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Humor Roles of Females in a Product Color Matrix

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***Abstract*—**Healthcare providers sometimes use the power of humor as a treatment and therapy for buffering mental health or easing mental disorders because humor can provide relief from distress and conflict. Humor is also very suitable for advertising because of similar benefits. This study carefully examines humor's widespread use in advertising and identifies relationships among humor mechanisms, female depictions, and product types. The purpose is to conceptualize how humor theories can be used not only to successfully define a product as fitting within one of four color categories of the product color matrix, but also to identify compelling contemporary female depictions through humor in ads. The results can offer an idealization for marketing managers and consumers to help them understand how female role depictions can be effectively used with humor in ads. The four propositions developed herein are derived from related literature, through the identification of marketing strategy formulations that achieve product memory enhancement by adopting humor mechanisms properly matched with female role depictions.

***Keywords*—**Humor mechanisms, Female role depiction, Product types.

I. Introduction

THE importance of humorous ads has been actively discussed by researchers since 1960, when it was generally agreed that "humor is power", and that humor stimulates attention, provides inducement through social interaction, and enhances marketing communication. Although, the precise communicative effectiveness of humorous ads is uncertain, the adoption of humor techniques has been widespread. It is perhaps a fit with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasive knowledge; target consumers can more quickly comprehend and evaluate a product's message or a product's attribution/benefit in ads through a centralizing idea because of their prior experiences with related products [9], [20]. Furthermore, an endorser's role depiction or image-orientation in humorous ads can be used to provide information for peripheral processing or a heuristic viewpoint, which can help consumers accelerate their product message evaluation and draw a positive conclusion.

Weinberger et al [34] propose the product color matrix (PCM) as a way to categorize products into four color groupings based on product function and involvement. The white, blue, yellow, and red categories are used to explain how humor mechanisms can best be systematically integrated into ads in order to emphasize a product's attribution and enhance a consumers' memory. White represents a product of high involvement and tool functionality, and which is expensive and durable, including large appliances, insurance, or business equipment. Blue represents nondurable, low involvement products with tool functionality that need routine purchasing such as detergents, fuels, and non-dessert foods. Red represents high involvement products with toy functionality that require detailed comparisons before the purchase-making decision; for instance, fashion clothing, jewelry, sports cars, or other expensive "big toys" that represent a self-fulfillment. Yellow represents the "little treat" one might have as a daily reward. Snack foods, soft drinks, beer and tobacco are included in this category. These products neither take too much time to make a comparison nor require a large outlay of money. The combination of humor tactics in ads with products that have a high involvement, especially those products purchased with heavy psychological/emotional involvement in the purchase decision, is rare. On the other hand, low involvement products that solve everyday problems, need to be routinely purchased, and/or have low cost features can be casually, and successfully, represented through humor [28].

The goal of this study is to examine the incorporation of female endorser role depictions into the PCM in order to determine the current state of those depictions in humorous ads. More specifically, can humorous female roles portrayed in ads translate into consumer understanding of a product's message, function and involvement, and also enhance consumers' memories?

II. Proposition Development

Even from the time of Aristotle, thinkers and researchers have utilized principles of sociology, psychology, leadership, and communication to ponder and speculate as to why people laugh and what makes people want to laugh [13], [20], [22], [32]. In general, several humor mechanisms or theories are discussed: tension relief, superiority theory, social cohesion, meaning-making, and incongruity theory [5], [7], [22], [30]; the application of these theories is identifiable in past and contemporary advertising. The theory of tension relief, which is underlain by the belief that humor is power, is used to reduce interpersonal tension when fulfilling task goals and for increasing the likelihood of smooth relations [4]. However, not just anybody can tell a joke. According to the superiority theory

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of humor, people who occupy the higher status tiers in a group tell more jokes than those of a lower status. Humor, according to this theory, reveals a sense of accomplishment, confidence, and self-esteem. For instance, regarding gender, there is much existing research that indicates men tell more jokes than women, and men think women have 'no sense of humor' [19].

Research indicates that gender differences influence the response to humor; men tend to differentiate themselves with humor creation while women tend to be connoisseurs of humor constructs and content. Men often have a negative response toward humor directed at them; perhaps this can be contributed to their consciousness of gender esteem, or their perceived status in relation to females. They often use humor to disparage women, using a contrasting male viewpoint, in the realm of sexual and aggressive humor in order to express an indifference toward females [3], [16], [26], [30]. This phenomenon may be attributable to a social power status that typically places women in a secondary position to men, making them a more likely theme in humor creation; societally, women likely accept this in order to maintain social cohesion and harmony. Hence, women's lack of a sense of humor could be interpreted as women not being able to express their real emotions under restrictive social regulations and a patriarchal mindset, and has thus become a dominant social convention—they are to be listeners and appreciators [6], [8], [19], [33], [37].

