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Use of Ethnic/Culturally Based Incongruent Cues in Informational versus Transformational Advertising

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ABSTRACT

This study compares the relative effectiveness in the use of culturally incongruent cues in informational and transformational advertising. A case study was done to explore the extent to which ethnic/ culturally incongruent cues are used in advertising in informational and transformational advertising and to compare the effectiveness of these ads between the two advertising forms. The study sought to address two questions: (1) To what extent are ethnic/culturally incongruent cues used in informational or transformational advertising? and (2): Is the use of culturally incongruent cues more effective for informational or transformational ads?

A content analysis approach was used to extract social media data from YouTube for this study. The advertisements used to compare the effectiveness of informational and transformational ads were selected from AdWeek's top 10 most watched YouTube videos of 2013. Nvivo 10 was used to capture the commercial and comments to be analyzed as part of the second research question.

The results of this study indicate that culturally incongruent cues can be used to great effect in both informational and transformational advertising. This study also suggests classification criteria for culturally incongruent ads as well as informational and transformational advertising. When analyzing the effectiveness of culturally incongruent ads based on responses in social media, we are limited to metrics embedded in these tools and those that can be developed by analyzing the data collected. This study proposes that for YouTube commercials, the number of likes, dislikes and the valence of viewer comments are the most appropriate measures of advertising effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

According to Nielsen, advertisers worldwide spent \$557 billion in 2012, 3.2 % more than they did in 2011. Advertising spend in North America grew by 4.6 % over that same period and U.S advertising spend increased by 3% in 2012 to \$140 billion (Nielsen, 2013; Kantar Media, 2013). The top 100 advertisers in the United States spent an estimated \$104.5 billion on advertising in 2012, 2.8% more than they did in 2011, according to AdAge.com (Johnson, 2013). Capturing the attention of the over 360 million people in the United States is big business, one that is of interest to practitioners and academicians alike. These substantial capital investments in advertising are not without disadvantages. Consumers are exposed to an estimated 38 ads per minute on national television, according to Nielsen (2012). As advertisers struggle to stand out in what has become

an extremely cluttered space they have sought to employ new methods to capture and keep the attention of consumers.

The study of advertising effects has long interested researchers and one notable stream of research focuses on the effect advertisements have on attitudes- towards the ad, towards the brand and consequently purchase intention. This study explores the use of ethnic/culturally based cues in advertising. Specifically, it explores how these cues are used to create incongruence in advertising. It also compares the effectiveness of these ethnic/ culturally based cues when utilized in informational versus transformational advertising.

This study constitutes a significant contribution to the literature on incongruence as to date, research on incongruence has not yet covered the use of cultural cues.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Affect, Cognition and Persuasion

Research has already established that attitude towards the ad is an important determinant of attitude towards the brand (Brown & Stayman, 1992). The greater the liking for the ad, the stronger the possibility that the viewer will like the brand and be more willing to purchase it. Biel and Bridgewater (1990) found that people who liked a commercial “a lot” are twice as likely to be persuaded by it as those who had neutral reactions to that commercial. Attitudes are theorized to have both cognitive and affective components. Affective components include emotions, feelings or drives while cognitive components include beliefs, judgments or thoughts (Edwards, 1990). Attitudes are also formed through cognitive processes such as reason or they can be formed through emotional factors such as needs, wishes and feelings (Edwards, 1990). Berkowitz (1993) proposed a three phase model of viewer reactions to stimuli. In the first phase, basic, lower order, automatic responses occur before viewers are even aware, or cognitive process begin. In the second phase, deliberative, cognitive processing takes place, which may either reinforce or weaken the action tendencies that resulted from the lower order affective reactions. In the third phase, the affective significance of cognitive processing may result in action tendencies that are developed much more slowly than the lower order affective reactions, as more deliberative processing takes place before those reactions occur (Shiv & Fedorkin, 1999).

Humorous ads are some of the most common types of affect based ads (Kellaris & Cline, 2007) and attempt to not only portray a funny situation but also induce positive moods and brand associations in viewers. Lee and Sternthal (1999) posit that positive mood can even result in increased recall of brand name. While cognitive capacity and feelings as information theories propose that a positive mood results in more focus on the situation and limits cognitive resources available for stimulus processing, Lee and Sternthal (2009) claim that positive moods motivate greater consideration of the hedonic consequences of allocating constrained cognitive resources to processing stimuli than neutral moods. There is however agreement across academia that both affect and cognition behavior (Shiv & Fedorkin, 1999).

Affective and cognitive cues not only have implications for attitude formation, they also affect how attitude change occurs. Edwards (1990) found that affect-based attitudes are more susceptible to affective persuasive influences while cognition based attitudes exhibit equal

change under both affective and cognitive forms of persuasion. It would appear that affect-based persuasion can be a very powerful agent of attitude formation and attitude change.

