

SUMMARY FOR GENERAL PUBLIC

EXPLAINING CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN THE USE AND EFFECTS OF HUMOR IN ADVERTISING

Humor has remarkable power and it has been thus extensively used in advertising for years. The enthusiasm of advertisers towards humor stems from promising research results reported by scholars worldwide. Many empirical findings demonstrate that humor can be very successful in gaining consumer attention, in producing acceptance towards the advertiser and the ad, and in persuading consumers to purchase the advertised brand. Despite the extensive amount of studies on humor and advertising, there is a considerable void when it comes to scientific data on the cross-cultural differences in the use and effects of humor in advertising. It is still unknown how variations in cultural background influence responsiveness to humorous ads and how the use of humor in advertising differs across cultures and societies. Yet, people from different countries laugh at different ads and differently use humor in advertising. Unfortunately, prior research studies in this field are very limited because:

- (1) they have failed to develop a consistent and complete theory which would be applicable to many cultures;
- (2) they have failed to apply sufficient methodology to address cross-cultural issues and explain cross-cultural variations at both individual and country level;
- (3) they have failed to collect sufficient data and compare more than two or three countries simultaneously.

The general idea behind this project is to address and bridge all these research gaps. We will attempt to provide sound theoretical background and to examine cross-cultural differences in humor use and effects with appropriate methods which allow for greater control and confidence.

Our empirical works will include:

- (1) a content analytic study that addresses the differences in use of humor in advertising across various countries,
- (2) a meta-analytic study that addresses the influence of country differences on the effects of humor in advertising, and
- (3) an experiment that will test the causal effects of humor and will transfer the aggregate findings to individual data.

Such combination of different methods, data sources and measures will allow us to enhance validity of our results. As a consequence, our research project contributes to humor research (by explaining the cross-cultural variation in humor, and by providing empirical evidence to various theories), and to advertising research (by explaining and predicting the cross-cultural differences in humor use and effects).