Self-mockery in advertising : when not taking yourself seriously makes consumers take you seriously

Abstract

Objectives: Self-mockery (i.e., being humorous at one's own expense) as an executional advertisingtactic is a new communication trend. However, there is no clear understanding among practitioners and no published marketing academic work regarding how self-mocking advertising impacts consumer response. This research addresses this gap.

Methodology: Two experiments have been conducted.

Results: Across two studies, we consistently find that self-mocking advertising improves brand trustworthiness only for well-known brands. Finally, we find that the positive effect of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness is mediated by brand honesty perceptions.

Key words: self-mockery, advertising, brand trustworthiness, brand awareness

> Ouidade SABRI[1]
IAE Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Sorbonne Business School)
12 rue Jean de Baif,
75013 Paris, France
Mail: ouidade.sabri@yahoo.fr
+33 6 63 09 23 69

> Nadr El HANA
EDC Paris Business school
70 Galerie des Damiers,
92415 Courbevoie
Paris, France
Mail : nadr.elhana@gmail.com
+33 6 10 72 71 40

[1]**About the authors**

Ouidade SABRI is a Professor of Marketing at the Sorbonne Business School. Her research covers topics such as communication appeal and execution, parody and online communication. Her research was published in marketing journals, including Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Business Research, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Ethics or Recherche et Applications en Marketing.

Nadr el Hana is a Professor of Marketing and digital Marketing at the EDC Paris Business School. He is also a PhD candidate; his research covers topics such as online communication and parody.

Introduction

Self-mockery is a universal form of conversational humor that consists of a self-critical comment on the part of the speaker, who admits to making a mistake or failure (Dynel 2009); the speaker is then the target of the humor (Glenn 1991; Yu 2013).Quoting Greengrossand Miller (2008, p. 394),"self-deprecating humor often highlights – in a socially pre-emptive way – perceived deficits in one's general intelligence ("Mommy says I'm special"), personality traits ("Saturday has a morning?"), moral virtues ("If it weren't for physics and law enforcement, I'd be unstoppable"), mental health ("Some days it's just not worth gnawing through the straps"), or physical attractiveness ("I'm hung like Einstein and smart as a horse")".

The use of self-mockingexecution within advertisingis a recent communication trend. For example, Microsoft launched an Internet Explorer marketing campaign that poked fun at its own Internet Explorer history with its "browser you loved to hate" campaign(Richardson 2014).Despite practitioners' apparent intuition that self-mockery helps, there are no published articlesin marketing on the effect of self-mockery on consumer decision. As self-mockery is based on a self-critical comment, it runs the risk of destroying brand capital and trustworthiness. The aim of the paper is then to assess if self-mockery is a counterproductive strategy that may undermine brand trustworthiness.Building on the social sciences literature on self-mockery, our key contribution is to demonstrate that self-mockery isa fruitful strategy in building brand trustworthinessamong well-known brands. However, self-mockery is unfruitful for unknown brands. This result has important managerial implication as brand trustworthiness is more important and strategic than ever in an age where consumers are more suspicious and cynical regarding brands (Lantieri and Chiagouris 2009).

Importantly, the current article provides several contributions. We develop a better understanding of how self-mocking advertising works and impacts brand trustworthiness perceptions. We extend the research on brand trust-building, as limited attention has been paid to the role of self-mockery for trust-building marketing strategies. In complementing most extant literature on advertising effectiveness which focuses primarily on memory and attitudes, we examine the effect of this strategy on brand trustworthiness, which is a strong predictor of brand loyalty, brand equity(Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001), and brand purchase intention (Benedicktus et al. 2010; Carrillat, D'astous, and Lazure 2013).

The remainder of this work is structured as follows. First, we develop our conceptual framework around the concept of self-mockery and discuss its application in an advertising context. We then test our proposed framework and related hypotheses in two empirical studiesfor products in different sectors. Finally, we summarize the insights that the research provides in both theoretical and practical terms.

