The Effect of Individual Values on Perception of Humor: Case of Anti-Tobacco Advertisements

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Abstract

Personal values have been the object of different studies almost for four decades in market segmentation and the advertising. This research attempts to identify the individual values of smokers and to study their effects on the perception of humor. It highlights a relationship between values related to hedonism and the perception of humor. The findings of this study emphasizes the role of individual values in designing effective anti-smoking communications and suggest it might be effective for anti-smoking advertisers to work at lessening the association between smoking and the values of exciting life.

Keywords: Individual values; Humor; Anti-tobacco advertising

Introduction

Globally, the number of smokers has increased steadily [1]. Many studies highlight that the smoking prevalence is high in Tunisia [2]. In order to combat this calamity, it is therefore essential to discourage people from smoking by adopting several measures, such as the regulation (Law No 17-98 of 23 February 1998) or the design of anti-tobacco campaigns [3]. Our study focuses on this last point. Dubé [4] points out that despite the abundance of campaigns to eradicate this scourge, the process of information of the smoker remains unclear. In Tunisia, communication professionals do not evaluate the effect of their action. Media campaigns are generally centered on the ravages of active and passive smoking. They are rare and irrelevant. (Tunisia Preliminary Report following the second Cairo Workshop 2002, Fakhafakh et al., [5]).

In a study carried out in 2000 by the National Institute of Prevention and Education for Health to determine the most relevant publicity registers, it was found that young people between 11 and 30 years old are admired by films which have become for them "a spectacle of pleasure" [6]. In addition, it appears that this target is attracted by messages that are focused on strong emotions such as fear, humor and despair [7]. In the same vein, Riou [8] states that with the advent of postmodern culture, new communication codes are emerging: entertainment, connivance, humor, seduction. It is essential to move from a persuasive to a seductive mode as do private brands: Levi's, Nike, Calvin klein, Apple. Apple suggests "Think different," Nike mentions "Just do it," Calvin Klein said "Be yourself." HP adds "Invent". These communications are based on self-glorification and self-assertion. Individualism has evolved: we didn't project ourselves into models. Advertisers no longer talk to a consumer to convince him of the superiority of the product. Ads are for a person who is looking to share the value system to seduce him. A new dimension that has prevailed is the spectacle: entertainment and creativity. Advertising should surprise with strong values of "fun and enjoyment" [8].

The research problem arises from the following finding: previous studies have focused on emotions and cognitive mediators to explain the intention to follow the recommended action and have neglected the role of individual values [9-11]. This study aims to point the preponderant role of the individual values and to prove that the communication of inter comprehension is the most effective. The theoretical framework in which our research is based on Habermas' theory of communicative action (1987a, 1987b). This theory gives language a preponderant role. It indicates that language is a

medium of influence. Habermas [12,13] proposes two forms of communication: instrumental communication and inter comprehension communication. Instrumental communication is asymmetrical. It considers the consumer as an object or a mean. It is therefore unethical. However, the communication of inter comprehension is based on the understanding. It considers the consumer to be an actor capable and confident in himself. It tries to get closer to the consumer by sharing his system of values and by privileging complicity and humor. This technique aims to create a reaction from the consumer, to generate emotion, empathy, smile and promote advertising effectiveness.

Definitions of personal values

According to Rokeach [14], value is defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence''. It should be noted that values constitute a rational judgment, an agreement realized between a groups of individuals. Values provide criteria for evaluating actions, individuals and events [14]. A value is defined as an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific end state of existence or specific mode of conduct is preferred to an opposite end state or mode of conduct [15].

Rouvrais Chantal [16] states that "values, organized in systems, are normative references, abstract concepts that serve as referents for thought and action". He adds that the values are formed because the individual has belonged and belongs to groups. Indeed, every socialized individual has integrated a system of values from his birth, from which he learns, reflects, acts, consciously or unconsciously. Rouvrais Chantal [16] develops the following definition of values: "distinct from motivations, norms, personality traits and attitudes, individual values can be considered as long-lasting, organized beliefs about desirable behaviors and/or states that transcend specific situations and affect almost all individual behaviors. They emerge from a complex interaction between the basic needs and the socio-cultural environment of each one". Values have a homeostatic character from the following four characteristics:

i. Values are learned within a company or by transfer between companies;

ii. A value system is embodied in a set of norms governing behavior;

iii. Values are shared within the same social group;

iv. Values are both stable and dynamic, with their evolution occurring over a long cycle.

