



NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF HUMOR IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

NEGATIVNI EFEKTI HUMORA U MARKETINŠKIM KOMUNIKACIJAMA

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JEL klasifikacija: L26, M13, J21

DOI: 10.5937/trendpos2302101B

**UDK: 658.821:[659.2-029:82-7
005.334:159.9**

COBISS.SR-ID 131190793

Abstract

Humor is an essential component of human psyche. Smart businesses recognize the value of incorporating humor into their marketing communications. Marketing experts have long recognized that in order to bring their brands closer to their customers, marketing communication must be designed to connect with them emotionally, not just rationally. Because humor captures people's attention, using it into an advertising campaign enables businesses just that, to connect emotionally with their customers. Humor in advertisements is a terrific technique to strengthen companies and elicit favorable emotions in consumers, leaving them with a lasting overall pleasant impression. At the same time, businesses must exercise caution when using humor in their advertising and campaigns. Famous brands have a global presence, and often translate their advertising messages, but this does not always work as planned. Unskillful adaptation of advertising content to foreign markets and misunderstanding of cultural differences can do significant damage to the brand and business in general. Furthermore, if the humor in the advertising message is improper, harsh, or unpleasant, it might elicit negative feelings in customers and provide businesses with the opposite effect than intended. In a digital context, a corporation can enhance brand awareness by creating a creative, hilarious, and viral product promotion that consumers share with their peers. Clumsily created humorous content, on the other hand, is likely to produce consumer unhappiness and trigger negative electronic word of mouth (which is very difficult to control), causing significant damage to brand image and influencing purchasing decisions.

Sažetak

Humor je suštinska komponenta ljudske psihe. Pametna preduzeća prepoznaju vrednost uključivanja humora u svoje marketinške komunikacije. Marketinški stručnjaci su odavno prepoznali da ukoliko žele da približe svoje brendove potrošačima, marketinška komunikacija mora biti osmišljena tako da se sa potrošačima povežu emocionalno, a ne samo racionalno. Pošto humor privlači pažnju ljudi, njegovo korišćenje u reklamnoj kampanji omogućava preduzećima baš to, da se emocionalno povežu sa svojim klijentima. Humor u reklamama je sjajna tehnika za jačanje kompanija i izazivanje povoljnih emocija

kod potrošača, ostavljajući na njih trajan ukupan prijatan utisak. U isto vreme, preduzeća moraju da budu oprezna kada koriste humor u svojim reklamama i kampanjama. Poznati brendovi imaju globalno prisustvo i često prevode svoje reklamne poruke, ali to ne funkcioniše uvek kako je planirano. Nevešto prilagođavanje reklamnih sadržaja stranim tržištima i nerazumevanje kulturoloških razlika mogu naneti značajnu štetu brendu i poslovanju uopšte. Štaviše, ako je humor u reklamnoj poruci neprikladan, oštar ili neprijatan, može izazvati negativna osećanja kod potrošača i pružiti preduzećima suprotan efekat od planiranog. U digitalnom kontekstu, korporacija može poboljšati svest o brendu stvaranjem kreativne, urnebesne i viralne promocije proizvoda koju potrošači dele sa svojim vršnjacima. Nespretno kreiran humoristički sadržaj, s druge strane, verovatno će izazvati nezadovoljstvo potrošača i pokrenuti negativnu elektronsku usmenu predaju (koju je veoma teško obuzdati), uzrokujući značajnu štetu imidžu brenda i utičući na odluke o kupovini.

Keywords: Humor, Marketing communications, Consumers, Cultural differences

Ključne reči: Humor, Marketinške komunikacije, Potrošači, Kulturološke razlike

Introduction

Humor is a wide notion that encompasses all aspects that result in laughing and amusement [1]. Humor is regarded as a widespread feature of life, which is frequently associated with hilarious elements and laughing when people interact [2]. In the media, particularly in television advertising, humour is described as an exceptionally powerful weapon [3]. However, in advertising, humor might appear funny to one person but offensive to another, therefore it must be carefully studied before being presented to the public [4]. Marketers have understood for a long time that they must appeal to both emotions and the intellect in order to connect with their customers [5]. In an effort to combat the escalating competitiveness in the marketplace, marketers are increasingly using provocative, even controversial, marketing materials [6]. Studies have revealed that how people perceive humor in advertising is influenced by their culture [7].

