

The Persuasive Effect of Self-mockery in Advertising on the Brand Attitude: a Moderated Mediation Model

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Abstract

- **Objectives**

Over the past few years, there has been an upward trend of brands that make fun of themselves in ads in a tendency called “self-mockery”. As self-mockery has not received much examination in the past, the present study is an effort to fill this void.

- **Method**

Building on two controlled experiments, we test our framework using a variety of brands (a fake brand and a real one), product categories, types of self-mocking ads (print as well as video), and types of self-deprecating argument.

- **Results**

We consistently find that self-mocking leads to the brand being perceived as humbler, which consequently affects the evaluation of brand attitude. Additionally, we find that this mediated effect is moderated by brand self-congruity.

- **Managerial and societal implications**

Marketing managers should consider a self-mocking executional appeal as a valuable brand-building strategy, as self-mockery may trigger brand humility personality trait perceptions, especially among consumers with a higher brand self-congruity.

- **Originality**

We open the door to the investigation of an understudied advertising strategy that is popular among practitioners. Thus, we offer several novel contributions to the literature on self-mocking humor and humility. These insights contribute to the burgeoning theorizing on the multifaceted nature and effects of self-mockery in advertising. Apart from adding to literature streams on humor appeal and humility, these insights help answer the managerially relevant question of whether and for whom to invest in self-mocking advertising.

- **Keywords:** self-mockery, advertising, humility, perceived funniness, brand attitude, brand personality.

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Sabri O. (2022), The Persuasive Effect of Self-mockery in Advertising on the Brand Attitude: a Moderated Mediation Model, *Décisions Marketing*, 105, online, le 09-02-22