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Humor in advertising

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Humor in advertising

Abstract

Advertising has an effect on all of us. Our homes are filled with proof of that fact. Advertisements have influenced people to buy anything from toothpaste to automobiles. Behind each one of those items people were persuaded to purchase is a creative marketing and advertising strategy. Advertising has become a science and an art form which requires effort and time for maximum effectiveness.

HUMOR IN ADVERTISING

A Research Paper
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Communication and Training Technology

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This Research Paper by: Kimberly Recker

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has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Training Technology.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Advertising has an effect on all of us. Our homes are filled with proof of that fact. Advertisements have influenced people to buy anything from toothpaste to automobiles. Behind each one of those items people were persuaded to purchase is a creative marketing and advertising strategy. Advertising has become a science and an art form which requires effort and time for maximum effectiveness.

Definition of Humor

According to Webster's Dictionary (1973), humor is defined as "something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing" (p. 557). Although philosophers and psychologists disagree on the nature of humor, "they do agree that the effect of humor is pleasure" (Lewis, 1979, p. 63). In simple and general terms, people like and enjoy humor. To define humor three elements need to be considered: (a) the source that may create humor; (b) the thought process an

Individual goes through that leads to a humorous experience; and (c) the behavioral response of smiling and laughter (Apte, 1985). Laughing and smiling are the most visible indicators to determine the occurrence of humor.

Purpose of Paper

A good advertisement is one that people remember, and humor is one tool to make people not forget that advertisement. Millions of dollars are spent on humorous advertisements every year. What makes a humorous advertisement successful? What products are best suited for the use of humor? What is the best medium for communicating humor? What people are most influenced by humor? When and how should humor be used in advertising? What are the advantages and disadvantages of humor? These questions will be addressed in this paper to bring a clearer understanding and provide some framework on the use of humor in advertising through research findings, theoretical models, and experience from successful advertising agencies.

Summary

In summary, humor is something funny or entertaining that people enjoy. Humor can be used as a powerful advertising tool if used wisely and discretely. This paper will provide guidelines for the use of humor to develop successful humorous advertisements.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theories of Mass Communication

There are several theories which try to explain how and why people react and respond differently or similarly to advertisements. These theories, or perspectives, will be presented in the following order; magic bullet theory, individual differences perspective, social categories perspective, social relations perspective, psychodynamic model, and sociocultural model.

Magic Bullet Theory

The earliest theory developed to explain the effects of mass media messages on audience members was the magic bullet theory. This theory says that all human beings are basically the same in nature. All people have the same needs, desires, emotions, instincts, and motivations. And when people are exposed to the same media message, each person will perceive, react, and respond in a uniform and direct manner. Because the stimuli (media messages) trigger

the inner urges/emotions of people, each individual responds more or less in the same manner (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). In other words, the magic bullet theory assumes that if one humorous advertisement is successful in persuading one customer to purchase the product, then everyone else who was exposed to the same mass media message will be persuaded to do the same.

This, however, is not the case. Instead each individual is uniquely different from the next person, with different urges, needs, emotions, and motivations, and will perceive, react, and respond in separate and different manners. Just because one person is persuaded to buy a Black and Decker Dustbuster because of the humorous commercial he/she saw on television does not mean that the next person will be persuaded to do the same.

Although it may seem that the magic bullet theory is a rather simple and naive model, the theory was developed from logical assumptions during the World War I era. Theorists believed that: (a) all people were born with the same biological mechanisms; (b) people were seen as incapable of making their own

decisions and had no control over their lives; (c) people were seen as completely separate beings with no connections to other people in society; and (d) mass media was seen as all powerful and controlling (Ogbondah, 1986).

Theorists rejected the magic bullet theory because they realized that audience members do not encounter media as a mass of unconnected individuals. Three perspectives were developed after the magic bullet theory was rejected. These three theories provide interpretive frameworks on how people encounter the media, the individual differences perspective, the social categories perspective, and the social relations perspective.

Individual Differences Perspective

The individual differences perspective states that people are different in their personalities and psychological structures which reflect the different effects or impacts mass media will have on audience members (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). Differences in individuals' personalities and psychological structures are a result of different environments,

different associations with people that a person keeps, different habits, values, beliefs, attitudes, and different learning.

Individuals vary in personality differences and this accounts for why media has different effects on each of us. Since each person is different, each individual selects what media he/she wants to view (selective attention/exposure). A person selectively focuses his/her attention on something which leads to selective perception which results in selective retention. People will choose media messages that are related to their areas of interests, consistent with their attitudes, congruent with their beliefs, and supportive of their values.