While advertisers control whether cognitive or affective persuasive cues are present in advertising, consumers' processing of advertising stimulus is not as straightforward. It has been argued that humans are cognitive misers who if possible, utilize mental shortcuts in processing advertising messages (Petty et al., 1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Heuristic-Systematic Model both propose that humans process persuasive communications in one of two ways: through effortful, systematic processing (centrally) or through the use of non-content cues (peripherally) (Chaiken 1980; Petty et al 1983; Cacioppo et al 1986). Both models cite involvement as central to message processing. When the viewer is both motivated and able to process a persuasive message, involvement will be high and central processing of the advertising message will occur. If on the other hand motivation or ability is low, peripheral processing will occur. Viewers may be motivated to attend to an advertising message if the topic is of personal importance, if there are personal consequences, or if the viewer feels they will have to defend their opinions, behavior or choices (Chaiken, 1980; Petty et al 1980).

Ability however is determined by situational and individual factors such as distractions and repetition that affect the allocation of limited cognitive resources to interpreting stimuli. The Elaboration Likelihood model posits that affective cues have the strongest effect on attitudes when motivation and ability are low while cognitive cues are most influential when motivation and ability are high (Edwards, 1990). Beil and Bridgewater (1990) in their research found that the relationship between liking of an advertisement and persuasiveness is strongest when audience involvement is low. Cacioppo et al (1986) also found that need for cognition i.e. individual liking or preference for logical consideration of information, is another factor that influences central versus peripheral processing. By the same token, individuals who display high need for cognition will be more responsive to cognitive cues.

Informational vs. Transformational Advertising

While some advertisements make certain claims or assertions about the brand being advertised, others tell a story through which the audience infers the advertiser's claims (Deighton, 1988). According to Puto and Wells (1984), advertising can be divided into two basic forms: Informational and Transformational. Informational advertisements present consumers with factual, relevant brand data in a clear and logical manner, which allows them to assess the merits of purchasing the brand based on verifiable information. Informational ads display three main characteristics. They present:

1. Factual, relevant information about the brand.
2. Information that is immediately and obviously important to the potential consumer.
3. Data that the consumer accepts as being verifiable.

Informational advertisements can change consumers' cognitive expectations of the brand, which affect users' satisfaction and general affect during the use experience. Informational advertisements or arguments are most effective in cases when the advertiser wishes to elaborate product benefits and establish criteria for evaluating product effectiveness (Deighton, 1988; Naylor et al, 2008). This is important for new products and product categories while transformational ads are more necessary as product categories become more established and

brand awareness, brand image and differentiation become more important (Swaimithan et al, 1996).

A transformational advertisement associates the experience of consuming the brand being advertised with a unique set of psychological characteristics that would not be typically associated with the brand experience without exposure to the brand. It transforms the usage experience by marrying it with an experience that is different from using other brands. There are two main characteristics associated with transformational advertising. Transformational ads:

1. Make the experience of using the product richer, warmer, more exciting and/or enjoyable, than if it were obtained from just an objective description of the brand.
2. Inextricably link the experience of the advertisement with the experience of using the brand so that consumers cannot remember the brand without remembering the experience generated by the advertisement.

Consequently, transformational advertising motivates selective recall of brand related experience which is described by Puto and Wells (1984) as vicarious classical conditioning. Repeated exposure to transformational ads should therefore produce strong, positive attitudes. Deighton (1984) also proposes that advertising can impact consumers' consumption experience. Transformational advertising fosters inductive reasoning in which the viewer interprets the experience presented in the advertisement. Transformational advertising creates, alters or intensifies feelings that accompany brand use and consequently impact attitudes towards the brand. It also reinforces feelings that result from brand usage and influence reactions to subsequent advertising by the same brand even if the brand is not utilized frequently (Aaker & Stayman, 1992). These two categories are however, not mutually exclusive. Ads can be classified as:

- High Transformation/Low Information
- Low Transformation/High Information
- High Transformation/High Information
- Low Transformation/Low Information

An advertisement is considered transformational if the overarching goal is to generate a transformational effect, regardless of whether the ad is informational, transformational or both. The centrality of the transformational effects will determine if the ad is informational or transformational. Similarly, informational ads can change cognitive expectations about the brand, which can affect the user's satisfaction and general affect during the use experience. The advertisement is primarily informational while the transformational effects are secondary (Aaker and Stayman, 1992).

Studies of informational and/or transformational advertisements have explored their application in political communication (Shen, 2012), magazine print ads (Cutler, et al., 2000), health communication (Mendon, Goodnight & Robin, 2008) but to date, no research has been done on the application of these appeals in ethnic/ culturally incongruent ads.

Incongruence, Humor and Persuasion

Advertisers employ incongruent cues as a way of cutting through the clutter, increase the level of audience attention and motivate more effortful message processing (Heckler & Childers, 1992). The salience of an advertisement increases as incongruity increases. Incongruity occurs when information that violates expectations or current beliefs is presented (Kellaris & Cline, 2007). The presence of incongruence adds an element of surprise to a persuasive message, increases attention and encourages more effortful processing (Sternthal & Craig, 1973; Kellaris & Cline, 2007). The presence of unexpected stimuli also increases recall and memories of details can be activated much more rapidly than for unexpected stimuli (Kellaris & Kline, 2007).

