

## STUDY ON ROLE OF HUMOUR IN PERSUASION.

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**Abstract :** The use of humour in television advertising is common in practices and all over the world. Researchers and advertisers similar are divided on the effectiveness of humour in advertising as some see the use of humour as unsafe because it may upset recall of product characteristics and conception. This study sought to explore the role of humorous television advertising in viewer persuasion and why humour is used. The study revealed that advertising experts use humorous television advertisements because they alleged it was better at achieving communication goals. Situational factors like product features, media placement as well as audience factors were very important considerations for effective humorous television advertisements. There was also a constructive relation between humorous television advertisements and persuasion. However, certain conditions must be met. These include ensuring product features, audience factors and media through which advertisements are placed are appropriate for humorous advertisements. Experts must know their target audience very well to be sure if particular humour treatment will be effective or not. Objectives for any particular advertisement should be clear so as to use humorous television advertisements suitably.

### INTRODUCTION

Some form of humour is used in nearly half of all TV advertising, where it frequently contributes to very effective ads. Humour can make ads more pleasing, involving, and remarkable. However, if the humour diverts from branding and communication, it can hamper the ad's success. In addition, perceptions of humour are different around the world and across different audiences; this may limit the ability of a funny ad to be used across markets. Humour is a common element in advertising. About half of all ads around the globe are considered either "funny" or "cheerful." It is not shocking that advertisers appeal humor, as it can make a big influence to an ad's memorability.

**Questionnaires were administered to a sample of 100 and 350 respondents from advertisers and television viewers respectively. Two hundred (200) television viewers responded representing 57% responds rate. Self-selection and convenience sampling methods were used for advertisers and viewers respectively.**

### HOW WELL DOES HUMOR TRAVEL?

Humour is subjective and often culturally specific. Types of humour that don't travel well include mockery, distortions, cheap, eccentric and dark humour, as well as humour that depends on sensitivities largely depends upon the country. Like, in China mockery is not widely appreciated, in Singapore humour based on sexuality is offensive. The English have a particular love of irony and so on. So, in view of all this, is it possible for humour to work across markets? And I find that it can, provided that:

- ◆ The subject matter is universal
- ◆ The references used are universally understood
- ◆ The subject is not offensive or banned

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- ◆ The humour is visually based, rather than relying on something that may be lost in interpretation

### **HUMOUR, COMMUNICATION, AND PERSUASION**

Humour's relationship with communication is less candid than its relationships with fun and influence. Certainly, the right humour can aid communication—but the wrong humor can just as easily hamper it. Humour that is not related to an ad's key message may be so distracting that the key message is missed; humour that misses the mark can detract from an ad's overall effect.

For example, one ad I tested was working well in many aspects, but it used a concept that was just not funny. (Just Jelly- Chotta Bheem Concept) Viewers described the ad as irritating and enjoyment was below average. Humour does not aid persuasion, as humorous ads are seen as a little less credible and relevant. However, the difference is small, and may simply be due to a tendency among advertisers, to avoid diluting strong persuasive messages with humour. There are plenty of examples of humorous ads that are also persuasive. Like Fevicol, Alpenlibe, Amul Paneer, Surf excel to name a few of them.

### **THE RIGHT MEDIA FOR HUMOR**

Choice of media can have a considerable influence on the effect of the humour, because humour may be observed differently depending on whether the medium is public or private. Online ads are a great specimen of ads which are generally primarily viewed privately. But when the most successful online ads go viral, they can enjoy a very public life; this is a deliberation when you propose your ad to go viral (although it is always worth remembering that only a small proportion of ads achieve this).

Humorous television commercials have a very favourable perception with experts and viewers alike. Both say they prefer humour advertisements to serious ones. Most of the respondent's representing 90% of the viewers see humour advertisements as effective and majority also do watch humour advertisements. 'Everyone likes funny commercials. Creative people like creating them. Advertisers are pleased to be running them. The consumer enjoys them. However, viewers believe that bad joke may offend consumers.

### **THE DETERMINING FACTORS OF EFFECTIVE HUMOROUS TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS.**

Experts believe product features is very important consideration for an effective humorous television advertisement. Majority said they would use humour for products and not services and they said that, they would use humour with low involvement products and services than with high involvement products and services. This agrees with views of many humour researchers. The nature of the product being advertised affects the effectiveness of the use of humour in the advertisement. Certain product types are perceived to be less appropriate to the use of humorous advertising than others. Low involvement products such as consumer non-durables (foods, beverages, snacks) seem more suitable for humorous advertising treatments as against intimate, serious or high involvement products. Experts also considered audience factors as very important, and that level of education, cultural background as well as ages of target audience should be taken seriously into consideration for an effective humorous television advertisements.

### **COMMUNICATION GOALS/ ROLES OF HUMOROUS TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS**

Experts as well as viewers were unanimous on the role of humorous television advertisements. Humorous television advertisements were found to enhance comprehension, liking for product or service and increasing persuasion. Both practitioners and viewers gave high marks to humorous television advertisements' attention grabbing role and its ability to enhance product recall. On persuasion however, experts were not in agreement with viewers since majority of viewers did not vote for that. In essence, majority of the respondents disagree to humour advertisements persuasion role. However, it is generally believed by advertising experts that humour improves attention, and therefore, it is quite possible that in natural settings, humorous appeals are more likely to be persuasive than serious versions of the same message.

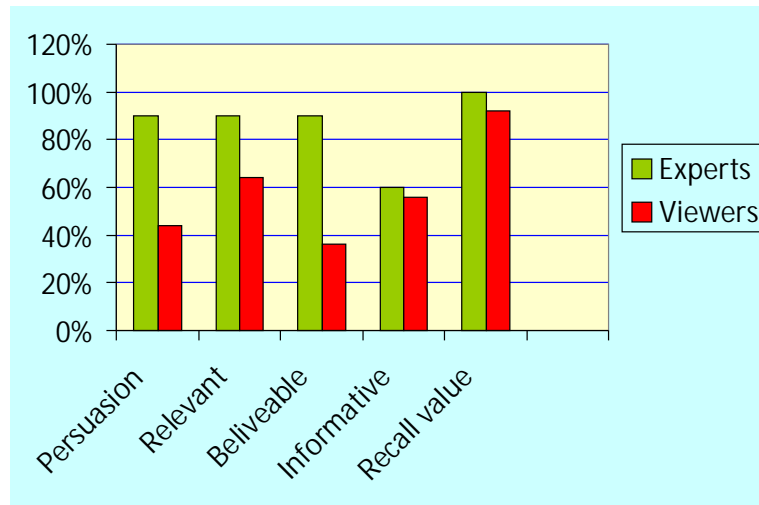
### **TOOL OF STUDY:**

Questionnaires were administered to a sample of 50 viewers and 10 advertising experts from two different ad agencies. Self-selection and convenience sampling methods were used for advertisers and

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viewers respectively.



## CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon to count many humorous advertisements in a single commercial break in a television program in India. Humorous television advertisements attract attention. Humour does not harm conception. Humour does not appear to offer an advantage over non-humour at increasing persuasion. Experts believe that humour enhances persuasion; viewers on the other hand do not believe they are persuaded to buy just because of humorous television advertisements. Humour does not enhance source It appears humour may harm source credibility instead. Humour enhances liking for products and services advertised with humour. Audience factors affect humour response. Special emphasis is on age, level of education and cultural background of target audience. It is important to state that humour can be very effective in some situations and not others. It is vital that advertisers are aware of the eventualities that define humour's effectiveness beforehand before attempting to use humorous television advertisements.