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Humour in the graphic advertising of Spain’s General Directorate of Traffic (1960-2009)

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Abstract

Introduction: The objective of this research article is to analyse the use of humour as a semantic resource in the advertising campaigns of Spain’s General Directorate of Traffic and identify the emotions expressed in the ads that use this resource. **Methods:** An interdisciplinary methodological approach is used to review previous research on humour as a resource for the development of the content and form of advertising messages. A historical review of the graphic advertising of the General Directorate of Traffic is offered to establish when and how humour has been used in the configuration of its advertising messages. The universe under study consists of all the graphic advertisements circulated by the General Directorate of Traffic from 1959 to 2009 (a total of 246 ads). **Results and conclusions:** The results confirm the presence of humour as a semantic resource in the advertising campaigns of Spain’s General Directorate of Traffic across the decades under study. The ads that use humour associate this resource with the objectives, messages and types of emotions the General Directorate of Traffic aims to project.

Keywords

Graphic advertising; humour; General Directorate of Traffic; comedy resources; emotions.

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Translation by **CA Martínez-Arcos** (PhD in Communication from the University of London)

1. Introduction

The main objectives of this article are:

- To quantify the presence of humour in the graphic advertising produced by Spain's General Directorate of Traffic (GDT) over five decades (from 1959 to 2009).
- To understand the linguistic-structural role that humour plays in the semantic construction of the advertising message and its relation with the type of emotion expressed in the message.

The specific objectives are:

- To detect the intended objectives (to inform, raise awareness, change behaviours, etc.) of each advertisement that uses humour as a resource in its semantic construction.
- To identify and quantify the types of comedy resources used in the different advertisements.
- To establish the relation that exist between the ads' comedy resources and objectives, the semantics of the messages and the types of emotions expressed in the ads.

The initial hypotheses are:

- Hypothesis 1. The General Directorate of Traffic (GDT) has used humour in different advertising campaigns throughout its history as a tool for the semantic construction of the message in order to inform or educate drivers and pedestrians about the consequences of breaching traffic regulations.
- Hypothesis 2. The semantics of messages and the presence of emotions in the ads are conditioned by the social context of the period in which the campaign was launched, i.e., they are conditioned by the objectives established by the GDT for each campaign and each period of time.

As advertiser, the GDT is obliged to carry out institutional advertising according to the criteria of Spain's National Law on Institutional Advertising and Communications. In this context, the General Directorate of Traffic carries out social marketing campaigns to spread awareness about the rules adopted to maintain public order and safety, and about risk prevention measures that can contribute to the reduction of accidents and of damages to the country's heritage. Given that the social and economic conditions and the context of reception of advertising messages have varied during the period under study, which covers from 1959 to 2009, is of special interest to examine the use of humour/comedy in the advertising campaigns of the GDT to identify the behaviours and attitudes the campaigns want to change and the information that has been most relevant in the different periods. The social significance of the advertising of the GDT, whose campaigns are intended to raise awareness or modify attitudes and behaviours to preserve order and security, is the starting point of this research, which examines the role of the presence of humour in the advertising campaigns of a public institution, which at first sight seems to contrast with the important social work and the seriousness of the warnings presented in its messages.

The review of the scientific literature revealed some works that have analysed the use of humour in advertising in scenarios in which its use would be unlikely. Juárez and Echeverría (2009), in their study of political communication in Mexico, highlighted the high percentage of comedy ads that circulated in Baja California. These results were surprising for researchers because crime was the most important theme in those ads. According to the authors, black comedy was used to create ads against candidates of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Also from a political perspective, Toledano (2011) analysed various examples of political election slogans used in the United Kingdom in 2010. For the author, both Conservative and Labour parties hired advertising agencies to develop election campaigns based on criticism to the political adversary through the use of irony and sarcasm.

Humour is understood as an emotional and positive reaction of the individual that is subject to the cultural contexts in which it is produced. Aladró (2002) argues that the intentional use of humour involves abandoning the initial conventions that give meaning to the message in order to generate a separation that favours a comic decoding. Aristotle's rhetoric defends the use of metaphors, exaggerations, puzzles and word-playing and jokes to encourage the acceptance of the provisions and the unexpected: "this happens when we say something paradoxical [...], that does not go along with the previous opinion, as the unexpected punch line of jokes" (Aristotle, 2002:281).