Incongruity and humor go hand in hand; according to Pornpitakpan and Tan (2000), incongruence is one of the structural components of humorous advertisements. Suls (1983) states that incongruity is both a necessary and sufficient condition to produce humor. A cross national study of humorous advertisements found incongruity in commercials in Thailand, Germany, Korea and the United States (Pornpitakpan & Tan, 2000). Pornpitakpan and Tan (2000) describe three basic types of humorous contrasts:

- (1) Distinguishing an actual/existing situation where the hero of the joke finds himself/herself or in which the joke is actually set and a non-actual situation that is not compatible with the actual setting of the joke. Perceived incongruence is low in this situation
- (2) A normal/expected state of affairs and an abnormal/unexpected state of affairs. Advertisements that portray this type of contrast are considered to be moderately incongruent
- (3) A possible/plausible situation and a fully possible/less plausible situation. Incongruence is highest in this situation.

Pornpitakpan and Tan (2000) also proposed that perceived humor is highest in situations of moderate incongruity.

There are several reasons why humor has become so popular in persuasion. Humorous ads are more successful at capturing attention, enhancing source liking, reducing counter arguing and are likely to be more persuasive for feeling oriented or low involvement products (Sternthal & Craig; 1973; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992; Nabi, Moyer- Gusé and Byrne, 2007). Humor has been described as “a universal language that humanizes advertising, allowing the communicator to speak to the members of the audience on his or her own level” (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Neislen (2012) rank audience- appropriate humor as number one on their top 5 characteristics of winning TV ads.

Kellaris and Kline (2007) cite humor’s ability to catch attention, increase memorability, reduce reactance and enhance persuasiveness as benefits of this type of appeal. They proposed that advertisements that engage the audience, illustrate the charm and playfulness of a brand, are likely to result in positive outcomes. Beil and Bridgewater (1990) found that when audience involvement is low, the relationship between liking of an advertisement and persuasiveness is strongest. Klein and Bryant (1992) also proposed that humor can be effective if it contributes to the main point of the message and also if the product being advertised is appropriate for the use of humor.

While it has been established that humor and incongruence are closely related, research on incongruence has been primarily limited to the visual stimuli presented in these ads. One study by Lalawani, Lwin and Ling (2009) investigated the effect of music type on persuasion. The work of Petty et al (1983), Chaiken (1980) and other scholars suggest that characteristics of the message source also influence attitudes towards the ad. Visual and verbal characteristics of the source play important roles in the overall effect of commercials on audience beliefs, attitudes and intentions arising from the advertisement (Heckler and Childers, 1992; Lalawani et al 2005). The Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Heuristic-Systematic model both argue that under conditions of low involvement, peripheral cues such as liking for the message source are key determinants of liking for an ad. Shiv and Fedorkin (1999) also found that when processing capacity is limited, affective reactions to an ad (such as liking of the source), have stronger influences on consumer choice. The consumer is more likely to select an option that elicited a high affective response than an option elicited a cognitive response.

Message sources that are perceived to be more credible, likeable, similar and/or familiar are more persuasive than those that are not. Characteristics of the message source in some cases, are even considered persuasive arguments under conditions of high involvement, for example in the case of beauty products (Chaiken, 1980). Accent is one of the verbal/ vocal characteristics of a spokesperson that impacts perceived credibility. Accents provide listeners with information about the spokesperson, helping to create certain impressions of him/her. Tajfel's social categorization, social comparison and social identity theory posits that people use speech, style and accents as bases to categorize people according to their own socialization and cultural values (Lalawani et al 2005). The British accent for example, has been used in advertisements and entertainment programming to create the "snob appeal" (Lalawani et al 2005).

Advertising and entertainment content that features spokespersons or actors with accents (fake or real) are perceived differently by people from differing cultures, genders and even generations. For example, a study commissioned by the Central Office of Information (COI) in the United Kingdom, found that residents from different regions vary in their preference of the local dialect/accents as opposed to the more formal British English. Residents of Tynesdale and Manchester preferred to listen to PSAs that featured actors who spoke in their local accent while residents of West Midlands and Bristol preferred PSAs delivered by actors with "received pronunciation" (Sweeney & Robinson, 2009). Not only were there regional differences but generational differences as well. Younger respondents preferred PSAs that used the local dialect/accents while older respondents preferred the Received Pronunciation (Sweeney & Robinson, 2009).

This study posits that verbal cues such as use of accents, can also be used to create incongruity. The utilization of accents can be used to convey messages about the sources' mood, cultural values and personality.

Case Study

A case study was done to explore the extent to which ethnic/ culturally incongruent cues are used in advertising in informational and transformational advertising and to compare the effectiveness

of these ads between the two advertising forms. The study addressed two specific research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are ethnic/culturally incongruent cues used in informational or transformational advertising?

