

Sex, Humor and Rock'n'Roll: The Effects of Mating Orientation and Humor in Advertising on Persuasion

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Consumers often encounter humor while being exposed to messages from companies, and, particularly in advertising, the use of humor has become more popular and successful. However, the way consumers respond to humor and different types of humor vary. Prior research has tried to explain such differences using consumer learning theories, but has failed to provide a single theoretical explanation that would be viable for different consumers and for various humor types. This study suggests a novel theoretical approach based on evolutionary psychology to explain differences in consumer responses to humor and tests the explanation through a set of five experiments. The findings support the evolutionary explanation that humor effects increase with consumers' mating orientations. We found that the effects are moderated by humor type such that aggressive humor is less effective for consumers who show a long-term mating orientation.

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