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Humor in American, British, and German ads

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Abstract

Some 665 advertisements were sampled from American, British, and German trade magazines and assessed by three bilingual judges to determine incidence of humor. Although there was some evidence that humorous messages may be less appropriate in business-to-business advertising, 23% of the ads contained humor. There were no differences in humor frequency among the three nationalities. Humor use varied by industry, and there was significant interaction between nationality and industry in humor ratings. Five types of humor were investigated: aggressive, sexual, nonsense, warm, and pun. Puns, nonsense humor, and warm humor were employed most often, with no national differences. Aggressive humor was used in some industries more than others.

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