Rokeach [14] attempted to differentiate the values of other neighboring concepts in social psychology as needs, personality traits, social norms, motivation, and attitude by proposing a set of arguments. Standards are moral statements that express duties and obligations [17]. There are three differences between values and standards. A value refers to a mode of behavior or purpose of existence. Whereas a standard refers only to one mode of behavior. Then, a value is not limited to specific situations. However, a social norm often reflects a prescription of behavior within a specific framework. Finally, a value remains personal and internal to the individual whereas a standard is developed externally by a general consensus process [18]. The attitude contains beliefs about a particular project or situation. Value is related to a single belief about a specific aspect. From a practical point of view, values are measured with only one question per value, while attitude toward an object or a situation is the average result of the measurement of the various representative beliefs of this object or situation. Rokeach [14] adds that a value transcends objects or situations while an attitude focuses on certain objects or situations.

Theoretical Approaches to Personal Values

Several researchers have focused on identifying individual values. Three approaches can be used: Rokeach's approach called "Rokeach's Value Survey", Kahle's inventory [19] called "List of Values" and Schwartz & Bilsky's [20] inventory.

A. The Approach of Values According to Rokeach [14]

The typology of Rokeach's values consists of thirty-six values designed to represent values in contemporary American society. They are divided into two main categories. The terminal values that contain individual or social goals such as peace, family security, equality. Instrumental values reflect the ways of being or acting, such as courage and honesty. This approach revolves around the following five premises:

i. The total number of values a person owns is relatively small;

ii. Every individual has the same values to different degrees;

iii. Values are organized into systems;

iv. The antecedents of human values come from culture, society and its institutions and personality;

v. The consequences of human values are reflected in almost all the phenomena studied in the social sciences.

Rokeach [14] has developed a test called Rokeach Value Survey or RVS which aims at the identification of value system of individuals. It should be noted that it is denounced for the objectivity with which the items were chosen for its difficulty in administering and the omission of values related to physical development and well-being. Moreover, subsequent research has not been able to confirm the two-dimensional structure [18].

B. The Approach of Values According to Kahle [19]

This approach was developed by Kahle in the University of Michigan [19]. It is based on the following premise: "Individuals adapt to certain roles in life, in part, according to their values" [18]. It is more condensed than Rokeach's approach. It has only

terminal values which are nine in number instead of 18. They are closely related to the daily lives of consumers. The list of values identified by Kahle [19] is as follows: the sense of belonging, the need for excitement, fun and enjoyment, warm relationships with others, self- fulfillment, and a sense of accomplishment, being well respected, security and self-respect. Beatty et al. [21] carried out a comparative study of these two inventories. They found that "sense of belonging" and "self-fulfillment" is specific to the Kahle scale. Certain categories of the Rokeach list are subtracted: "a world at peace, a world of beauty", "happiness", "inner harmony", "mature love ", "salvation" and "wisdom".

Other values have been combined to form more general concepts. For example, "security" includes "family security" and "national security". In addition, these two lists have similar values that are "feeling fulfilled" and "being respected". As a summary, Kahle's values are societal, easier and quicker to administer [18,21]. On the other hand, several Rokeach values are not directly relevant in the context of consumer behavior as "national security, a world at peace". Their introduction can torment the established relationship between values and consumption. Kahle's parsimonious approach thus makes it possible to overcome this limit. For this reason, marketing specialists consider it more useful because researchers generally adopt other measures related to the different concepts inherent in the study of consumer behavior such as attitude.

It should be noted that Rokeach [14] focuses on the individual values. He points out that values are sustainable beliefs of a universal character. They are internalized. They should reflect needs. Rokeach believes in the motivation of individuals to embody interesting purposes. According to him, society should gradually succeed in bringing and pushing individuals to accept these values without resorting to sanction or pressure. However, Kahle [19] focuses on society. Values are social cognitions. They are designed as a set of principles and standards of behaviors. They therefore constitute a limit to action. They have an instrumental character of adaptation to environmental changes. They are relative. They are a cognitive construction dictated by society. Kahle believes in coercion and force, he adopts a deontological approach. Moreover, it is important to mention that the choice of the approach depends on the context of the study. The inventory of Rokeach [14] is better suited to a research "with individual connotation". In this research, we will identify the individual values of smokers using Kahle's inventory and study their impact on the perception of humor.