This theory may be used by advertisers as they try to design and produce humorous advertisements. By following the individual differences perspective, humorous advertisements are designed and produced to be directed toward specific individuals since each person is influenced by his or her own ideas, attitudes, values, and beliefs.

However, this theory, like the magic bullet theory, presents some problems. The individual

differences perspective is too narrow stating that each individual person reacts to advertisements directed specifically toward that person. The magic bullet theory states that every person is uniformly influenced by advertisements is too broad. While there is some truth to the individual differences perspective there are also other outside forces that should be considered that persuade an individual's decision to purchase a product or service. The next two perspectives, social categories and social relations perspectives, explain the effect of outside forces on an individual's decision.

Social Categories Perspective

Another interpretive framework that is used to help understand how people encounter mass media messages and what effect such messages may have on them is the social categories perspective. The basic assumption is that society is stratified into social categories. People within the same social category will respond basically in the same manner to mass media messages, while people outside their social category will respond differently. People are

stratified into social categories according to their age, sex, income level, educational level, rural-urban residence, religion, and occupation (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982).

The social categories perspective can be used by advertisers to predict how and who will respond to humorous advertisements. This model implies that people within the same social bracket will respond roughly in the same way. This model is true to an extent. It is true, for example, that elderly people will be attracted to older forms of humor, like comedian Bob Hope, while younger people are attracted to comedians like Eddie Murphy. However, not all elderly people like Bob Hope, and not all younger people are attracted to Eddie Murphy. This is where the individual differences model comes into consideration. The social categories model emphasizes how social stratifications affect how an individual perceives, reacts, and responds to humorous advertisements. And the individual differences model focuses on each individual's perception, reaction and response to humorous advertisements. It must be stressed that all these

theoretical models should, and must, depend upon and interrelate with the other interpretive perspectives. A comprehensive and complete framework can be established if these theoretical models are used together to explain the effects of humorous advertisements on people

Social Relations Perspective

The third interpretive framework to explain mass media effects on society is the social relations perspective. This perspective states that social ties and group relationships have an influence on how individuals respond to mass media messages. It is through these group ties and social relationships that an individual forms and establishes part of his/her identity. Some of the social group ties an individual may have are to his/her family, peer group, fraternity or sorority, political party, and religious organization. This theory states that an individual responds to a media message that is consistent and congruent with his/her social group's beliefs, values, and interpretations (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). An attitude change principle

from Fleming and Levie's book (1984) states that "more effective communication occurs when the source and receiver are similar" (p. 205). So, in other words, if an individual is persuaded by a humorous advertisement to purchase a product, the individual will buy the product only if the individual's social group approves of it.

This theory is also true to an extent because people usually do things that are approved and accepted by others, especially by their social relationships, since these groups have a major influence over people's lives. "People are strongly influenced by the groups they belong to and by the attitudes of their reference groups" (Fleming & Levie, 1984, p. 268). These social groups serve as reference points for evaluating a person's values, ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes. People seek approval from the reference groups that they admire. If the group(s) approve(s), then the person is accepted; if the group(s) disapprove(s), then the person is rejected. However, the advertiser must also take into consideration the individual

differences and social categories perspectives when designing and producing a humorous advertisement.

The last two models, the psychodynamic model and the sociocultural model, are basic frameworks to explain how mass media persuades people. These two persuasion models are based on the last three perspectives that were presented, individual differences, social categories, and social relations perspectives.

Psychodynamic Model

The psychodynamic model is based on the individual differences perspective of mass communication. This model says that an effective persuasive message can alter the internal psychological functioning of individuals so they respond in the way(s) that were intended by the persuader (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982).

The psychodynamic model is a basic explanation of how a person reacts and responds to persuasive messages. The psychodynamic model explains that a persuasive message can influence a person's thinking and behavior, and an advertiser can use this

influence to persuade consumers to purchase his/her product or service.

Sociocultural Model

The sociocultural model is based on the social categories and social relationships perspectives. This model believes that social categories and relationships are important for guiding, defining, and modifying the behavior of individuals (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). People rely on these social groups and relationships to interpret the rules for them, what is right or wrong, good or bad, fashionable or out of date.