Literature review

Prior research on self-mockery

Various terms have been used interchangeably in the literature to describe self-mocking humor, such as self-disparaging, self-denigrating or self-deprecating humor, as well as self-directed humor (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Dynel 2009; Kotthoff 2003; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006; Norrick 1993). Research examining self-mockery is relatively rare (Janes and Olson 2010)and virtually absent in marketing, while mockery and disparagement have been the focus of scholarly studies conducted from philosophical, psychological, sociological, anthropological and linguistic perspectives (Dynel 2009; Ferguson, Ellen, and Piscopo 2011; Janes and Olson 2010).

Self-mockery is an under-studied phenomenon(Yu 2013),although recent literatureaims to fill this gap. Janes and Olson (2010) have documented the disinhibiting effect of self-mockery,whereby observing self-mockery led participants to generate more creative ideas and conform less to the attitudes of others.Self-mockery is also a means to develop a positive social identity(Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Norrick 1993). By acknowledging personal shortcomings, weaknesses, or failures, speakers enhance their sense of humor as well as their ability to recognize and overcome their own problems (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Norrick 1993). Focusing on ethnic humor, self-mockery is conceptualized as a defense mechanism or an intra-punitive defense style (Freud 2018), which leads victims to adopt the point of view of their aggressors and persecute themselves (Juni and Katz 2001). By doing this, victims gain a sense of control over previously uncontrollable punishment, which "is presumed to constitute restitution, with the hope that wrath will be appeased" (Juni and Katz 2001, p. 125).

Literature on humor has then defined self-mockery as an offensive humor and a negative humor style that aims to denigrate oneself in order to seek acceptance for others(Vinson 2006). In an advertising context,as an art form based on self-critical comment in a humoristic way, self-mockery is considered as humor appeal. However, while previous research has addressed several humorous advertising techniques (e.g., exaggeration, puns, put-downs, surprises, silliness and sarcasm) and types (Weinberger and Gulas 1992), self-mockery as an executional advertising tactic has not been studied so far. This research aims to fill this gap and explores the effectiveness of such a strategy.The literature in advertising has demonstrated so far the positive effects of humor on attention(Madden and Weinberger 1982) and attitude toward

the advertisement (Eisend 2009; Weinberger and Gulas 1992), but no clear additional effect over serious messages on brand trustworthiness (Eisend, 2009) hasbeen established. Based on the characteristics of self-mockery appeal, we may predictthereafterthat self-mockery advertisement will increase message brand trustworthiness.

Influence of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a characteristic of the firm (trustee), upon which the customer (trustor) forms a judgment based on factors such as implied values and previous behaviors (Roy, Devlin, and Sekhon 2015). Trustworthiness has been defined as the perceived qualities or attributes of an exchange partner that leads him/her to act in the interest of the other partner(Roy, Eshghi, and Shekhar 2011). Three dimensions of perceived trustworthiness have been identified, namely reliability, honesty and benevolence (Grimmelikhuijsen 2011). Reliability refers to the belief that the seller has the expertise and competence to do the job effectively (Benedicktus et al. 2010) while honesty represents the integrity of the trustee and its ability to keep commitments and tell the truth, and benevolence refers to the ability of the brand to address customers' interests (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001; Grimmelikhuijsen 2011).

Trustworthiness can be influenced by direct actions of the brand wishing to be trusted(Roy, Devlin, and Sekhon 2015). Self-mockery's intent aims to present some drawbacks to their products with a sense of humor. However, self-mockery is more than negative acknowledgment of some drawbacks, as self-mockery not only highlights a negative property but stresses the ability of an actor to overcome their own difficulties and drawbacks (Boxer and Cortes-Conde, 1997; Norrick, 1993).As the brand demonstrates its ability to improve its offer by fixing its pitfalls,self-mockery will positively impact reliability perceptions and consequentlyperceived brand trustworthiness.

In addition, brands are using self-mockery as a strategy that "has helped some brands atone for mistakes, others address the frustrations of consumers, and others show empathy over the triteness of their industry's advertising" (Altman 2016, p. 1). By acknowledging its own weaknesses, self-mockery might increase the perception that the brand is honest and has nothing to hide, which in turn may impact brand trustworthiness perceptions and its honesty dimension.