C. The Schwartz's approach (1992)

Schwartz's approach is essentially based on the typology of Rokeach [14]. It is structured around fifty-six values categorized in ten domains: self-orientation, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism. These values are arranged in a circular structure and form a continuum. This research stream is widely used in transcultural studies. Schwartz in Wach & Hamer [22]

defines values as "ideals, endowed with universal content and structure, corresponding to the requirements characteristic of the human species (biological needs, inter-individual coordination, societal continuity) ". Schwartz [20] states that:

i. Values are beliefs.

ii. They refer to the ideals that individuals strive to achieve.

iii. They transcend specific situations and actions. They are abstract objectives. This characteristic distinguishes it from other concepts such as norms, attitudes that often refer to specific situations, actions or objects.

iv. Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, individuals and events. They play the role of criteria or standards.

v. Values are ranked in order of relative importance. They form an ordered system reflecting the priorities of each person's values. This hierarchy of values distinguishes it from norms and attitudes.

D. Humor

There is not yet an agreed-upon terminology in humor research. The humor is very complex and plays a central role in human life. Humor is a multidimensional, vague concept and difficult to define scientifically [6]. The humour is perceived universal in the sense that exists in every culture. Also, it is considered as a time-and place- specific phenomenon [23-25]. Much research has been conducted on the impact of humor on advertising persuasion [26,27]. Humor is the most common and frequently used emotion appeals in advertising [28]. Biel [29] points out that liking an advertisement increases persuasion. Humor attracts the attention to the advertising. It attracts more people because of pleasure and comfort on entertaining (Fugate, 1998). Audience enjoys more on frequency of humor ads. Accoding to Eisend [30] a humorous advertisement can elicit a positive attitude towards the advertisement, towards the brand and it can increase purchase intentions. Humor is appreciated differently from one culture to another, from one region to another, from one person to another. The perception of humor is highly individualistic.

E. Humor types

In 1973, Sternthal and Craig [31] suggested that humor in advertisements might be determined when the advertisement makes use of pun, joke, understatement and other humor devices. A humor device can be seen as the technique of humor that is used to make an advertisement humorous. Kelly and Solomon [32] gave some analysis on humor in television advertising and suggested six types: pun, understatement, joke, ludicrous, satire and irony. Buijzen and Valkenburg [33] stated that there are seven types of humor: slapstick, clownish humor, surprise, misunderstanding, irony, satire, and parody. Chan [34]

proposed a categorization that was a combination of the humor approach of Sternthal and Craig [31], the humor devices of Kelly and Solomon [32] and the typology of Buijzen and Valkenburg [33]. The seven humor devices are puns, understatement/exaggeration, ludicrous, Satire/irony, comic, jokes/nonsense, others. In the category 'others' are all the other humor devices like slapstick.

F.   Hypothesis

The individual is in regular quest for the satisfaction of his values like the photographer who perpetually seeks to fix the right image. He aspires to reach the goals of his existence and to satisfy his lasting beliefs even when processing commercial information Rouvrais Charron [16]. Kahle [19] asserts that the individual adapts to his socio-cultural environment through his values. The basic needs and environment of each interact to create values. Based on the studies of Rokeach [14] and Kahle [19], Rouvrais Charron [16] states that individual values constitute the common patrimony of members of the same society. It assumes that "the system of individual values assumes, upstream, a perceptual filter function in the process of advertising persuasion".

Extensive research belonging to the fields of psychology, sociology or management reports the primordial influence of values on the opinions and behaviors of the individual. Values are the very soul of advertising. In this context, Rouvrais Charron attempts to understand the impact of values on the perception of the receiver. It postulates that any stimulus should pass through a perceptual filter that is composed by the system of individual values. In a survey testing four informative versus emotional advertisements, Rouvrais Charron finds that values contribute to the formation of the attitude towards the advertising message and to the brand whatever the tone of the message stimulus. The meaning of the spectators' values and the meaning transmitted by the elements of the message must be congruent in order to increase the effectiveness of advertisements [16]. Perception is therefore dependent on individual values. From where, H1: Personal values have an impact on the perception of humor.

Methodology

The procedure of selection the advertising medium

The procedure for selecting the advertising medium is done in two stages: initially, we downloaded from the Internet twenty-eight anti-tobacco spots. The experts in communication select, in a second stage, the stimulus generating humor. The sample consists of smokers.

Measurement scale for individual values

Kahle's inventory focused on terminal values seems to be better suited to our study aimed at identifying the personal values of smokers. The LOV is better suited to our study because it has the advantage of proposing a reduced number of values.