RQ2: Is the use of culturally incongruent cues more effective for informational or transformational ads?

METHOD & DATA COLLECTION

Data Source

The top 10 brands from the 2013 Effie rankings were selected to examine the extent to which ethnic/culturally incongruent cues were used in informational and/or transformational advertising. The Effie index ranks the world's most effective advertising agencies, advertisers and brands (Effie, 2013). The brands and their Effie rankings are illustrated in figure 1 below:

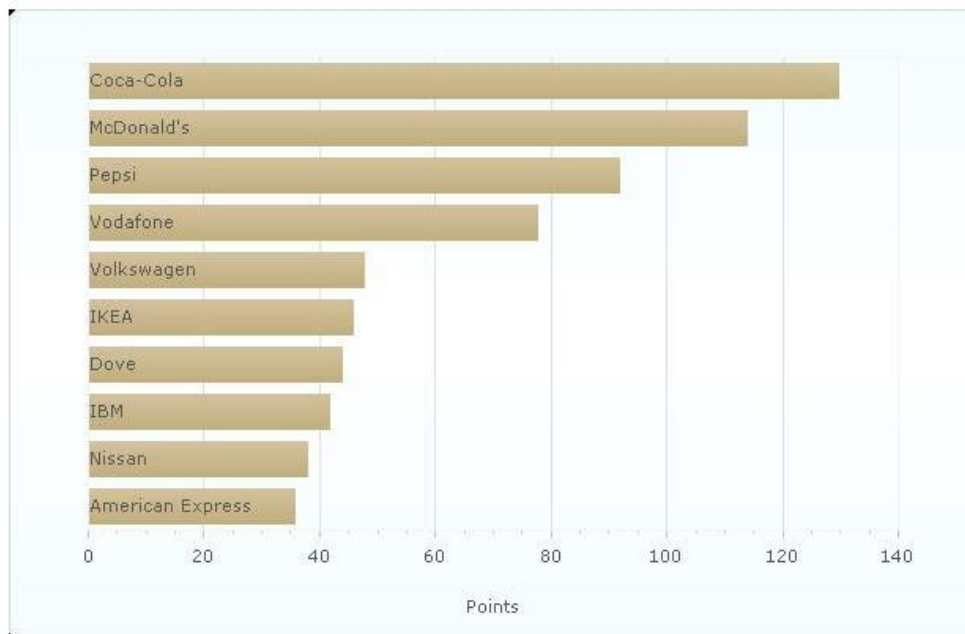


Figure 1: Effie Top 10 Brands for 2013.

The advertisements used to compare the effectiveness of informational and transformational ads were selected from AdWeek's top 10 most watched YouTube videos of 2013. Two of the ten ads on this list utilized culturally incongruent cues: VW's "Get Happy Super Bowl commercial, ranked at number nine and Poo Pourri's "Girl's Don't Poop" commercial ranked at number five. All the commercials used in the analysis were sourced from each brand's official YouTube channel. YouTube was selected due to its popularity and its ability to capture user feedback, which will be especially important for comparing the effectiveness of the ads. According to YouTube statistics, more than one billion unique users visit YouTube each month, watching over six billion hours of videos and uploading over 100 hours of video every minute (YouTube, 2014). YouTube is the top source for online video streaming; 128 million Americans viewed

video content from the site each month in 2013 (Nielsen, 2013). Its accessibility on mobile platforms also adds to its popularity, making it the fourth most popular mobile application in 2013 (Nielsen, 2013). The site also has global reach, with over 80 percent of its traffic coming from outside the United States (YouTube, 2014).

In order to gather data to test the first research question, the researcher visited the official YouTube channel of each Effie Top 10 brand and viewed one hundred of each brand's most watched videos. Videos that were not commercials were excluded from the analysis. Each commercial was evaluated on whether or not ethnic/culturally incongruent cues were used in that commercial. Since there is no established criteria for identifying ethnic/culturally incongruent ads, Pornpitakpan and Tan's (2000) criteria was used as a general guide for identifying these ads.

The criteria for classification of ethnic/ cultural incongruence are listed below:

1. The commercial was created as a general market commercial, for the US market
2. The commercial utilized one or more of these cues:
 - a. Themed music associated with another culture
 - b. A model or source who appears to be from another culture
 - c. A model or source who sounds like they are from another culture
 - d. A model or source displaying behaviors normally associated with another culture
 - e. A model or source from another culture who does not appear to fit into the context of the commercial

Once ethnic/culturally incongruent ads were identified they were then coded as informational or transformational and the frequencies of views, likes and comments were recorded. Since Vodafone does not operate in the United States, it was excluded from the analysis.