Finally, while confessing their mistakes and difficulties, brands are consequently engaged in developing creative solutions that might create value for consumers. For example, top brands such as Microsoft or Domino's have pursued a self-mockery strategy in which "Microsoft panned its notoriously outdated Internet Explorer browser and Domino's copped to ill-conceived product innovations like the 'Cookie Pizza'" (Altman 2016, p. 1). Consequently, self-mockery might positively and directly influence brand trustworthiness evaluations through its benevolence dimension as consumers may have the feeling that brands are listening to their voice and are responding by taking their interest at heart.

As a consequence, we postulate that:

H1: Perceptions of brand reliability (a), brand honesty (b) and brand benevolence (c) will mediate the positive impact of self-mocking advertisement on perceived brand trustworthiness.

However, self-disparaging humor might be a risky strategy (Greengross and Miller 2008), which runs the risk of suggesting negative information, which may diminish the self-deprecator's evaluation in the eyes of the others (Lundy, Tan, and Cunningham 1998). However, the evaluation of self-mockery is predicated on the notoriety of the speaker. In a study conducted by (Chang and Gruner 1981), participants heard speeches supposedly broadcasted on the radio that explained why the speaker had decided to specialize in either Economics or Psychology. One version of each involved humor disparaging the academic field. The authors demonstrated that notorious and well-known speakers with relatively ethos could disparage their professional fields and raise their ratings on wit, funniness, and sense of humor without damaging other credibility factors. For renowned speakers, self-mockery can produce solidarity rather than concern for the competences of the speaker.

From these premises, compared to unknown brands, we assume that well-known brands will trigger greater brand trustworthiness when exploiting self-mockery (vs. non self-mockery) appeal.

H2: The positive effect of self-mocking advertisement on perceived brand trustworthiness is greater for well-known brands as compared to unknown brands.

STUDY 1: BUILDING BRAND TRUSTWORTHINESS WITH SELF-MOCKERY

Method

Participants

The study involved 122additional adult consumers (58% female, Mage = 34.13) through an online study.We recruit participants with different occupations and agesliving in France (see Table 1).They were randomly assigned to a

2 (type of executional appeal: self-mocking ad vs. non self-mocking ad) x 2 (brand awareness: well-known vs. unknown-known brand) between subjects design. A total of four groups are obtained. Furthermore, we employed chi-square tests to check whether groups differ with regard to their structural composition. We found that the four groups did not differ significantly in terms of gender, age and occupation.

Table 1

Socio-demographic profiles

Sex	Male	41.8%
	Female	58.2%
Age	18-24	15.5%
	25-34	32.8%
	35-44	44.3%
	45 and more	7.4%
Occupation	Business owners	2.5%
	Upper socio-professional categories (executives)	60.7%
	Middle socio-professional categories (intermediate professions)	5.7%
	Lower socio-professional categories (employees and workers)	22.9%
	Others (students, jobless, retirees)	8.2%

Stimuli

To manipulate the executional appeal and create two different ads (self-mocking ad and non-self-mocking ad), we took an actual print advertisement for Mercedes, a leading brand in the car industry.The black and white visual featured a Mercedes car in the middle of a desert landscape with just the Mercedes logo at the bottom left of the visual. To create a self-mocking version of this original visual, we introduced a fictitious self-disparaging slogan in which Mercedes recognizes that its old car models could be perceived as too traditional and classic,as follows: "Because you have judged our models too classic, we have reviewed our classics." With this slogan, there is a word game with the term "classic" to reinforce its humorous character.Making a play on words using puns in a slogan is a popular practice within humor appeal strategies (Catanescu and Tom 2001).

Following (Hoyer and Brown 1990)and (Macdonald and Sharp 2000)procedure, brand awareness was operationalized as a dichotomous variable consisting of awareness and no awareness conditions. In the awareness condition, subjects were presented with a well-known national brand that has been advertised heavily. The well-known brand is a brand that subjects are aware of without ever having purchased or tried it. In the no-awareness condition, subjects were presented an unknown brand. Consequently, we featured two different brands, together with the new visuals and taglines. Mercedes is considered as a well-known brand and LuxGenas an unknown brand. While LuxGen is a real Chinese brand, it is not a familiar brand in European countries and might be considered as anunknown one.Four versions of print advertisements were created with the appropriate brand logo, equal in all respects.