The advertiser can use the sociocultural model to create effective persuasive humorous advertisements. The advertiser can show how his/her product or service is the right choice by having opinion leaders in social groups approve and accept the product. Also, the advertiser can show how people who do not use the product are nonconforming, deviant, wrong, and ridiculed by public.

Summary

These interpretive frameworks have been and should be used to explain the effects of mass media messages upon people. An advertiser needs to remember these perspectives when designing and producing humorous advertisements. He/she must be aware of the fact that people respond to advertisements individually (individual differences perspective) and sometimes by the influence of outside forces (social relations and social categories perspectives). There are many variables that determine the success of an advertisement, and these theoretical models provide a framework that may assist the producer of communication messages.

Advantages of Humor

Humor in advertisements can be very effective and profitable if used wisely and correctly. For example, Wendy's "Where's the Beef?", and Federal Express' "Fast Talking Man" commercials were successful humorous advertisements. Many successful advertising agencies believe humor is an effective communicating tool. But other advertising agencies have adopted a policy to never use humor in their

advertising. These advertising agencies usually don't have experience with the use of humor so they feel humor should not be used. People are wary and insecure about the unknown.

There are many advantages to the use of humor in advertisements. Humor is a universal language that "humanizes advertising, allowing the communicator to speak to the members of his/her audience on their own level" (Sternthal & Craig, 1973, p. 12). Humor can gain attention and awareness of a new product. And humor can put new life and memorability with an old product.

One advantage that research has proven is that humor attracts attention, at least on the first few exposures of the advertisement (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). People sit up and take notice of advertisements that are funny and positive. Most people avoid and don't like to hear negative and boring advertisements. Humorous advertisements are rated more interesting than similar serious advertisements (Duncan, 1980). Since humor induces pleasure and enjoyment, persuasion will be enhanced because the audience viewing a humorous message will

be put in a positive frame of mind. Humor is mostly an awareness device.

Humor seems to add excitement in what may otherwise be a low interest product. Humor is most effective with simple, noncomplex products, such as fast food products (McDonald's), carbonated beverages (Coke, Pepsi), and common, simple household products like toilet paper (Charmin), room fresheners (Stick-Ups), which are easy for an audience to understand.

Evidence also shows that humor increases a source's credibility and liking toward the source (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). According to Fleming and Levie (1984), "high credibility sources exert more persuasive influence than low credibility sources" (p. 199). If the members of an audience like the source, they will have a positive mood and attitude, which is a persuasive force to influence consumers to purchase a product. There is some evidence that humor may aid a dull presentation or presenter. However, humor may hurt an interesting presentation or presenter because the audience's attention is already captured and humor may distract the audience

(Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Yet other evidence from Sternthal and Craig says that using humor as a distraction element can have a positive effect. If the audience is distracted by humor, counter argumentation is reduced and the persuasive effect of the communication message is increased (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Humor may be used as a persuasive element in advertisements if it is used properly.

Disadvantages of Humor

Humor has many pros and cons. If used correctly, humor can be very effective. However, if the target audience misunderstands or fails to see the intended humor in the message, the humorous advertisement may backfire on the advertiser. One disadvantage of humor is that humor may distract the audience, taking attention away from the product. Another disadvantage of humor is comprehension of the product may suffer (Madden & Weinberger, 1984). Humor that draws attention away from the product can damage the product. Humor should attract and add to an advertisement, and not take attention away from the product.

Also, humorous advertisements are considered low-rated advertisements. Serious advertisements are rated higher by consumers. Research points out that advertisements that are most receptive to consumers are advertisements that are "simple, straightforward, realistic and offer a tangible benefit" (Hepner, 1964, p. 99).

Another disadvantage is that humor may communicate to the audience that the advertiser is avoiding the product's weaknesses by using humor to distract the audience away from the issue(s). A person may resort to humor if he/she finds himself/herself losing an argument. Although this strategy may work sometimes, the public is aware and skeptical of such distracting advertising techniques. It takes confidence to be able to make fun of yourself. Humor is one way to communicate confidence. If a business has enough confidence in its product it will admit that a product falls short of perfection. Admitting to imperfection will make the product and source more likeable and believable to consumers. As Red Skeleton once said, "Humor is actual truth" (Herold, 1963). Humor, though, should

not make fun of or degrade a company's product or service. If the advertiser has no respect for his/her offering, then how can one expect the intended audience to maintain respect. Instead, use humor to be honest with the consumers and not to cover up a product's faults. One guideline to remember is, "don't be funny at the expense of sincerity" (Lewis, 1979, p. 64).