Nvivo 10 was used to capture the commercial and comments to be analyzed as part of the second research question. While both commercials had a large number of comments, YouTube restricted the number of comments NVivo was able to capture to 99 per commercial. The researcher was however able to capture all comments by copying and pasting them into a word document and they were imported into Nvivo 10. This was done for each commercial. Transcripts for the commercials were also copied from the YouTube transcript and then checked for errors by matching the transcript with the actual commercial. Discrepancies between the transcript and video script were corrected to correspond with the actual commercial. Despite the availability of all the comments for both video, this study will only examine the original NVivo captures as the size (99 comments per ad), as the full data set is quite extensive and will require the work of multiple coders. This will be undertaken at a later juncture.

Coding

Puto and Wells' (1980) criteria for classifying commercials as informational or transformational were employed to classify each ad. Ads were classified as informational if the content provided in the ad was perceived to be: factual, important and verifiable. Ads were classified as transformational if it did not meet the informational criteria and if it portrayed a special/unique experience that is clearly associated with consuming the brand.

Analysis

Videos posted in social media lend themselves to certain methods of assessing their effectiveness. Previous studies involving datasets derived from social media used likes/dislikes as well as analysis of comments on these videos as a means of measuring attitudes towards the ad (Ledford & Anderson, 2013; Lewis et al, 2013; Paek et al, 2012) . In those cases, and in this study, positive attitude towards the ad is implied as an indicator of advertising effectiveness. In this study, the following criteria was used:

1. Number of views
2. Number of likes
3. Number of dislikes
4. Valence of comments

RESULTS

Popularity of Culturally Incongruent Ads

Of the 900 videos evaluated, only 10 were commercials that utilized culturally incongruent cues. As is displayed in table 1 below, 80% of these ads employed transformational cues. This indicates that culturally incongruent cues are not very widely used among top advertisers. It also indicates that transformational ads are the most common applications of culturally incongruent cues. The results also suggest that fast moving consumer good brands like McDonald’s and Pepsi, which in many cases are considered low involvement products tend to use culturally incongruent transformational advertising more frequently than other higher risk purchases. It should however be noted that automobile brands like Volkswagen and Nissan also use culturally incongruent transformational ads more frequently than culturally incongruent informational ads. IBM was the only brand investigated that utilized informational culturally incongruent ads.

Table 1: Classification of Culturally Incongruent (CI) Ads by Top 10 Effie Brand

Brand	# of CI Ads	Transformational Ads	Informational Ads
Coca-Cola	0	N/A	N/A
McDonald’s	3	3	0
Pepsi	2	2	0
Vodafone	N/A	N/A	N/A
Volkswagen	2	2	0
Ikea	0	N/A	N/A
Dove	0	N/A	N/A
IBM	2	0	2
Nissan	1	1	0
American Express	0	N/A	N/A
Total	10	8	2

It is interesting to note that of the 10 videos that employed culturally incongruent cues, only three received over one million views, the most popular being Volkswagen’s 2013 Super Bowl commercial, which was arguably the most popular and controversial advertisement of the 2013 Super Bowl. The runner up was VW’s teaser for their 2013 Super Bowl spot. VW also leads other top advertisers in online video views, these figures are displayed in table two below. Its 2011 Super Bowl spot “The Force” is the most popular commercial of all time with 58,860,915

views, and counting. While the spot was another example of transformational advertising, no ethnic/culturally incongruent cues were used.

Table 2: Views, Likes, Dislikes and Comments for Top 10 Effie Ads

Spot	Cue	Views	Likes	Dislikes	Comments
The Wind (McDonald's)	Wind blows smell of fries to Ireland	34,122	62	9	9
Rivals (McDonald's)		72,144	21	36	21
Big Mac Chant (McDonald's)	Big Mac chant across the world in different languages	15,554	24	12	16
Can Trick (Pepsi)		556,260	2901	104	417
Crowd Surfing (Pepsi)	Reggae music	1,123,660	3,946	185	741
Get Happy (VW)	Caucasian model acting Jamaican	14,863,092	46,176	2179	11,912
Get Happy Teaser (VW)	Jamaican musician singing in a field "pied piper type of effect"	10,367,849	11,296	1,909	2,637
I am an IBMer #1 (IBM)	Scenes from across the world (people holding up cell phones)	228,983	72	4	17
I am an IBMer #2 (IBM)	British model/accent at the end	197,165	66	19	18
Heisman House Coordinated (Nissan)	Famous African-American football player dressed like a "pimp" with car that matches	59,568	1,271	3	41

Comparing Informational and Advertising Ads

Girls Don't Poo

The "girls don't poo" spot featured a well-dressed Caucasian woman sitting on a toilet discussing a product that prevents "poo" from smelling. She speaks sitting on the toilet for the duration of the commercial but gets up and exits the scene at the very end. The scenes vary from a stall in a public toilet to the middle of an office, to an event, to the living room of her implied boyfriend's house, to a farm full of cows, and a field full of flowers. She adopts a British accent for the entire commercial and uses a range of funny but "proper" adjectives and terms such as 'creamy behemoth', "cutting a rope", "laying a brick".