Procedure

As an introduction, we explained to the participants that they will be exposed to a print ad during few minutes and theywill answer some questions about it. In the four experimental conditions, participants examined one of four print ads for a few minutes (i.e., in average 1 to 2 minutes). We adopted a two-step procedure: before and after seeing the ad.

Before seeing it, we measured one control variable given that they might affect perceptions of self-mocking brand: prior brand attitude. Prior brand attitude is introduced as covariate as it might influence brand trust perception (Bhuian 2016; Jin and Lee 2010). Sex was also introduced as a covariate, as previous research has demonstrated the role of sex in the evaluation of self-deprecating humor (Dindia and Allen 1992; Jourard 1961; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp 2006; Stocking and Zillmann 1976). Brand attitude before exposure to the ad was measured with three items adapted from (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989)bipolar scale ("bad–good," "negative–positive," and "unfavorable–favorable"; α = .936).

After seeing the ad, participants filled out a longer questionnaire. We first checked that respondents had not already seen the targeted ad. None (100%) had. In addition, we controlled that respondents were able to attribute the right targeted brand to the advertising to which they were exposed. We have introduced an open-ended question "To which brand the ad was made for?". Two respondents were unable to correctly state the right brand of the ad. They were excluded from the analysis. We then assessed the dependent variable (brand trustworthiness) before the independent variable (self-mockery perception) for not introducing a bias in responses as participants might be aware of the variables that were manipulated. A multi-item measure of brand trustworthiness dimensions was used on a seven-point Likert scale adapted from (Grimmelikhuijsen 2011; Roy, Devlin, and Sekhon 2015): Brand reliability("Brand X has a reputation for being reliable", "Brand X has a reputation for being competent", α =.902), brand benevolence ("Brand X has a reputation for having its customers best interest at heart", "Brand X has a reputation for looking after its customers", α =.896), and brand honesty("Brand X has a reputation for being honest", "Brand X has a reputation for being sincere", α = .946).In addition, one single item measures the overall perception of brand trustworthiness ("Overall, I feel that Brand X is trustworthy"). Perceptions of brand self-mockery was administered using a three-item index employing seven-point ratings (1 = very strongly disagree, 7 = very strongly agree) with the following statements (α = 0.903):"The brand does not take itself seriously," "The brand makes fun of itself," and "The brand plays the self-mockery card".

Finally, a manipulation check of brand awarenesswas introduced. It refers to the extent to which consumers do know the brand. Brand awareness was measured using two items adapted from (Oh 2000)bipolar scale (The brand X is: "very unfamiliar–familiar," "not known at all–very well-known", α = .807).

All multi-item measures used in the study were averaged to create construct measures for the evaluated concepts. For each multi-item measure, we calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficients separately for each group to account for possible treatment effects. For all groups, the Cronbach's alpha exceeded the minimum 0.70 recommended by (Nunnally 1978).

Findings and Discussion

Manipulation Checks

Results confirmed that participants exposed to the self-mocking ad perceived it as more self-disparaging (Mean=3.95), compared to those exposed to the non-self-mocking ad (M=2.49, $t(118)=-6.035$, $p=0.000$).In addition, Mercedes was considered as awell-knownbrand (M=5.32) compared to LuxGen(M=2.12, $t(118)=14.776$, $p=0.000$). Our manipulations of self-mockery and brand awarenesswere validated.