The review of works that study the relation between humour and advertising and were published after the 1960s shows that there are different perspectives from which the relation between humour and advertising is analysed. Lynch and Hartman (1968) analysed the effects of American humorous advertising on consumers, and compared them with the effects produced by jokes. Sternthal and Craig (1973) concluded that the use of humour in advertising could adversely affect the understanding of the message, since it distracts the audience. However, they also considered that if these effects do not occur in the audience, humour improves persuasion, since it gives credibility to the source through the establishment of a positive context or mood through the ad. Kelly and

Solomon (1975) studied more than 2000 television ads and reached the following conclusions about the effectiveness of humour in advertising: the location of humour at the start of the ad increases the audience's attention; the use of humour facilitates the development of messages with double meaning. Kelly and Solomon (1975) proposed that the effectiveness of humour will depend on its relation with the product. These authors made proposals to analyse the relevance of the use of humour in advertising in relation to the nature of the advertised product, the persuasive effectiveness of ads and the negative image a product may acquire when it is advertised with non-serious language.

Weinberger and Gulas (1992) reviewed studies on advertising published from 1972 to 1992 and concluded that humour does not guarantee that ads will be more persuasive, since sometimes it hinders the understanding of the message, does not increase the credibility of the advertiser and its use must conform to the objectives of the advertisement, the nature of the products and the target consumers. Yoon and Tinkham (2013) also supported this argument and analysed the effectiveness of humour and its relation with the nature of the advertised product, the degree of information of the message and the degree of involvement between consumer and the advertised product. The authors considered that humour can be a threat to the understanding of the ad depending on the degree of seriousness of the message and the type of consumer.

Alden, Mukherjee and Hoyer (2000) studied consumers' perception of humorous ads and concluded that "surprise" is an essential variable to make sure messages will be effective and understand the meanings evoked by images. On the other hand, Chan (2011) studied the use of humour in television advertising in China based on three objectives: to measure the frequency of occurrence, to identify the types of products that use humorous advertising and identify the different types of comedic elements and their location in the ad. The author concluded that surreal comedy and exaggeration were the two forms of humour most often used by advertisers. According to Chan, this is because these two comedic devices are easy to apply and easy to understand by consumers, since, unlike satire and irony, they offend consumers less.

This review reflects the interest of scholars in understanding how humour is involved in the construction of advertising messages and in assessing whether its use favours the comprehension of the message. Mayo (2002) notes that the mission of the advertising message is to materialise the objectives and ambitions of the advertiser and to optimise the contact with the public. In this sense, León (2001) argues that the effectiveness of humour lies in its ability to contribute to the objectives of the advertiser through its ability to draw attention and bring the public closer to the advertiser.

This study examines the communicative dimension of advertising when it tries to participate in the modification of social discourses to build positive messages about advertisers, where the participation of audiences in the decoding of the ads is essential to assess their effectiveness. As Catalá Pérez (2008) points out, advertising currently seeks the participation of the receiver in the decoding of the message through the development of open messages, through questioning and the association of cultural contents and knowledge. In this sense, humans have numerous resources to

provoke humour with the narration of their stories, and these resources are also applied by advertising and other cultural industries; “a joke is a compliment to the intelligence of our fellow human beings, it illuminates the atmosphere and guarantees that people will retain a positive impression” (Pricken, 2006:182).

