

Does Sexual Humor Work on Mars, but Not on Venus? Exploring Consumer Acceptance of Sexually Humorous Advertising by Gendered Brands

James Mark Mayer, Piyush Kumar, and Hye Jin Yoon

Abstract In this paper, two studies demonstrate that the efficacy of sexual humor in advertising is more complicated than the conventional wisdom of “works for males, but not for females.” The findings suggest that males and females tend not to exhibit significant differences in sexual humor evaluation (*how funny is this?*) but that advertising utilizing sexual humor is more likely (less likely) to generate positive attitudes (*do I like this advertisement/brand?*) when a masculine (feminine) brand is communicating with male (female) consumers. However, brand gender differences and the resultant consumer attitudinal differences can be eliminated through the use of gender-atypical brand personality. Taken together, the results show that the mere presence of sexual humor does not drive gender-based differences in advertising response; rather, it appears to be the fit of such humor with brand personality.

Keywords Sexual Humor • Advertising • Gender Differences • Consumer Acceptance

References

References Available Upon Request

J.M. Mayer (✉)
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA
e-mail: jammayer@iupui.edu

P. Kumar
University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA
e-mail: pkumar@terry.uga.edu

H.J. Yoon
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, USA
e-mail: hjyoon@mail.smu.edu