

Humor and persuasion essay



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On a daily basis, people deal with a lot of persuasion and it has progressively influenced today's modern society; for example, with people having access to the media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and internet there has been an increase in the frequency of advertisements, which companies attempt to persuade the media audience to purchase their products. In addition, there are more people using the internet to influence their opinions by persuading others that the advertisements are true, because of the increase in the amount of persuasion happening in today's world, various people have started using different methods to have a more effective message by using persuasion.

Humor is one technique that is used, because by using humor in persuasion, it gets the listener to connect with the one using persuasion. By using humor in persuasion is usually a very successful tool; but, there are some pitfalls that need to be carefully considered. "The effects produced by humor may be too small to compensate for any weakness in the persuasive message itself" (Lyttle, 2001, p. 214). The author of this paper will examine how humor is risky and effective, and why the ones who use humor should use it cautiously. Effectiveness of Humor in Persuasion

Humor in persuasion can be a very effective tool. A study, which Lyttle (2001) points out says, "Persuasion theory was used to develop predictions about the effectiveness of humor" (p. 206). He examines various ways that humor in persuasion could possibly be effective. By creating a positive effect is one way humor in persuasion may be effective; for example, people who are in a good mood are less likely to disagree with a humor persuasive message. By enhancing the "liking" of the source is another way; for

example, humorous cartoons in textbooks relaxed learning environment, which a student may prefer that style of learning. Ironic humor is another way to “ block systematic central processing by distracting receivers from constructing counterarguments” (Lyttle, 2001, p. 207-208). Self-effacing humor is another way to build trust (p. 208).

Encouraging positive effect warrants persuasive communication; therefore, people are more open to the recipient and the message. A message can be more appealing by using humor; so, the listener’s attention is increased and the need for more repetition and explaining is decreased. “ Humor impacts communication by signaling important or sensitive information. Reducing resistance through the creation of positive effect, and by increasing the persuasiveness of a message” (Romano & Pescosolido, 2008, p. 400). For example, situational humor is used by Zig Zigler, a motivational speaker. According to Hayes & Zigler, it is important to use situational humor because people tend to lose interest because some people have short attention spans and they grow weary. Ziglar uses humor every nine to eleven minutes, which produces a change from concentrated and by using humor people tend to listen more intently and it holds their attention (Hayes & Ziglar, 2004, p, 19).

Research confirms that using humorous ads, such as radio ads, magazine ads, television spots, and newspaper ads, prove that people pay more attention to them than humorous ads. In the United States, several study results revealed the following statistics: 38 percent thought humor improved comprehension; 94 percent believed humor was helpful in gaining people’s attention; 62 percent mentioned that humorous ads had the greatest influence. Ninety-two percent stated humor was a selling tool and was “

either highly or moderately effective, [as well as] an effective communication technique for a wide range of products and channels” (Cline and Kellaris, 1999, Abstract para 1, para 2).

According to Fishbane, 2007, the most important advantage of using humor is that the individual that receives the message connects to the persuader. Many times, the one who is trying to persuade may seem annoying and pushy; nevertheless, the person does have to stop the other person to convey such a message. Usually this turns individuals off to specific opinions because it seems to annoy them; for example, while people are walking down the street they have been interrupted and asked if they have a few minutes to spare to save some natural resource, such as some animal or the rain forest. Even if the cause is good, the majority of people seem to associate this with negative emotions; they are usually focused on something else and do not seem to care about particular issues. At this time, this is where persuaders use humor in their communication. By using humor, the one who delivers the persuasive message tries to connect with others and bring them into the conversation.

According to Guadagno & Calдини (2010), this humor is comparable to the bait-and-switch persuasive theory; but in this instance, humor is being used as the bait that wills swiftly important issue at hand. To the huge population of people, humor appeals because no one would really say that they do not enjoy laughing. Laughing accelerates positive brain neurochemistry that causes us to feel good when we hear amusing humor, according to Waugh and Godlib (2008). Therefore, it makes that people are attracted to laughter, and even baited and drawn by it.

In addition, using humor can be successful because it permits the message to be obvious compared to the others. On a daily basis, when faced with many persuasive messages, many of the humor persuasions can become combined and often comes from a large number of various sources. This is damaging to the reason of the persuasion since this indicates that individuals manage to not remember the message; but, people will remember humor and the Persuasive messages that was conveyed to them. This is rather tied to priming that is the marvel that something was held in memory will be more familiar than something, which is unfamiliar (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2010).

The humor- inspired persuasive message will continue to be more noticeable in the mind of the listener since it is different from what other individuals have heard in different persuasive messages, under the priming scheme. When the message is retrieved again, it becomes more beneficial because it was already revealed in the past. By using humor as an effective persuasive tool, it reveals that humans do value humor; and if making someone laugh does take time to cheer them up, people are willing to use that time if something hilarious captures their attention (Waugh & Gotlib, 2008). As stated before, by using humor in hopes that it will increase persuasiveness, to connect the message with the people.

Although, when using humor the wrong way does create problems; therefore humor does have a potential benefits and must be used in a careful way. There are certain areas that one cannot use humor, even though people are appealed to humor. Due to the seriousness of nature, there are things that people cannot joke about and may seem very negative and come out very

negative, especially if someone was trying to get someone's attention by using humor in an inappropriate way.

If this happens, the inappropriate use of humor will be a turn off to message being presented to the people; for example, if the persuader used jokes about terrorist attacks, the American people would not be received the message very well. Many people would totally disagree because of this message being lewd humor. Various types of humor do appeal to the population and should be stressed when applying it in persuasive messages. In order to avoid having any problems, there should be more consideration when using other controversial types of humor.

Another type of risk of humor is when it has the ability to downplay the importance of the message portrayed; for example, if the message portrayed is that we need to do more to safeguard the safety of abused children, and then using humor would be very inappropriate because the listener would not receive and process the specific message. Actually, this type of humor could possibly be taken the wrong way and indicate that the issue is not serious to the persuader. Moreover, the persuader communicating the persuasive message might lose integrity with the listener and the message would not be received correctly. It is clear to match the humor to the message being used because not all persuasive messages can be used with humor; even though, it might have potential to be successful if it is used in the most appropriate and effective way.

Due to the accessibility to advertisements, the growing media, and the internet, persuasion has become sophisticated. By using humor within

persuasive messages in hopes that it will help increase the persuasive effectiveness of the messages. Humor does have the ability to help the persuaders achieve their goal; however, it does not always work because there will be situations where humor is not appropriate. The author believes that humor will remain to be an important influence in persuasion and continue to improve rather than reduce from the main persuasive message.

Conclusion In conclusion, on a daily basis, persuasion has been gradually important, and people deal with numerous persuasions; for example, the complete availability of the Internet and the media where companies try to persuade consumers to buy various products. The Internet offers a The method for people to articulate their opinions with the consequence of persuading other people that the companies know the truth. With persuasion increasing in the world today, various people have started to use various methods for their message to be successful, and using humor is one technique. One uses humor to persuade the listener to connect with the one using persuasion, and by using humor it is well intended and effective tool although, there are some disadvantages that must be considered. The author of this paper has examined how humor is risky and effective, as well as why it is important that when using humor, the persuader must use it carefully.