Humour, in its relation with advertising, can be studied from different dimensions. This work identifies the presence of humour in advertising as a participatory mechanism in the semantic configuration of the message and identifies the emotions projected by the sample of analysed advertisements. Rodríguez Rosique and Provencio Garrigós (2012) argue that, from a pragmatic point of view, humour is the substitution of a previously activated framework by another that breaks receiver’s expectations with contradiction and surprise. In relation to the application of humour with social and commercial implications in the creation of ads, León (2001) identifies irony, parody and satire as possible modalities. It is important to note here that León recognises that it is complex to define exhaustively the resources that are available to advertising creatives. León relies on Hutcheon (1985) to distinguish what he calls three forms of humour, so while irony is a trope, satire and parody are genres, or discursive forms that humour has adopted throughout history. For the author, at certain times these forms can use irony in their configuration, but for León, irony has enough value in itself to be seen as a resource. Irony is presented as a modality, as a resource that is based on the contrast between what is described and the way in which it is described, a contradiction between text and image, a way of showing the opposite of what one wants to say, and using the double meaning of the phrases. “Ironic language is a tactic that invites the public to adopt a more sophisticated and often cynical way of thinking about reality” (Deighton, J., 1985:3).

The use of this tactic to present advertising content requires the active participation of recipients, who must decode the semantics of the message. However, this is risky because it is very difficult to verify whether the comprehension of the message has reached the intended effects. “The effects of the use of irony in advertising have not been established so far. Irony is considered to be a destabilising trope, like the metaphor and wordplay, but it is not true that all these tropes are recognised equally” (Lagerwerf, 2007:1703). Together with irony, León (2001) proposes the comic modalities of parody and satire as resources for the construction of advertisements. León defines parody as a comical imitation of celebrities and famous, classic, cult or current films. Finally, satire involves the use of parody to ridicule. It enhances the error, the absurdity of the ridiculed style, standard or person. It can be considered a parody that reaches mockery through exaggeration in order to censor something. Thus, it has a social and moral claim, the intention of punishing or criticising the actions of an individual or group. This characteristic can also be identified in other forms that are used to understand the nature of humour and which will be taken into account in this work: Exaggeration, black comedy, surreal comedy, situation comedy and blue comedy. The black, surreal and blue forms of comedy are characterised by the themes they deal with: death, daily life and sex. Pricken (2006) reminds us that black comedy is produced when social taboos, such as death, morality and sex and are addressed with comedy instead of solemnity. For the purposes of this work, we recognise irony, hyperbole and other tropes as comedy resources, which are classified not as discursive genres, or according to their subject matter, but as ways of intervening in the structure of

the content, while parody and satire are considered discursive genres of humour, which are used to address an issue from a comic perspective. However, and according to these characteristics, this paper will consider all these devices as methods or resources used to configure a persuasive message. Based on these considerations, this work deals with the study of humour in advertising of the GDT, recognising the aforementioned differences about the nature of humour and its potential applications in advertising. This analysis of humour aims to identify how it works as a resource or mechanism in the semantic construction of advertisements and how it promotes the acceptance and understanding of the advertising message through its different forms of application, either comedy discourses or genres or devices of the comedy discourse.

To achieve this objective, it is also necessary to understand that humour is a type of emotion. Today more than ever, as Benavides, Villagra, Alameda and Fernández (2010) point out, faced with the active participation of consumers in the process of corporate communication, advertisers encourage the creation of advertising around the values and emotions associated with the brand. It is important to remember that emotions are complex processes triggered by stimuli that individuals subjectively interpret and value according to their individual experiences and culture, and involves physiological and facial changes that in most cases are followed by actions such as laughter and sobbing (Kleinginna and Kleinginna 1981). As Fernández-Abascal and Jiménez (2010) point out, the definition of an emotion depends on the existence of an internal or external input that triggers in individuals a subjective interpretation and assessment and a facial and physiological expression that leads to action.

According to the first definition, humour is a secondary emotion because individuals develop it within the context of a given society and their cognitive abilities, unlike the primary emotions which are innate to evolution such as happiness and fear (Ekman, 1992, 2003), according to the classifications of classical authors such as LeDoux (1989) Izard (1993) and Damasio (1996). This means that humour is an emotion that appears slowly and gradually during individuals' development. Secondary emotions do not respond to certain facial expressions but involve patterns from other emotions. So for example, humour can also result from an error: "the process resulting from what can be valued as an error, which is not bad or harmful, and this produces laughter and good feelings" (Martín et al, 2010: 391). At the same time, humour is a mechanism that aims to "mitigate, reduce, interrupt, or even permanently replace a variety of negative states of mind" (Martín et al., 2010: 391-400). The use of absurd situations or comic drawings are part of a strategy for sweetening a tragic reality. In addition, the use of this emotion can may also be due to its prosocial property whose purpose is to generate membership and belonging to a group through an emotion generated by common social patterns. These are conditioned by the culture that determines the sense of humour of one society in comparison to another.

