour in ads makes more enjoyable, involving and memorable.

Newness in humour, leading to high brand recall, getting the right blend of humour, getting the timing right should be the future implications in humorous advertisements.

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