

Chapter 13

Brand Humour Advertisements on a Social Network Platform and Their Impact on Online Consumer Engagement: The Case of Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Past studies on humour have predicted that the right humour technique can attract attention and lead to organic engagement from the viewer. However, limited research has been conducted concerning the use of humour by brands on social media. Based on Speck's taxonomy of humour, this research aims to clarify whether online brand humour advertisements have an impact on consumer engagement on a visual social media platform like Instagram. This chapter analyses the influence of comic wit and satire on product involvement, brand familiarity and gender, and their impact on online consumer engagement on the social network platform. A survey was developed and distributed online and a total of 216 participants from Qatar voluntarily filled out the questionnaire. Data was then analysed using SPSS and structural equation modelling. Results provide evidence that both humour techniques have a significant impact on consumer engagement when product involvement is mediating their relationship. Managerial implications of the results and future research prospects are also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, online marketing and advertisement research has become the centre of many empirical studies due to internet penetration and the increasing number of social network sites and users (El-Gohary and El-Gohary, 2016; Krawford, 2011; El-Gohary and Eid, 2012). Several studies on the attitude towards advertisements demonstrate that humour creates a positive effect on consumers by breaking through the advertisement clutter. Many researchers studying the effect of humour in traditional media, such as television and print media (Eisend, 2009; Gulas and Weinberger, 2006) have reached this conclusion; however, little research has been conducted regarding the use of humour in digital media.

Researchers have been intrigued by the complexity of humour; however, the effect of humour in brand communication and advertising remains an under-researched area in marketing literature. According to Eisend's meta-analysis of humour effects (2009), there are some inconsistencies in research findings of the impact of humour, such as humour leading to higher attention generation towards the advertisement and brand in question. However, because of mixed results, it remains unclear how online brand humour influences consumer motivation to engage with the brand online. Therefore, humour is perceived by most brands and researchers as a very usable but complex and unpredictable tool. As the use of humour in advertising is prevalent, it is crucial to improve our understanding of consumers' responses to brand humour on social media platforms by acknowledging that different humour types lead to different results. This study examines whether different humour types on social media networks, specifically Instagram, contribute to consumer engagement.

The research objectives of this study are to examine the role that comic wit and satire humour techniques play in a brand advertisement on a social media platform and how it can affect consumers' choice to engage with such a post on the platform. Furthermore, this research work will help in the examination of other important factors that can affect the relationship between social media brand advertisements and online consumer engagement. This study will address the gap in literature by scrutinising the role of brand familiarity, product involvement, and gender in creating online consumer engagement.

BACKGROUND

Most businesses these days are facing with an "attention-deficit" from consumers. Attention-deficit is a phenomenon that describes consumers' lack to attention to brand messages and cues. Due to an overwhelming amount of information coming from various sources, consumers end up absorbing a small percentage of that information.

Commercial brands are constantly developing different communication strategies to approach their target market electronically (El-Gohary et al., 2013). Social Network Sites have especially been a game changer in providing brands with an effective communication channel to interact with their target audience in an efficient and timely manner to increase brand awareness (Christodoulides, 2009). Social Network platforms offer consumers the tools to be expressive. Due to this reason, social media and more specifically, social network sites have become essential for brands to manage consumer experience and loyalty with their brand (Christodoulides, 2009).

Traditional media has a captivated audience that has little choice but to watch the ad being shown on their television screens. However, on social media, consumers are considered an active audience and are given the choice to skip ads that they are not interested in. Moreover, the platform providers understand

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