Unfortunately, there are many examples in practice in which well-known global companies have caused great damage to their business, by inadequate communication with the target market, which arose primarily due to a misunderstanding of the culture of the people to whom the advertising messages were intended. Exploiting serious violations to create humor may increase the likelihood of the commercials eliciting negative emotional reactions in addition to perceived humor. Unfavorable reactions may have a negative impact on the advertised brand [8].

Communication with users is easier and faster in the digital age, and businesses may more successfully influence consumers' sentiments toward their brands [9]. New, perceptive, and engaging content on social media draws in more audience members. By encouraging social interaction and conversation, which in turn makes it easier for consumers to share, humorous and fun advertisements aid in the growth of relationships [10]. However, if consumers encounter negative information about a brand in a digital environment, it will influence the creation of a negative attitude towards the brand and may reduce future purchase potential [11]. Because of its accessibility, simplicity, and quickness, the digital environment facilitates easy communication with customers. Consumers respond positively to marketing content that is specifically tailored to their requirements and desires. However, if marketing communication is not managed professionally, such as inappropriate, aggressive, or tasteless humor, it can cause significant damage to the brand, primarily because such content, when combined with negative consumer comments, spreads exponentially through the digital environment and is extremely difficult to control and stop.

Literature review

The manner that marketing connects with consumers is evolving daily and continues to do so. It is possible to respond more accurately to market demands and more effectively comprehend consumers' hidden requirements and aspirations by keeping an eye on trends and creating more creative marketing communication approaches [12]. Humor increases positive cognitions while decreasing negative cognitions [13]. Because of its ease of use in various mediums and ability to entertain the public, humour may be useful in a variety of situations [14]. To boost consumer-brand connections, brands frequently deploy anthropomorphic lighthearted entertainment content [15]. According to Scott et al. [16] research, the greatest way to reach customers is when the use of humor is directly tied to and interwoven with the messages raised by the advertisement, as well as having already screened the product.

Because the original aim of the humor can be seen differently, not all humor is well received, and it is therefore critical to highlight cultural differences in order to clarify the intention of the humor [17]. All nations have turned to using humor in their media over the years. Even if humor is universal its consequences are not. Recognizing the cultural distinctions that exist in various markets is essential for marketing management in order to develop advertising efforts [18]. Despite cultural differences, there are common factors that save money when producing advertising campaigns. Companies find it far easier to universalize a campaign, but adjusting to the national market and target customers has a lot bigger impact on the attention, brand, recall, and attitudes developed [19].

Incongruity, rhetorical irony, simple surprise, or inconsistency relating to the message structure can all elicit humour, which is the cognitive mechanism [20]. Humor is a peripheral cue, which means it is easier to process than other aspects, which adds to the benefits of using humor by increasing recall through effortless and incidental learning. Because people try to reduce unpleasant emotions like guilt and shame, using irritation as a deliberate marketing strategy may not be successful. However, using emotional appeals that are based on conflicting feelings may also have a detrimental impact on consumer attitudes [21]. According to research, consumers may experience both happy and negative emotions during a single commercial, and pleasant emotions acquired from television programming increase their enjoyment of it [22].

Members of the public create a predisposition toward a distinct evaluation, feelings, and action based on media information. The mass media audience constructs its vision of the outside world through mass communication [23]. Positive or negative emotions that are highly stimulating to people tend to make humor stimuli considerably funnier than those that are in low stimulating environments [24]. Provocative or not, attempts at humor carry a certain amount of risk because a poor performance might backfire and anger a crowd [25]. Most studies claim that being funny effectively decreases the possibility of upsetting, misunderstanding, or disgusting customers [26].

