

Being Funny is a Serious Business for Feminine Brands

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Abstract : Purpose: Marketers and Researchers alike have simultaneously, yet in mutually exclusive instances, promote the use of humour by brands in their communication and gendering of brands, as both enhance brand equity and can generate positive attitudinal responses from customers. However, the gendering of brands comes with associated gendered stereotypical expectations. The current paper consolidates the long standing literature on gender role/stereotype theory and brand gender theories establishing a theoretical framework for understanding how gender-based stereotypes about humour can influence consumers' attitudinal responses towards brands. Design/methodology/approach: Using parallel constrain satisfaction theory as domain theory to explain the highhandedness of stereotypes and gender stereotype theories (particularly around feminine use of humour), we explain why gender based stereotypes could constrain brand behaviors, and in turn, feminine brands get penalised for using witty, aggressive and self-enhancing humor. Findings: Extension of gender stereotypes to anthropomorphised brands will lead consumers to judge the use of negative humour by a feminine brand as less appropriate, which will trigger the causal chain of reduced sense of communal appropriateness and brand warmth which will result in a negative attitude towards the brand. Originality/value: Brand gendering being susceptible to gender based stereotypes, has very little attention in the literature and hence use of negative humour (stereotypical male behaviour), has never been studied in the context of gendered brands. It also helps understand to what extent stereotypes will impact attitudinal responses to the brand. Our work can help understand when heavily gendered brands can optimise the use of humour and when they can avoid it.

Keywords : brand femininity, brand gender, gender stereotypes, humour

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