2. Methods

2.1. Methodological strategies

The study combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The work involves the chronological registration of the advertising campaigns that use humour in order to establish the frequency of occurrence of the modalities of humour in all of the publicity produced by the GDT and the emotions present in the comedy ads. The ads that use humour have been subjected to content analysis focused on 11 variables. A database was created with the results of the analysis to compare the results between ads and across variables. In this way, the study identifies the targets of the campaigns and associates them with the objectives of every humorous campaign: awareness (behaviour or attitude modification), information or promotions. Subsequently, we examine the relation between emotions and the modalities of humour identified through the semantic analysis of the images, texts and slogans, and the interpretation of the main message. The variables analysed are:

1. Code: number assigned in the database to each ad.
2. Date: publication date of the ad.
3. Physical description of the ad. Description of the images, settings and characters.
4. Identification of the advertiser: the textual and visual elements used to identify and designate the GDT in the ad.
5. Slogan: Registration of the text that acts as the slogan.
6. Advertising objective:
 - Awareness: Ads in which the GDT aims to modify certain behaviours or attitudes in drivers or pedestrians
 - Information: Ads aiming to provide the audience with new knowledge related to new traffic rules, sanctions, etc.
 - Promotions: Ads aiming to sell products or services related to the GDT.
7. Advertising message: identification of the ad's semantics, the meanings transmitted to achieve the goal.
8. Promise or benefit present in the message. Main benefit or promise the ad claims drivers will get if they amend their attitude, behaviour or value the information provided.
9. Type of emotion expressed in the ad. As described in section 2.1.4.
10. Identification and description of the public: driver / pedestrian / general public / gender / age / lifestyle / other.
11. Modality of humour: as described in section 2.1.4.

2.1.2. Population and sample

The universe of study is composed of 246 graphic advertisements produced by Spain's General Directorate of Traffic, which have been historically classified in a database developed by the

institution itself. This universe is composed by all of the ads created by this institution from 1959 to 2009.

2.1.3. Data collection instruments

For the review and selection of ads, the research team had the collaboration of the General Directorate of Traffic, which provided access to the analysed documents. All ads produced by this institution during the designated time period were reviewed but only the ads that met the criteria to be part of the study were examined and registered with a code in the digital database created with Microsoft Excel.

The interpretation of the data followed the following steps:

- A. Reports of the frequency of occurrence of variables: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 10 and 11.
- B. Crossing of variables: Code-ad's objective / Objective - Message - Frequency of emotion – type of comic resource.

2.1.4. Procedure

The following criteria were followed for the selection of ads:

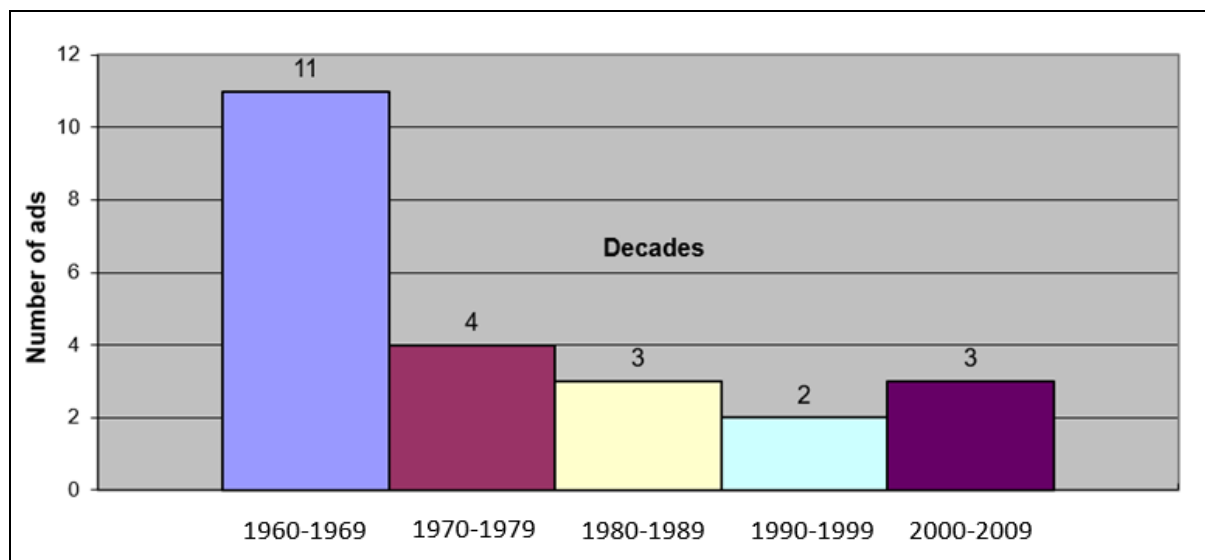
Ads that use any form of humour classified according to the approaches of the theoretical body of work, comprising both discursive genres, such as satire and parody, and comedy resources or devices, such as irony, exaggeration and surreal comedy. The criteria proposed by León (2001), Deighton (1985), Rodríguez Rosique and Provencio Garrigós (2012) and Catalá Pérez (2008) were used to carry out the identification and classification of the forms of humour used in ads.

Emotions were differentiated in the following categories: Primary emotions, such as surprise, disgust, joy, fear, anger and sadness, according to criteria of Ekman (1992, 2003); the emotions derived from the primary ones, such as hope, pain, anguish, sympathy and enjoyment, according to the criteria of Lazarus (1994); and finally the secondary emotions, such as shame, guilt and hostility.

3. Results

Only 23 ads of the universe of study featured comedy resources in their structure. This means that humour is present in only 9.4% of all the ads produced by the GDT. At the same time, the distribution of the frequency of these ads across decades shows that the comic ads had a greater presence from 1960 to 1969, and afterwards their presence was very scarce (see Figure 1):

Figure 1. Number of humorous ads, distributed across decades.



Source: Authors' own creation

Eight different objectives or themes have been detected among the ads that use humour as a semantic resource (see table 1):

Table 1. Relations between the ads' objectives, frequency of occurrence and code.

Objectives	Frequency of occurrence and code of the ad in the database
1. Awareness. Maintenance of cordiality between drivers.	26% of humorous ads. 6 cases: 0003, 0005, 0006, 0008, 0009 and 0011
2. Awareness. Do not drink and drive.	26% of humorous ads. 6 cases: 0001 and 0002, 0014, 0016, 0022 0023
3. Awareness. Road safety education and attention to pedestrians can prevent accidents.	17% of humorous ads: 4 cases: 0007, 0012 and 0010 and 0020
4. Awareness. Helmet must be used when driving a motorcycle.	13% of humorous ads. 3 cases: 0004 0019 and 0021
5. Awareness. Seat belt must be used when driving.	4.4% of humorous ads. 1 case: 0013
6. Awareness. Vehicle must be prepared before making a long journey.	4.4% of humorous ads. 1 case: 0015
7. Awareness. Pedestrians must not run on the road during the Christmas	4.4% of humorous ads. 1 case: 0017

holidays.	
8. Promotions. Discounts in the cost of course to obtain a driving license.	4.4% of humorous ads. 1 case: 0018

Source: Authors' own creation

The following table presents the results of the crossing of the variables “advertising objectives”, “message”, “comedy resources” and “emotions”:

Table 2. Objective, message, emotion, and modality of the comic ads.