The commercial was coded as informational. The transcript for the commercial was divided into twenty statements in order to analyze the types of arguments used in the ad. Each statement was then coded using Puto and Wells' (1980) criteria. All of the 20 statements appeared to have a purpose and were perceived to be important; eight contained factual information and nine contained verifiable information. The commercial provided information about the problem, how the problem affects the audience, inferior solutions and then their suggested solution. The commercial also discussed the efficacy and popularity of the product as well as consumer ratings. A product demonstration is also provided and information on where to purchase the product is provided.

Incongruence was manipulated in the ad in a number of ways. First, the toilet that moves from scene to scene. Apart from the public bathroom, that would be a visually incongruent cue in all the scenes. Secondly, sophisticated appearance of the lady and her British accent which conveys

a certain impression of propriety is in stark contrast to the topic being discussed: going to the toilet. This topic is not one would expect to be discussed in polite conversation, let alone by a “British” woman. The straight-laced image of the British is played upon in this commercial. It also plays upon the inherent femininity associated with women, who men would prefer not to think about using the toilet. Incongruence is also evident in the language used throughout the commercial. The metaphors used throughout the commercial were very effective in providing graphic detail in a humorous way, but also somewhat neutralizing the disgust that could be experienced by the audience by the ad itself. A word frequency query was conducted to identify the most frequently used words. The word cloud in figure 2 displays words that were most frequently used in viewer comments. The most frequently words included funny (13), lol (11), real (11) and works (9). The references for each word provided the context in which the words were used. The words “funny” and “lol” were most frequently used by viewers to articulate that they found the commercials humorous. For example:

“Best line of this commercial is "cutting a rope at a party"classic. this commercial is so funny!!! great job bethany !!!!!”

“Lol I relly can't belive it ether haha. P. S Winne the pooh hahahahahahaha”

It appears that the advertisers used cultural incongruence to produce humor thereby reducing the level of awkwardness or disgust that would have resulted had the information been presented without this treatment.

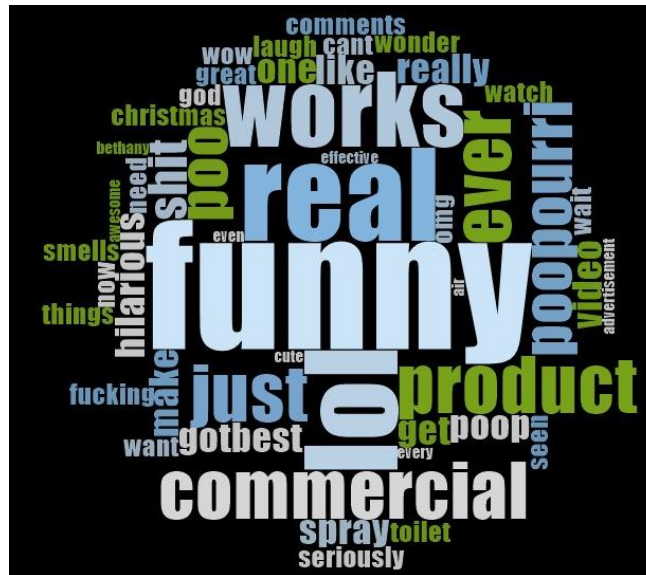


Figure 2: Word cloud showing word frequency query results

Overall, over half of the comments were positive, and 28% were neutral (see table 4 below). One interesting effect was the disbelief expressed by some viewers, despite the informative nature of the ad. Approximately 23% of all comments questioned whether or not the product was real, or the ad was just a gimmick. For example “Omg this is real?! XD”, which resulted in “real” being the third most frequently used word as other viewers also posted confirmatory comments”. Although the percentage of negative viewer comments was negligible compared to positive

comments, it is important to note that a few of the viewers in the sample analyzed did not find the commercial funny:

“is this suppose to be funny...? Cause i didnt get a laugh at it, at all...Taking a shit is normal just like any other human being. Red-heads my god”

Table 4: Nature of Viewer Comments- Girls Don’t Poo

Node	Frequency	% of Total
Positive	55	55.5%
Negative	6	6.1%
Neutral	28	28.3%
Unrelated	9	9.1%
Total	99	100%

Get Happy

The Get Happy Commercial featured a Caucasian male “Dave” at work on a Monday. In each scene he interacts with people who are in a bad mood and tells them in his best Jamaican accent to essentially “be happy”. He attends a board meeting in which the presenter wraps up a presentation saying “so in conclusion, things are pretty dismal”. Dave exclaims that the room needs “a smile” and asks “who wanna come wid I”. He takes them for a ride in his VW beetle and when they return, all passengers are “happy”. The music accompanying the scenes is Jimmy Cliff, a renowned Reggae musician’s “Get Happy”. Scenes include the elevator, the vending machine, the boardroom and the parking lot. The ad did not present any verifiable, factual or important information as described by Puto and Wells (1980), as such, it did not meet the criteria to be classified as an informational ad. The ad did communicate however that Dave, by driving to work in his VW Beetle was happy when everyone else at work was not. It also reiterates the transformational effect of driving in a VW Beetle when he takes two of his colleagues out for a ride in his Beetle and they all drive around laughing and return from the ride happy as well. This qualified the commercial as transformational ad.