A question that advertisers must ask when producing a humorous advertisement is, "How long will the humor stand up?" (Helitzer, 1985, p. 36). Humorous advertisements lose their punch more quickly than other nonhumorous advertisements, which is another disadvantage. It is true that jokes become less amusing after the second time they are heard. Humorous advertisements even become annoying after several repetitions. Therefore, humor is not very persuasive in the long run. So an advertiser must update and change the advertisement frequently because the novelty wears off quickly.

Although humor offers many benefits and advantages, advertisers must be aware of the disadvantages of humor to successfully communicate

and profit from humorous advertisements. Successful humorous advertisements will abide by the many pros and cons of humor, such as the guidelines outlined in this paper.

How and When to Use Humor

The use of humor depends on many factors. Three factors that should be considered when utilizing humor in advertisements are: (a) the type of product to be promoted; (b) the target audience that the advertisement is directed towards; and (c) what media will be employed.

Madden and Weinberger (1984) researched these three factors by questioning the top advertising agencies in the United States. The results showed that the worst media to use humor are direct mail and newspapers. Radio and television were the best media to deliver humor because of the use of sound to bring advertisements "alive."

Humor works better for selling low-priced items than high-priced products, in most cases. Consumers want to be treated seriously when they are making a major purchase, such as a new house or an automobile.

In the article, "Auto Executives Take Humor Seriously," auto executives generally agree that humor has its place at the right time, with the right product (automobile). For example, humor would not be beneficial nor recommended to promote "classier" cars. Humor used to advertise a Cadillac would degrade the automobile and the business' image. Humor is not needed when your product has distinct advantages over the competitors, such as a Cadillac, that can be advertised with a serious approach. Yet some auto executives feel that humor makes the product and the company more human and personable. Again, it depends on the product when employing humor in advertisements.

The research that Madden and Weinberger (1984) conducted concluded that corporate advertising and industrial business products were seen as the least suited to the use of humor, while consumer nondurables and business services were the best products for the use of humor. When producing humorous advertisements the advertiser must ask, "Is this a product that consumers are willing to accept as fun?" (Helitzer, 1985, p. 36). Humor should never

be used with serious and sensitive products, such as funeral homes. Products that people buy for fun or products whose appeal is taste are acceptable products to use with humor. Soft drinks, food, alcohol, snacks, candy, restaurant, health, beauty, toys, and games were best suited for humor, in that order (Madden & Weinberger, 1984).

The advertiser must be aware that different individuals have different reactions to humor. "Different subcultures and social classes with the same target group may require different types of humor as well as different levels of humor" (Lewis, 1979, p. 64). Each of us has a different sense of humor. So the advertiser must seek and receive second opinions from outside sources to see if a humorous advertisement is funny because the advertiser usually cannot judge his/her own work objectively. Advertisers must keep in mind the previously discussed perspectives and models on mass communication to successfully and effectively design and produce humorous advertisements. Madden and Weinberger (1984) found that individuals who are youthful, better educated, upscale, and male were

best suited while older, less educated, and downscale groups were least suited to humor appeals. Another attitude change principle from Fleming and Levie (1984) supports this research:

As compared to receivers who are slow in the adoption of innovations, early adopters tend to be better educated, more literate, have higher social status, and greater upward social mobility. Earlier adopters tend to be more intelligent, empathetic, venturesome and achievement motivated while being less dogmatic and fatalistic. (p. 261)

Evidence also shows that people who are heavy users of some products are less receptive to humorous advertisements than are light users. This evidence may be reasoned as that heavy users consider the decision to purchase the product to be serious. In all cases though, humor should never be offensive to an audience. For a humorous advertisement to be accepted, humor should be directed toward the product rather than the intended audience.

The advertiser must be sure that humor is related to the product. Jokes that are unrelated to the product should never be made. If humor is unrelated to the product the audience has no idea what the message is intended to be. Using humor for

the sake of humor may hurt the product rather than benefit and sell the product. Humorous advertisements are effective but sensitive ammunition that must be used sparingly and wisely.

Advertisers try to create clever, funny advertisements so the audience will enjoy and remember the product. Hopefully, it will unconsciously persuade the audience to buy the product or service. If humor is used in advertising it must be really funny to be effective. If it is not funny it will fail fast. The audience, after viewing a humorous advertisement, should say "I want to buy that," instead "what a clever advertisement that advertiser made."