Objective	Message	Frequency of occurrence of emotions	Modality of humour
1. Awareness. Maintenance of cordiality between drivers.	“Kindness is free”, “the road has rules”, “Be respectful of the other driver in discussions about traffic”, “don’t be brave in discussions on traffic”	Joy (1 case), Anger-joy (1 case), Fear-joy (2 cases), fear (1 case)	Irony by means of contradiction between texts and images A satirical discourse is used to ridicules driver’ bad practices (anger and verbal violence)
2. Awareness. Do not drink and drive.	“If you get drunk and drive you can die”, “don’t drink and drive”, “If you drink and drive you can kill a child”	Joy-fear (2 cases), joy (1 case), happiness (1 case).	Irony, exaggeration, paradoxes and wordplay are used to produce a satirical discourse that criticises and ridicule drivers’ bad actions
3. Awareness. Road safety education and attention to pedestrians can prevent accidents.	“Expect anything when on the road”. “Children should receive driver’s education”. “To avoid accidents beware”. “Drivers must drive on the right lane, turn on the lights at night and use tyres in good condition”	Guilt (1), fear (1), impotence (1), joy (2) and surprise (1)	Surreal comedy, exaggeration and irony are used to reflect the consequences of the bad driver habits

4. Awareness. Helmet must be used when driving a motorcycle.	“Helmet is the only compulsory garment”, “If you don't use the helmet when driving a motorcycle you can lose your head”	Humour-joy (1), fear “(1), no-emotion (1)”	Irony and exaggeration by contradiction between text and image.
5. Awareness. Seat belt must be used when driving.	“Use the seat belt also in the city”	No emotion (1)	Surreal comedy
6. Awareness. Vehicle must be prepared before making a long journey.	“Do not turn driving into a dangerous adventure”	Fear and joy (1)	Parody of “Indiana Jones”, the movie.
7. Awareness. Pedestrians must not run on the road during the Christmas holidays.	“During the Christmas holidays it is safer not to run to reach your destiny”	Joy (1)	Parody of a Christmas scene
8. Sales information. Discounts in the payment of driving license.	“For just one euro a day, the GDT finances the courses young people need to take to obtain a driving licence”	Joy (1)	Irony, word-play and surreal comedy.

Source: Authors' own creation

The results show that humour has been present in the GDT advertisements throughout its advertising history, but its distribution has not been uniform over time. The ads produced in the first stage aimed to modify behaviours and to inform, through the use of criticism and the projection of positive and negative emotions. There is for instance, the case of the campaigns aiming to change the aggressive behaviour of drivers and in particular to reduce traffic-related discussions and their consequences. This campaign involved a series of ads that use humour to provoke laughter after the decoding of the message, but also criticise the driver's conduct and project negative emotions, such as fear, anger, or the mixture of anger and joy, but also positive emotions, such as joy, happiness and surprise. Several ads used irony, wordplay, and satirical discourse to surprise the public and raise awareness about the consequences of the bad habits of drivers: not wearing a seatbelt, driving under the influence of alcohol, not wearing helmet when driving a motorcycle, and driving aggressively can cause death.

Image 1. “The best shield: mutual courtesy”. Code 0009. Year 1963.



After this first decade, the presence of humour in the graphic advertising of GDT became very scarce. With the exception of some isolated examples, after the 1970s the advertising of the GDT replaced the use of illustrations as a comedy resource with photography, which was used to represent and identify the public with greater realism. The emotions projected in the ads were not always positive and humour was used by the advertising of the GDT to facilitate the projection of fear. This is the case of the campaign titled “Do not turn driving into a dangerous adventure”, which parodies the film “Indiana Jones” to make drivers aware of bad behaviours behind the wheel.

Image 2. “Don’t turn your journey into an adventure”. Code 0015. Year 1990.



Another aspect that stands out after the analysis is the evolution of the advertising of the GDT and its objectives of awareness and information targeting specific drivers, such as young people. Thus, the 2007 campaign uses a language with double meaning to address young drivers. The slogan “driving license course for only one euro per day” is accompanied by the image of a “Turkey” (which used to cost one Euro). In this example, the image captures the attention and promotes audience’s active participation in the decoding of the message. In this case, humour, provoked through positive emotions such as joy, is used to inform and not to raise awareness through criticism.