Anger, fear, or disgust are common negative emotional responses to things that are threatening or incorrect [27]. Advertisements are more likely to negatively affect brand attitudes when they use extremely alarming stimuli to make humor instead of slightly threatening ones, when they target specific individuals rather than the general public, and when they rely on threats that encourage avoidance rather than approach [28]. There are some stimuli that might cause both a perceived laugh as well as a negative emotional response, like a politically incorrect joke or a socially awkward remark. For example, people may laugh when they are tickled, but they may also feel uneasy [29].

Because perceived humor and negative reactions are independent, measuring humor on a single scale from not funny to funny is problematic because it obscures whether an advertisement judged "not funny" elicits a neutral or negative response, and whether an advertisement judged "funny" elicits strictly positive feelings or mixed feelings of humor and negative emotion [30].

On TV and radio, where there are more ways to express oneself, humor works better. However, research has shown that people's brains perceive electronic content differently than print because paper advertisements elicited stronger emotional responses [31]. Advertisers have a vested interest in the message they transmit being noticed, believable, and eventually accepted. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve this through traditional advertising approaches, thus advertisers are looking to new modes of communication [32], one of which is the use of deliberate humor in advertising.

Consumers may manifest particular reactions to the marketed brand in response to irritating advertising [33]. Antagonism toward an advertisement, such as annoyance, affects one's perception of the brand and purchasing behavior. As a result, elements like taboos or transgressions can be harmful marketing tactics if the intended message is not conveyed [34]. According to research on aggressive humor advertising, insulting hilarious television adverts boost brand attitudes and advertising recall by raising the superiority of individuals who crave great power [35].

An essential component of internet culture, online humor benefits from the attention economy of digital platforms [36]. The majority of viral content on the internet has been discovered to be humorous [37]. However, the marketed brand may suffer if the humor is not appropriate for the intended audience, that is, for cultural norms. Negative electronic communication (eWOM), which can have a disastrous impact on the brand image, might result from this negligence in the digital world [38]. Public complaints may result from humorous advertising that elicit negative emotions [39]. Quite often, negative marketing content can become viral, that is, it can spread exponentially through the digital environment by being reposted by users on social networking sites. In that situation, the company's hands are almost tied in an attempt to stop this effect and at least mitigate its consequences.

Conclusion

Humor in marketing communications crosses all cultural, age, and demographic boundaries. The power of humor can disarm customers. When a product or commercial makes people laugh, they are momentarily taken aback and are therefore more open to absorbing the information being advertised. But humor is a delicate marketing tactic that needs to be used with great care and consideration. It elicits the desired emotions in the audience and fosters the development of more trusting and solidified relationships. The same joke, though, could strike some as extremely smart and ridiculous to others. Additionally, a number of prominent companies have suffered significant commercial losses as a result of "spirited advertisements" that did not work out as expected due to poor translations and the fact that the advertising contents are improper for the culture in which they are presented. These brands' unpleasant and abrasive appearances damaged consumer loyalty, brand perception, and purchasing decisions. When handled properly, humor can raise brand awareness. In light of this, it may be said that incorporating humor in marketing initiatives can be a risky bet. The ideal use of humor in promotional campaigns is when the jokes are relevant to the product or subject being sold. If they are inappropriate, customers may perceive them as unimportant or insulting and form a personal association to avoid such a brand.

Consumer expectations of brands have been changing for some time as a result of technology advancements and the digitization of retail. The use of humor in marketing initiatives has been embraced by several well-known social media platforms. Humor may be a great tool in social media, but only if the content is intelligently developed, tailored to market tastes, and if it isn't overdone; otherwise, it can make the company appear heartless and abusive and lead to the creation of bad associations towards brands. Consequently, a negative remark can become viral on social media and spread rapidly harming businesses incalculably.

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Datum prijema rada: 24.09.2023.

Datum prihvatanja rada: 11.11.2023.