Joe Sedelmaier, one of the most successful humorous advertising producers in the United States, says the problem with most humorous commercials is that the commercial hits you over the head, it insults your intelligence. Sedelmaier believes you do not have to do that. So many commercials are based on the punch line, but it's the telling of the joke that should be funny, according to Sedelmaier (Barol, 1986).

Scheduling the humorous advertisement is also another factor that needs to be considered. It has been suggested that humor is more accepted by the audience when a humorous advertisement is presented in the context of a humorous program (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). In other words, if a humorous advertisement follows a serious program the humor of the commercial is not as effective and accepted by the audience. So it would be advisable to schedule a humorous advertisement following a humorous program.

Summary

Humor can be a strong selling aid, but it takes more than humor to close a sale or persuade a customer to buy the product or service. When designing humorous advertisements create the promise of a benefit, but don't stray off the main point. Successful humorous advertisements emphasize a feature of the product/service which gives the customer a serious reason to purchase it. Also, the advertiser must test the humorous advertisement to

check effectiveness with customers. Customers should remember the product, not just the humor.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

Humor is understood by all people. People laugh and smile in the same language. If humor is so common and universal, then why is humor so difficult to research and effectively use in advertisements? It is risky to use humor in advertisements since very little research has been done in the area of humor and its effects. It is apparent, by the lack of material, that humor is a difficult human expression to study and measure. Since there is limited research done on the subject of humor, the concluding generalization is that "the effects of humor on persuasion are generally unpredictable" (Fleming & Levie, 1984, p. 231).

In conclusion, it is evident that there needs to be more research on the effects and uses of humor in communication messages. "Although several studies indicate that humor is persuasive, they have failed to exhibit that humor is more effective than a serious version of the same appeal" (Sternthal & Craig, 1973, p. 17).

Fleming and Levie (1984) concluded the effects of humor by quoting Sternthal and Craig (1973).

...reviewing humor in advertising, feel that while humor does not offer clearcut advantages and may interfere with comprehension, it may help through attracting attention, enhancing source credibility, creating a positive mood, acting as a reinforcer and reducing the effect of counter-argument action by distracting the receiver. (p. 231)

Theories of Mass Communication

There are several mass communication theories to explain and predict society's reaction to mass media messages, such as advertisements. In review, the magic bullet theory states that all people are influenced in the same manner when exposed to the same mass media message.

After the magic bullet theory was rejected, the individual differences perspective was developed. The individual differences perspective explained that everyone is a separate, independent individual who reacts and responds differently to different stimuli.

The social categories perspective states that people who are in the same social bracket will respond in the same manner as everyone else in the same social bracket. In other words, people in a

higher socio-economic bracket will respond the same way, while people in a lower socio-economic bracket will respond differently when exposed to the same advertisement. For example, people in a higher socio-economic bracket will react favorably and positively to an advertisement about fine wines. However, people from a lower socio-economic bracket will react neutrally or even negatively to this same commercial on fine wines.

The social relations perspective states that individuals will react and respond favorably to media messages that are accepted and congruent to his/her social group's beliefs, values, and attitudes. For example, if an individual belongs to a fraternity he will respond positively and uniformly to advertisements that his fraternity likes and approves.

Although all these models were introduced as separate interpretive frameworks to explain how people encounter mass media messages, they should be used interconnectively to provide the best overview of mass communication effects on society. An advertiser should keep in mind that people react sometimes

individually (individual differences perspective), or by other outside influences (social relations and social categories perspectives). Advertisers need to look at several variables to determine the effects media will have on people.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Humor

One of the strongest advantages of humor is that it is used to capture the attention of the audience. Yet, this advantage may become a disadvantage when the humor in an advertisement steals the attention away from the product or service. The audience remembers the humor in the advertisement, not the product or service. Thus, the real purpose or goal of the advertisement, to sell the product or service, has failed. A successful humorous advertisement should gain attention and interest for the product or service, not take the attention away from the product or service.

Another advantage of humor stated in the literature is that a humorous source is more likeable to his/her audience, thus, more persuasive because the audience is in a positive frame of mind.

Evidence also states that humor can be used to aid a dull presentation or presenter. Humor is a persuasive force by distracting the audience which reduces counter argumentation.