In this commercial the level of cultural incongruence was even more pronounced than the previously analyzed spot. While the model in the Poo-Pourri commercial could actually “pass” as British, as her accent was almost Authentic, was less believable as a Jamaican both because he was Caucasian and also because his imitation of the Jamaican accent was not very authentic. While Jamaica is a multiracial nation, most people do not associate Caucasians with Jamaica. Additionally, the lack of authenticity of his accent produced a high level of misfit between his appearance and his speech. Dave was not pretending to be Jamaican, in fact, in the spot, he admitted to being from Minnesota “di land of ten thousand lakes”. The ad clearly portrayed that the experience of driving in the VW Beetle was the only reason Dave was “as happy as a Jamaican”.

Table 5 below illustrates the frequency of negative, positive and neutral comments. Even though this commercial does not have as many views as the previously analyzed spot, but has more comments. This commercial was admittedly more controversial than the previous spot and may account for why more persons felt the need to express their opinions about it. The commercial sparked controversy and national debate when it was released in January of 2013 and was

covered by national news networks including CNN and USA Today. Reactions from various aspects of the industry have been varied, with some analysts labeling the spot as “racist”, and presenting a stereotypical portrayal of Jamaicans; others have accused the company of using culture as a punch line (Johanasen, 2013). The spot has been compared to “blackface with voices” by New York Times columnist Charles Blow and has sparked numerous public comments (Johanasen, 2013).

Table 5: Nature of Viewer Comments- Get Happy

Node	Frequency	% of Total
Positive	60	60.6%
Negative	11	16.7%
Neutral	20	20.2%
Unrelated	8	8.1%
Total	99	100%

A word frequency query revealed that some of the most commonly used words were Jamaican (38), commercial (36) and racist (33), see figure 3 below. While the references to the word “commercial” were mostly expressing liking for the ad, most of the comments also addressed whether they felt that the spot was racist. In fact, most of the neutral comments were part of an ongoing conversation in the comments section about the presence or lack of racism in the ad. These comments included statements such as: “This commercial always makes me smile. P.S. If you're calling it racist you should get to know the Jamaican culture better”.

Jamaicans also participated in the discussion. In some comments, viewers identified themselves as being Jamaican or of Jamaican descent and all comments analyzed from persons who identified as Jamaican were positive evaluations of the commercial and also added that they did not perceive the commercial as being racist: “Imitation is the highest form of flattery. I am Jamaican and find this commercial to be quite amusing and a job well done by VW. It pays homage to our accent and culture. We have all ethnicities in Jamaica so those who deem this to be racist are much too myopic and over-sensitive which is contra the message being conveyed by the commercial. If we Jamaicans are not the least bit offended, no one else should be”.



Figure 3: Word cloud showing word frequency query results

The Get Happy commercial has been viewed over 14 million times, has over 46,000 likes and over 11,000 viewer comments. The Girls Don’t Poo commercial has been viewed over 22,000,000 times, has over 45,000 likes and over 11,000 viewer comments. The “Girls Don’t Poo” spot was also ranked 13th on AdWeek’s list of the top 20 most viral videos of 2013, with 1.24 million shares, these results are indicated in table 6 below. This information suggests that both informational and transformational culturally incongruent cues can be effective in advertising. Even though the “Girls Don’t Poo” spot had higher views and shares, the “Get Happy” commercial had the greater percentage of likes, lower percentage of dislikes and greater frequency of comments.

Table 6: YouTube Statistics for Commercials

	Girls Don’t Poo	Get Happy
Views	22,369,219	14,863,092
Comments	7,278	11,912
% of total views	.03%	.08%
Likes	45,611	46,716
% of total views	.20%	.31%
Dislikes	2,651	2,179
% of total views	.01%	.01%

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that culturally incongruent cues can be used to great effect in both informational and transformational advertising. As suggested by Swaimithan et al (1996), some types of products are better suited for informational ads while others would be better suited for transformational ads. While fast moving consumer goods, including fast food generally lend themselves to transformational advertising, culturally incongruent cues can be utilized to catch attention or add a humorous twist to ads that introduce a new product or innovation in an already mature product category. Culturally incongruent cues can also be used in informational ads for products and services that are considered taboo. The “girls don’t poo” spot is an example of how incongruence can be used to produce humor but still inform the audience.

Transformational ads are more popular than informational ads and advertisers currently utilize culturally incongruent cues more frequently in transformational ads. Generally however, the use of culturally incongruent cues is not yet very popular among advertisers. This may be because reactions to these commercials tend to be more extreme than other commercials but it appears that there are definitely benefits to utilizing these cues that could make them worth the risk. Both spots earned a place on the top 10 most watched commercials on YouTube in 2013 and VW is currently ranked in the top 10 worldwide in advertising effectiveness. There is however, one caution when utilizing these ads, the potential for social backlash increases as the level of cultural incongruence increases. Even though the “girls don’t poo ad” was more visually incongruent, the VW commercial contained more culturally incongruent cues, which resulted in it being the most controversial Super Bowl ad of 2013.