This improves the practicality of our survey, in terms of the better acceptance of smokers questioned and saves time and does not harm its predictive ability. Grube, Rokeach and Getzlaf [35] show that smokers are concerned with values related to personal amusement and autonomy. These results are confirmed whatever the sex. However, non-smokers are perceived as more conventional and concerned with values related to religion, family and interpersonal relationships. Ex-smokers attach great importance to the values of accomplishment and self-control. In addition, it turned out that the image of ex-smokers is "intermediate", it looks more like that of non-smokers. Chang [36] did a nationwide survey of high school students. He suggested that smokers attached greater importance to hedonic gratification values and less importance to idealism values than did nonsmokers. Also, he found that hedonic gratification values were associated with favorable attitudes toward smoking, while idealism values were associated with unfavorable attitudes toward smoking.

Measuring scale of the perception of humor

To check how humorous, the advertisement was perceived by the participant, the humor scale of Zhang [37] was used. This scale consists of 5 bi-polar items not humorous/humorous, not funny/funny; not playful/playful; not amusing/amusing and not dull/dull.

Results

Description of sample

The data collection has been done among students, teachers and employees of the Higher Institute of Management Tunisia. We interviewed 210 smokers. We eliminated 20 questionnaires that were incomplete. The questionnaire aims to investigate the values of participants and identified their opinions about the advertisement they had seen. Our choice was based on these respondents for their accessibility. Men are the majority of participants. Most of the respondents are students aged 20 to 29 (94%). Indeed, according to the World Bank (2000), individuals who do not start smoking during adolescence or early adulthood are unlikely to ever become smokers. Most smokers begin before the age of 25 in childhood or adolescence. In high-income countries, eight out of ten smokers begin adolescence. In low- and middle-income countries for which figures are available, it appears that the majority of smokers start shortly after 20 years, but the age begins to decline. These young smokers have a risk of nicotine addiction. It would be wise to understand the reactions of this target to humorous anti-smoking advertisements in order to find effective ways to motivate them to stop smoking.

Analysis of the dimensionality and reliability of the scale of individual values

The KMO index is equal to 0.666. It is considered satisfactory. Principal component analysis reveals the existence of three dimensions. We eliminate the item "being respected" because

its quality of representation is bad. Following a second ACP, the item "self-respect" is deleted as it has a poor quality of representation. After performing a third ACP, two dimensions are obtained which are described in the following tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: Dimensionality and Reliability of Individual Value Scale.

	Social orientation	Personal orientation and hedonism
Excitement		0.629
Fun and enjoyment in life		0.635
Warm relationships with others	0.850	
Sense of belonging	0.969	
Security	0.965	
Self-fulfillment		
Sense of accomplishment		
Cronbach's Alpha Score	0.923	0.756

Table 2: Dimensionality and Reliability of the Scale of Perception of Humo**r**.

	Dimension
This advertisement is humorous	0.926
This advertisement is funny	0.798
This advertisement is playful	0.805
This advertisement is amusing	0.906
Cronbach's Alpha Score	0.879

Analysis of the dimensionality and reliability of the scale of perception of humor

The KMO index is equal to 0.693. It is considered satisfactory since it is close to 1. Principal component analysis reveals the existence of a single factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1, that is, 2.962. We eliminated an item "this advertisement is dull" because it has a representation quality of less than 0.5. The table below illustrates the results of the exploratory factor analysis applied to the perception of humor scale: Reliability and convergent validity of the perception of humor scale. The Rhô de Jöreskog indicates a value greater than 0.7 for the constructed "perception of humor". In addition, the procedure of Fornell and Larcker [38] was followed to calculate the convergent validity. The Rhô of convergent validity indicates a value that exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Table 3).

Table 3: Reliability and convergent validity of the perception of humor scale

	λ_i
This advertisement is humorous.	0.981
This advertisement is amusing.	0.986
Jöreskog's Rhô	0.98
Rhô of convergent validity	0.96

The confirmatory analysis makes it possible to test the reliability and the validity of the constructs. The Rhô de Jöreskog indicates values greater than 0.7 for the four constructs. In addition, the procedure of Fornell and Larcker [38] was followed to calculate the convergent validity. The Rhô of convergent validity indicates values that exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5. Therefore, we can say that the four constructs are reliable and valid. It can be seen from the following table that the Jöreskog's Rhô indicates values greater than 0.7 for each of the dimensions obtained. Moreover, the procedure of Fornell and Larcker, was followed to calculate convergent validity and discriminate validity. The Rhô of convergent validity indicates a satisfactory value that exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.5 for the social orientation dimension and a value close to the threshold for the second dimension. In addition, the conditions of discriminating validity are respected (Table 4). Therefore, we can say that the dimensions obtained from the individual values are reliable and valid.