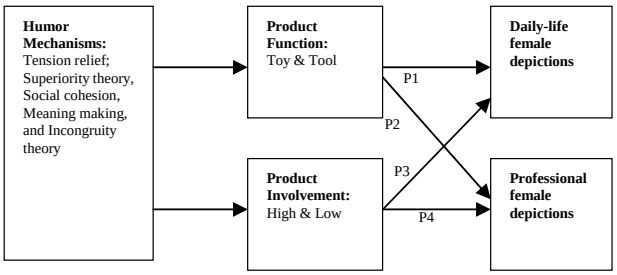

Fig. 1 Humorous Female Depictions conceptual Model

In past ads, gender differences were apparent in the various role depictions, image orientations, and settings. Men were the product information providers or managers in the workplace and women, often portrayed as mothers and housewives, were the consumers at home. This differentiation especially represents the power distance between the two genders prior to 1970. After 1970, there was a veritable revolution in society's view of the gender equation, thus promoting and demonstrating women's abilities and capacities when they are educated and fully participate in the labor market. Following the lines of the post-1970 view of gender while still harboring elements of male dominance, propositions 1 and 2 are summarized as follows:

P1: The humor mechanisms applied in tool function products tend to depict females with daily-life imagery.

P2: The humor mechanisms applied in toy function products tend to depict females with professional imagery.

Nevertheless, women do not generally consider humor as an exploitable personal talent necessary to initiate transactions in society; that is a male perspective. Instead, they more passively reveal their antipathy to patriarchal regulations by using satirical or ironic humor to self-disparage female characteristics that are considered natural. This attitude may be interpreted as, because women cannot change the facts of a male dominated society, they should with full awareness use self deprecating humor in order to satisfy remaining patriarchal values. Realistically speaking, current humor theories are still dominated by men's viewpoints, which often humiliate women; numerous female depictions in humor-based advertising are incident to typical contemporary social interactions in daily life and offer essential evidence that shows prevalent gender conventions [11], [24]. In a positive vein, the constant use of female-male humor interactions informally provides chances for women to modify and improve perceptions of their natural characteristics. The humor mechanisms may not change a lot, but female role depictions improve. For example, recent humor ads show women having advanced product knowledge and a professional image in the work place instead being a housewife consumer at home. Their characters confidently express new outlooks, indicating their strength within and their ability to build positive social cohesion with others [2], [10], [14], [15]. Considering the above discussion, propositions 3 and 4 are as follows:

P3: The humor mechanisms applied in high involvement products are positively related to professional female imagery.

P4: The humor mechanisms applied in low involvement products are positively related to daily-life female imagery.

High Involvement *Tool Function* *Toy Function* **Low Involvement**

White color Daily-life image Professional image	**Red color** Professional image
Blue color Daily-life image	**Yellow color** Daily-life image Professional image

Fig. 2 Female Roles Depictions Idealization

III. Discussions and Limitations

Woman, more than men, have been the usual butts of jokes; this gender pattern has been historically common in female-male interactions in humor ads and reflects a prevalent patriarchal, male-oriented society. Hence, the man is a humor producer, and the woman is a listener. The theory of social cohesion indicates that listeners express their support of the joke tellers in order to enhance their positions relative to others. Furthermore, back and forth communication produces a resonance between the teller and the listener as they share in situation-defining reality and meaning-making.

In the theory of meaning-making, the making of meaning minimizes the gap between social meaning and status by shedding light on invisible social structures for the listeners [12], [18], [31], [35]. The theory of incongruity, similar to the theory of meaning-making through its ties to social meaning, juxtaposes concepts, characteristics, personalities and

situations understood by an audience, producing an unexpected but understandable kind of humor. This heavily used type of humor involves themes of absurdity and nonsense that humorously violate the normal expectations of an audience. Although incongruity humor is typically effective at getting a laugh, advertisements should also informally educate an audience's perceptions and understanding of the products in question. The impact of incongruity humor is much enhanced when ads include greater product resolution [5], [17], [21], [23], [25], [32].

A shift, first from men's derision of women to the ability of women to talk from a more authoritative status, and then to the current femininity viewpoints, reflects an improvement of female role depictions in humor ads. In other words, the female victimization in humor is being largely replaced by female-oriented humor that shows a greater expectation and appreciation for higher self-esteem and social dominance among women [27], [29], [35], [38]. The propositions offered herein on contemporary female role depictions in humor ads should help advertisers produce ads that are visually (and humorously) appealing to viewers as well as able to enhance their product memory. However, it is also important to point out that the main limitation of the study is its possible lack of relevance across different countries, economies and cultural backgrounds. Future study can concentrate on making up this weakness by simultaneously comparing affluent countries and less affluent countries.

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