Although humor is used to make a presentation or presenter more interesting and likeable, the researcher believes that it takes more than just humor to gain an audience's total acceptance and approval. One disadvantage the researcher believes is that a humorous source may lose his/her credibility unless the source can prove his/her competence. It is advantageous to use humor to gain attention, and to make a source more likeable. However, a person should not use humor to excuse, cover up or escape important issues. The source must prove his/her credibility to persuade the audience to purchase the product or service, and to maintain his/her credibility as a competent and reliable source. The product should offer tangible benefits that the customers want or need. The product should give the consumer a reason to purchase the item.

Another disadvantage of humorous advertisements is that it is not effective and persuasive in the

long run. The novelty of humorous advertisements wears off faster than other nonhumorous advertisements. A humorous advertisement becomes less and less amusing, even annoying, after several repetitions. To overcome this disadvantage the advertiser should update and change the advertisement frequently to keep the audiences' attention and interest.

Evidence supports the fact that humor may negatively affect the comprehension of complex products or services, such as money investment services. Products that are simple and easy to understand are best suited and most effective with humor, like toothpaste and ball-point pens.

Humor in advertising has many advantages and disadvantages. Advertisers should keep these pros and cons in mind when producing humorous advertisements to be successful and profitable.

How and When to Use Humor

What makes a humorous advertisement successful? There are many variables that the advertiser must be aware of to know when and how to use humor in

advertising. The advertiser must decide what type of humor to be used to reach his/her communication goals, reflect the nature of the product, the target audience, and the type of media employed. The advertiser should also keep in mind the advantages and disadvantages, theories and perspectives when designing and producing humorous advertisements.

Humor should always be related to the product. If humor is unrelated to the product the audience will misunderstand the intended message of the advertisement. Humor should have a purpose in an advertisement. If humor is used in an advertisement just for the sake of humor it will fail fast and cause damage to the product.

What media is best suited for communicating humor? Radio and television are the best media to use humor because they can bring the humor alive in the advertisement with the use of sound. Direct mail and newspapers are the worst media to use humor. It is difficult for an individual to fully appreciate the humor in a media that does not use sound because the person can not hear the language, mood, pace,

style, volume, or emphasis that the producer intended.

Humor may not be used with every product. What products are best suited with the use humor? Humor should be used with products that are or could be considered "fun" by consumers, such as recreational vehicles, toys, or soft drinks. Humor seems not to be suited or acceptable for serious or high-priced products or services, like purchasing income tax services or a new home. People want to be treated seriously when dealing with major, important purchases.

A humorous advertisement should be scheduled to be presented following or within the context of a humorous program. After viewing or listening to a sober program, the audience will be less receptive and accepting to a humorous advertisement because the audience is in a serious state of mind. The audience will be more appreciative of, attentive towards, and interested in a humorous advertisement when it is shown within the context of a funny, light-hearted program.

What people are most influenced by humor? According to the literature, people who are young, better educated, upwardly mobile, male, and light users of the product are more persuaded by humorous advertisements. It seems that early adopters, who are more educated, and have a better socio-economic status, are more open and influenced by new innovations.

The basis for a successful humorous advertisement is to know and understand your market. The advertiser must completely know the product or service he/she is promoting and selling. The advertiser must know the advantages and disadvantages of the product. The advertiser should know the answers to these questions: What is the best feature about this product or service? What can this product offer that the competitors can not? What is the history and what will be the future of this product? When is the best time to sell this product? One of the most important questions the advertiser must know is, who are the potential consumers or customers for this product or service?

The advertiser must research and understand his/her audience's age, sex, education level, beliefs, prejudices, attitudes toward the product, socio-economic status, religion, nationality, handicaps, politics, and race. The advertiser must also understand that every person or group of people have a different sense of humor. A wise advertiser will seek several second opinions, from different sources, to test and judge the effectiveness of the humor in the advertisement. The more an advertiser knows and understands his/her identified audience and the product or service, the more successful the humorous advertisement will be.

The advertiser must be sensitive to his/her audience background, needs, and wants, for the product to be profitable. The advertiser must be aware that humor does not influence and is not accepted by every person. If the advertiser understands his/her audience then he/she will not make the mistake of producing a humorous advertisement that is offensive or unacceptable to his/her audience. Thus, the advertiser will save

his/her business from financial loss, and maintain the business' reputation and respect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the lack of research that humor is a difficult subject to study and predict. There needs to be more research on the subject of humor so it may be used as a controlled communication device for communication message designers. However, if the advertiser is aware and understands the information presented in this research paper, he/ she will be better prepared to design and produce a successful and profitable humorous advertisement. In summary, humor is an effective advertising tool if used with discretion and forethought.

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