Results

To test H1 and H2, we conducted a test of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2018) using Hayes's PROCESS tool and its adapted model 5. We used the version V3 of Process tool (Hayes 2017)to be able to combine moderation with mediation. We examined the conditional direct effect of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness depending on type of promoted brand (unknown vs. well-known brand)as moderating variable (H2) as well as the mediating roles of brand trustworthiness dimensions (H1). The covariates were also included in the model (prior brand attitude(Prior Ab) and sex). The descriptive results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive results

	Trustworthiness		Reliability		Honesty		Benevolence	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-mockery	4.76	1.33	4.96	1.50	4.62	1.40	4.79	1.39
Well-known Brand	6.09	.88	5.94	0.85	5.50	1.13	5.22	1.02
Unknown Brand	3.27	1.27	3.84	1.29	3.63	1.44	4.30	1.61
Non self-mockery	4.24	1.44	4.63	1.75	3.94	1.65	4.13	1.33
Well-known Brand	4.74	1.55	5.26	1.68	4.19	1.79	4.23	1.50
Unknown Brand	3.59	1.16	3.81	1.50	3.63	1.43	4.00	1.09

We found a significant interaction effect between self-mockery and brand awareness manipulation on brand trustworthiness (coeff= -1.05, p<.05), corroborating H2. Analyzing further the moderating role of brand awareness, we show that self-mockery does not significantly impact brand trustworthiness when the brand is unknown (Effect= -.37, p>.1) while this effect is significant and positive for the well-known brand condition (Effect=.67, p<.05). Self-mockery helps building brand trustworthiness only for well-known brands, such as Mercedes in the experiment. As ancillary findings, only the covariate _prior brand attitude_ has a significant positive impact on brand trustworthiness (Coeff= .19, p<.01).We then analyzed the indirect effects of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness through brand reliability, honesty and benevolence. The only significant indirect effect is the one that measures the impact of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness through brand honesty. We find out that self-mockery impacts positively brand trustworthiness through brand honesty(effect=.1398; [LLCI=.0016; ULCI=.3483]). H1b is then validated while H1a and H1c are not corroborated.

Discussion
Our work extends the research on self-mockery from perceived consumer responses based on an experimental design. Using a manipulation of self-mockery in advertising, we find that self-mocking advertising improves the evaluation of brand trustworthiness only for well-known brands, and this effect is mediated by brand honesty perceptions.

STUDY 2: REPLICATION OF THE RESULTS

Study 2 had one major goal. It aims to test the robustness of the effect documented in Study 1 in other type of product and sector. To this end, we made two changes to the procedure. We tested the effect for an additionalproduct category (furniture) with a new headline on which brand self-mockery is built (the difficulty of furniture assembly).

Method, stimuli and procedure
Study 2 involved 128 adult consumers enrolled in an MBA program in a French university (56% female, Mage = 33.73) who participated in the study as part of their research design and data analysis courses. They were told that the result of the study was part of a research program on advertising effectiveness. They were randomly assigned to a 2 (type of executional appeal: self-mocking ad vs. non self-mocking ad)*2 (brand awareness: well-known vs. unknown-known brand) between subjects design.

Manipulation of self-mockery

To manipulate the executional appeal and create two different ads (self-mocking ad and non-self-mocking), we once again took an actual and original self-mocking print advertisement for Ikea, an important brand in the self-assembly furniture market. In this self-mocking campaign, Ikea recognizes that their flat-pack furniture is hard to assembly, and consumers may need the Ikea assembly service. The ad shows a piece of furniture assembled upside down forming the word "OOPS," with tools and instructions littering the floor. Ikea plays on the perception that their assembly instructions are difficult for consumers to follow. From the original visual, the picture of the piece of furniture assembled upside down was replaced with a properly constructed piece to control the effect of the visual with the four experimental groups. However, we have introduced a new tagline in order to manipulate self-mockery: "Because our furniture is difficult to assemble, we have simplified our assembly kits!". To create a non-self-mocking version, we keep with the same visual without any tagline.

Manipulation of brand awareness

The brand awareness conditions featured two different brands, together with the new visuals and tagline. Ikea is considered well-known brand and Central Meublesas the unknown one.

Procedure
We used the same procedure and questionnaire as Study 1.

Findings and Discussion

Manipulation Checks

Results confirmed that participants exposed to the self-mocking ad perceived it as more self-disparaging (Mean = 4.64), compared to those exposed to the non-self-mocking ad (M = 3.63, t(124) = 3.99, p = 0.000). In addition, Ikea was considered a well-known brand (M = 6.57) compared to Central Meubles (M = 1.23, t(123) = 49.445, p = 0.000). Our manipulations of self-mockery and brand awareness were validated. We employed chi-square tests to check to check that the four groups did not differ significantly in terms of gender, age and occupation.