Table 4: Reliability, Convergent and Discriminate Validity of the Construct of Individual Values

	Social orientation	Personal orientation and hedonism
Excitement		0.60
Fun and enjoyment in life		0.59
Warm relationships with others	0.719	
Sense of belonging	0.99	
Security	0.98	
Self-fulfillment		0.70
Sense of accomplishment		0.73
Jöreskog's Rhô	0.93	0.768
Convergent validity	0.819	0.432
Discriminate validity	0.012<0.819	0.012<0.432

Verification of Hypothesis 1: Individual values have an effect on the perception of humor

The results indicate that hedonistic and self-oriented values such as self-fulfillment and sense of accomplishment have an effect on the perception of humor (Table 5). The hypothesis H1 is partially verified.

Table 5: Test result of hypothesis 1.

Causal link	Student's Test	p	Standardized coefficient
Social orientation → Perception of humor	-0.256	0.798	-0.015
Personal orientation and hedonism → Perception of humor	7.941	0.000	0.716

Hypothesis 1: Individual values have an effect on the perception of humor is partially verified. The fitting quality of the model is acceptable. The NFI is equal to 0.81; the CFI is equal to 0.98. The RMSEA is equal to 0.067.

Discussion

Our research highlights a relationship between values related to hedonism and the perception of humor. Grube, Rokeach and Getzlaf [35] highlight that smokers are concerned with values that relate to personal amusement and self-reliance. However, non-smokers are concerned with values related to religion, family and interpersonal relationships. Participants therefore attach great importance to values relating to fun, enjoyment, personal fulfillment and the need for excitement and are therefore attracted by stimuli full of humor. Marketers can anchor on emotions to influence their immediate versus long-term actions. Humor has a positive effect on memory recall. Educators and advertisers should have benefit from this association [39,40]. Also, the link between humor and liking is strong. Marketers should create more humorous advertisements to attract the attention of consumers and to increase the purchase intention.

This article focuses on personal values or individual- level values, as opposed to macro level or cultural values. It highlights important findings for successful marketing strategies and advertising. Marketing aims to assist consumers fulfill their values [19]. Seldom do consumers purchase anything solely for the functional dimensions of the products. They expect to get benefit from the purchase. We buy foods on the basis of certain characteristics such as taste and visual appeal, but the nutritional value is the most important aspect of the buying decision. In the same vein, few people buy a car exclusively for transportation. Many Ads describe vehicles as a mechanism of expressing self-identity. Advertisers ought to create an imaginary that resonates with the expectations of the target. Cigarette advertising does not sell cigarettes. It sells "identities". It attempts to valorize and standardize the smoking act and associate it with independence, freedom, rebellion, maturity and masculinity.

In addition, advertising targets women with images of beauty, slimming, emancipation, fashion and equality. Advertisers should be the true model of building values. Cigarette ads are potent because they portray images that people desire [29]. This research indicates that anti-smoking media campaigns should devaluate the act of smoking, reduce its social acceptability and associate it with naivety and inexperience. Chang [36] highlights that idealism values led to negative attitudes toward smoking. Public health practitioners and anti- tobacco advertisers should cultivate values as 'a world of peace' and a 'world of beauty' and attempt to weaken the association between smoking and the values of exciting life [41-44].

While this research provides contribution in the marketing literature by highlighting the role of values to increase the effectiveness of humorous advertising, there are a number of limitations. For example, this research focuses only on the effect of the values on the perception of humor. It didn't examine the impact of the perception of humor on the intention to quit.

The humorous messages affect the attitude of smoker and his behavior. It would be interesting to study the effect of individual values on the perception of ethical advertising. Studies to extend this research could continue to explain the impact of self-efficacy on the intention to quit. Practitioners are required to act on self-efficacy through vicarious learning dimension. Finally, negative emotions like fear and anger can be a powerful catalyst in marketer's attempts to formulate persuasive advertising in the case of anti-tobacco campaigns [10,11,45].
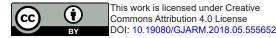
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