Image 3. “For only one turkey you will be able to differentiate between a roundabout and a circular intersection”. Code 0015. Year 1990.



4. Discussion and conclusions

Humour, considered as a human emotion, is an emotional and positive response to a stimulus that is considered to be funny by the involved individuals. In this sense, complementary efforts to study the stimuli and mechanisms that trigger this emotion are offered in the work of Fernández-Abascal and Jiménez (2010), Ekman (1992, 2003), Leroux (1989), Izard (1993), Damasio (1996) and Martín, Domínguez and Fernández-Abascal (2010). This study includes those works that propose that the nature of these mechanisms is both cognitive and cultural. Thus, the cultural environment in which the comic situation takes place directly affects the cognitive process by which individuals reproduce

this emotion. However, the analysis of the social conditions of the production and reception of each campaign is a pending task for this work and can be an objective of continuity for this research whose starting point is to understand the constant variation and resignification to which all signs are subjected.

Emotions have a very short duration but when they are intense they leave a trace in our memory. This is why advertising uses humour in the construction of messages to facilitate the public's recalling of the brand and invite the receiver to participate actively in the communicative experience. The more sophisticated a humorous advertising campaign is, the more likely it is that it will be recalled in a positive way, as is the case with the ad starring Stevie Wonder and whose slogan recommended people not to drive under the influence of alcohol. At the same time, advertising recognises the obvious human capacity to use mechanisms to produce such emotions in others. These linguistic mechanisms have been used in different cultural and communicative processes throughout the history of mankind. From this starting point, this work has addressed the study of humour in advertising to determine the purpose of its use in campaigns of social awareness in relation to traffic regulations, as Kelly and Solomon (1975) point out. We agree with Pricken (2006), León (2001), Deighton (1985) and Catalá Pérez (2008) when they claim that the use of humour in advertising favours the active participation of the public and consumers in the decoding of the advertising messages and thus facilitates the recalling of the delivered message.

As stated in the introduction to this work, several studies have examined humour in advertising to determine whether its presence benefits or hurts advertisers' intentions in relation to consumers: Lynch and Hartman (1968), Sternthal and Craig (1973), Kelly and Solomon (1975), Weinberger and Gulas (1992), Alden, Mukherjee and Hoyer (2000), Chan (2011), Yoon and Tinkham (2013) Catalá Pérez (2008), Rodríguez Rosique and Provencio Garrigós, (2012). Based on the contributions of Weinberger and Gulas (1992), the decline in the use of humour during the time period studied may be due to the fact that the relation between the nature of the advertiser, the GDT, and the characteristics of the activity of this institution, have changed significantly during the period of study. The use of humour was more intense in the 1960s and 1970s than in other periods and this may be due to the fact that at that time drivers were more credulous of humorous advertising and their advertising consumption was lower. Thus, based on the idea that advertising saturation causes indifference towards advertising messages, it could be argued that the GDT changed its advertising strategy, eliminated or decreased the use of humour and increased the use of messages that exclusively project negative emotions to better raise awareness towards serious issues: seatbelt use, helmet use, drunk-driving and speeding.

The study has confirmed our hypothesis in its general sense, but this must be further examined because the nature and the objectives of each of the detected ads do not always criticise or ridicule the behaviour of drivers.

Based on the previous findings, we can establish the following conclusions:

The humorous ads produced by the GDT do not always criticise the negative actions of drivers and use both positive and negative emotions in their approach.

When the purpose of the GDT's advertising campaign is to modify the negative behaviours and habits of drivers, humour does act as a mechanism of criticism or ridicule.

However, the results of our analysis indicate that satire is present only in four of the 23 ads identified as humorous. In other words, only four ads from the whole sample ridicule the bad habits of drivers.

Satire and irony are the main modalities used to build humorous messages that criticise the bad habits of drivers and raise awareness about their negative consequences. Those ads that have irony as their primary discursive resource criticise the negative habits of drivers but do not ridicule them. Finally, when the advertising discourse is not critical of the behaviour of drivers but serves an informative purpose, exaggeration, metaphor and surreal comedy are the most commonly used modalities.

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