Hypothesis tests

As Study 1, we used a moderated mediation using the model 5 of(Hayes 2017).Asignificant interaction effect between self-mockery and brand awareness manipulation on brand trustworthiness (coeff= -.29, p<.05) is found, corroborating H2. In addition, we show that self-mockery do not significantly impact brand trustworthiness when the brand is unknown (Effect= -.03, p>.7) while this effect is significant for the well-known brand condition (Effect= .25, p<.01). We then analyzed the indirect effects of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness through brand reliability, honesty and benevolence. One significant indirect effect is found. Self-mockery impacts positively brand trustworthiness through brand honesty (effect=.2032; [LLCI=.0158; ULCI=.4023]). H1b is then validated while H1a and H1c are not corroborated.

Discussion

Study 2 replicates the same pattern of results as established in Study 1. Self-mockery helps building brand trustworthiness only for well-known brand. This effect can be explained as self-mockery may trigger honesty perceptions about the brand, leadingconsequently to a positive impact on brand trustworthiness.

General discussion

The objective of this research is to examine the impact of self-mockingadvertising on brand trustworthiness. Across two studies, we consistently find that self-mocking advertising improves brand trustworthiness among consumers only for well-known brands.Focusing on the underlying process responsible for that impact, we identify the mediating roleof brand honestyperceptions to account for the positive effect of self-mockery and brand trustworthiness.

Theoretical contributions
These findings contribute to the literature on self-mockery,the executional appeal of humor,and trustworthiness. First, this paper provides the first systematic investigation of the impact of self-mockery in advertising on brand

trustworthiness, which remains a popular practice. Previous research on humor has demonstrated its positive effect on attention, memory (Eisend 2009), and attitudes (Eisend 2009). We extend research in this area by showing that the humorous appeal of self-mockery may also help building brand trustworthiness.

Moreover, we provide a new framework to better understand the boundary condition of the effectiveness of a self-mockery execution strategy. We identify the moderating role of brand awareness. Consistent with the social sciences literature on self-mockery, we demonstrate that the positive impact of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness occurs only for well-known brands.

In addition, this research provides new insight into how self-mockery impacts brand trustworthiness, identifying the mediating role of brand honesty perceptions. We have demonstrated that not all brand trustworthiness dimensions are activated when consumers are exposed to a self-mockery appeal. Self-mockery helps building honesty perceptions which impact in turn brand trustworthiness.

Finally, we extend literature on the effect humor types on consumer behavior (Catanescu and Tom 2001; Weinberger and Gulas 1992). Self-mockery, as an executional appeal, has been neglected so far by the marketing literature. This research fills then this gap with the exploration of the advertising effectiveness of self-mockery appeals.Self-mockery turns to be a fruitful strategy for building brand trustworthinessin an advertising context for well-known brands.

Managerial contributions

Findings from our research also have implications for advertising managers, who should consider self-mockery as a potentially fruitful executional strategy for brands.The appeal of self-mockery is reliable to develop the perception of brand trustworthiness among consumers. Consequently, marketing managers should consider a self-mocking executional appeal as a valuable brand-building strategy, especially if the main goal of the brand is to develop brand trustworthiness.

However, we identify that the success of a self-mocking appeal depends on the brand awareness.Crafting a self-mocking appeal for unknown brandswill be fruitless, as in this case the appeal has no impact on brand trustworthiness. Consequently, brands have to monitor and assess their brand awareness first before deciding to opt for a self-mockery advertising strategy.

Moreover, self-mockery might be also a valuable strategy if the brand wants to be considered as honest brand. In a context where consumers are expected to have more social responsible enterprise, the literature has well documented that company's behavior which is driven by honesty, may increase the positive perception of the brand's social goodwill and benefit consumer perceptions of product performance(Chernev and Blair 2015). In that context, brands and companies which may seek to be perceived as honest; self-mockery advertising might be an effective strategy to meet this goal.

