

Abstract

As an emotional appeal to reach the target audience, humor is a creative tool that uses laughter and entertainment to disarm the cynical viewer to deliver the advertising pitch. In this manner, a funny advertisement would capture audience attention and would have a greater chance of increasing the recall of the brand and the general marketing message. The presence of humor in advertisements spices up the content; thus, making it more interesting and amusing. However, due to the influence of culture to both individual and collective tastes in humor, the universality of humor may not apply to advertising, particularly to international advertising campaigns, at all times. Cultural differences challenge local and international campaigns to understand what the audience would understand, appreciate and buy in the long run.

Adapting the Berger's humor categories (1993), this thesis identified the prevalent humor categories in American and Filipino advertisements from January 2001 to March 2008 through content analysis. Although some categories are similarly prevalent in both samples, they are used portrayed in different ways. The various uses of these humor techniques are noticeable based on subtlety, physicality, intentions, nature and implied and latent definitions. Also, some humor techniques were combined with others to send the marketing message across effectively. This required the understanding of the overall picture and interaction of audio and visual elements in the advertisement. Therefore, this revealed that even both American and Filipino humor are characterized by their obvious, physical and sometimes vulgar expressions, there are still some differences between the two. American humor has a blunt, straightforward nature, whereas Filipino humor is subtle, conservative and visually goofy. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, revealed that only a few humor categories (four in the audio element, 1 in the visual element), showed the significant difference between American and Filipino advertisements.

To further see the meaning beneath the similarities and differences between the funny American and Filipino advertisements, this thesis provided a textual analysis of the prevalent humor categories that appeared in the content analysis. The humor categories both reflect and challenge the cultural values of both countries. What is present in the

society could be seen in the humor content of the advertisements, which may be a validation of the mirroring function of advertising. However, poking fun at the cultural value system in the United States and the Philippines gives them a taste of freedom and a feeling of relief from rules and constraints.