This study also suggests classification criteria for culturally incongruent ads as well as informational and transformational advertising. When analyzing the effectiveness of culturally incongruent ads based on responses in social media, we are limited to metrics embedded in these tools and those that can be developed by analyzing the data collected. This study proposes that for YouTube commercials, the number of likes, dislikes and the valence of viewer comments are the most appropriate measures of advertising effectiveness.

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APPENDIX 1

Girls Don't Poo Transcript

Copy	Purpose	Location	Factual	Important	Verifiable
You would not believe the mother load I just dropped. And that's how I like to keep it—leaving not a trace I was ever here, let alone that I just birthed a creamy behemoth from my cavernous bowels.	Catch attention	Public Toilet	No	Yes	No
Nothing is worse than stinking up the shared toilet at work.	Problem	Office (on computer)	No	Yes	No
Or the toilet at a party.	Problem	At a “nice” event served wine by waiter	No	Yes	
Or your lover's apartment.	Problem	In living room with man, eating popcorn and watching movie	No	Yes	
Of course, flushing removes the graphic evidence. Maybe two or three flushes, if your skid marks are as tenacious as mine.	Problem	Toilet stall	Yes	Yes	Yes
But what can be done of that subtle scent of a 300-cow dairy farm?	Problem	Farm with cows	No	Yes	No
Aerosol air fresheners aren't the most effective option, or the healthiest... trying to mask the stench, giving you a nice blend of chem-lab carnations with just a touch of feces?	Inferior Alternative	Farm with cows to office where people cough (spraying air freshener)	No	Yes	Yes
So, how do you make the world believe your poop doesn't stink, or in fact, that you never poop at all?	reinforce need to be satisfied	Nice event	No	Yes	No
Poo-Pourri.	Solution	Waiter serves a bottle of the product to model at nice event	Yes	Yes	Yes
Simply spritz Poo~Pourri in the bowl to create a film on the water's surface that actually traps the odors in its porcelain prison. And when your little ass-tronauts splash down and make contact with the film, they release Poo-pourri's pleasant	Demonstration	In the toilet holding up cards that demonstrate product use...shift to field so	Yes	Yes	Yes

aromas so all those around you smell is a refreshing bouquet of essential oils.		flowers at "so that"			
Yes it is a real product. And yes it really works.	Efficacy	Field of flowers	Yes	Yes	Yes
We've sold over 4 Million bottles.	Other people use it too	Office	Yes	Yes	Yes
On Amazon alone, there are over 1000 reviews rating it 4.8 of 5 stars. That's a better Amazon rating than the iPhone 5.	Other people like it	Office	Yes	Yes	Yes
If it doesn't completely stop your stench from spreading, send it back for a complete refund, our unconditional stink-free guarantee.	Lowering perceived risk	Farm with cows	Yes	Yes	Yes
If your poop stinks click here to get your Poo-pourri today at Poopourri.com .	Where to buy	Field of flowers	Yes	Yes	Yes
So whether you need to pinch a loaf at work...	Use Occasion	Office	No	Yes	No
Cut a rope at a party...	Use Occasion	Event	No	Yes	No
Or lay a brick at your boyfriend's	Use Occasion	Boyfriend's	No	Yes	No
Your days of embarrassing smells or prairie dogging it are over!	Use occasion	Boyfriend's	No	Yes	No
Poo-pourri...Our business is to make your business smell like it never even happened	Conclusion	Field with flowers		Yes	

APPENDIX 2

Get Happy Transcript

Dialogue	Scene Location
Male #1: I hate Mondays Female #1: Yeah they're the worst Dave: no worries Mon! Everything will be all right..hahaha! Yeah mon!	Scene #1: On Elevator
Dave: Don't fret near mi brodda, sticky bun come soon	Scene #2: Entering Office (colleague hitting vending machine)
Dave: Yeah! Wicked coffee Mr. Jim	Scene #2: Entering Office
Dave: Julia, turn the from di odda way aroun!	Scene #4: (Walks up to colleague in cubicle with stacks of files who is holding her head)
Features man #1 (from elevatorz), boss and Dave going for a ride in VW beetle. Sounds of laughter are coming from the car and all passengers are smiling. Music playing in the background: traveling along there's a song that we're singing, come on get happy, yeah!	Scene #7: going for a ride
Winston: You guys are three minutes late Male #1: Don't be no cloud on a sunny day Boss: Yeah, Chill Winston Winston: Sir? Dave: Respect boss man! (Boss and Winston bump fists and laughter ensues) Music: We make you happy, yeah! We make you happy! Announcer: That's the power German engineering	Scene #8 Car pulls up in the driveway
Announcer: That's the power German engineering	
Music: We make you happy!	