Lastly, the results relating to the co-variables tested show that prior brand attitude has a positive effect on brand trustworthiness. In addition to brand awareness, advertisers should therefore pay close consideration to prior brand attitude if they wish achieve the most positive communication outcomes from the implementation of self-mockery appeals.

Limitations and future directions

Research in marketing communication has largely neglected the study of anincreasingly popular executional strategy based on self-mockery (Altman 2016). We fill this gap, but acknowledge the limitations of our study, which in turn suggest some avenues for ongoing research.

First, we focus on the communication effect of self-mockery on brand trustworthiness. Previous research on the appeal of humor has demonstrated how humor entertains consumers and transfers positive associations between the ad and the brand through a conditioning process (Eisend 2011). Future research must also explore the impact of self-mockery on more traditional measures of advertising effectiveness, such as memory, advertising attitude and brand attitude, along with the evaluation of brand trustworthiness.

One question for future research to address is how far brands can go in using self-mockery. Previous research on social sciences has insisted on the "dark side" of self-mockery, stating that self-disparaging humor runs the risk of suggesting negative information about the speaker, which may diminish the self-deprecator's evaluation in the eyes of the others (Lundy, Tan, and Cunningham 1998). The counterproductive effect of self-mockery may depend on the argument on which self-mockery is built. If it is considered serious by others and represents an important critique of the "core-self"(Yu 2013), self-mockery can backfire. Future research mustexplore the effect of the severity of the weakness or limits raised by self-mockery appeal on brand evaluation.

Finally, to address a methodological limitation, participants were shown only one advertisement. In so doing, the experimental conditions do not accurately reflect reallife, where consumers are exposed to more than one ad at a time,

especially given increasing media clutter (Brunel and Nelson 2003), which might affect message persuasiveness. The main challenge is then to explore whether the positive effect of self-mockery for well-known brand may fade as the media clutter increases or over time.

References

Altman, Alex (2016), "Why self-deprecation is the newest advertising trend," *Murnahan Public Relations*.

Benedicktus, Ray L., Michael K. Brady, Peter R. Darke, and Clay M. Voorhees (2010), "Conveying Trustworthiness to Online Consumers: Reactions to Consensus, Physical Store Presence, Brand Familiarity, and Generalized Suspicion," *Journal of Retailing*, 86 (4), 322–35.

Bhuian, ShahidNakib (2016), "Extending consumer online brand trust research in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 28 (3), 201–10.

Boxer, Diana and Florencia Cortés-Conde (1997), "From bonding to biting: Conversational joking and identity display," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27 (3), 275–94.

Brunel, Frederic F. and Michelle R. Nelson (2003), "Message order effects and gender differences in advertising persuasion," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43 (3), 330–41.

Carrillat, François A., Alain D'astous, and JosianneLazure (2013), "For better, for worse?: What to do when celebrity endorsements go bad," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 53 (1), 15–30.

Catanescu, Codruta and Gail Tom (2001), "Types of humor in television and magazine advertising," *Review of Business*, 22 (1/2), 92–95.

Chang, Mei-Jung and Charles R. Gruner (1981), "Audience reaction to self-disparaging humor," *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 46 (4), 419–26.

Chaudhuri, Arjun and Morris B. Holbrook (2001), "The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty," *Journal of Marketing*, 65 (2), 81–93.

Chernev, Alexander and Sean Blair (2015), "Doing Well by Doing Good: The Benevolent Halo of Corporate Social Responsibility," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41 (6), 1412–25.

Dindia, K. and M. Allen (1992), "Sex differences in self-disclosure: A meta-analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*.

Dynel, Marta (2009), "Beyond a joke: Types of conversational humour," *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 3 (5), 1284–99.

Eisend, Martin (2009), "A meta-analysis of humor in advertising," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37 (2), 191–203.

——— (2011), "How humor in advertising works: A meta-analytic test of alternative models," *Marketing Letters*, 22 (2), 115–32.

Ferguson, Jodie L., Pam Scholder Ellen, and Gabriela Herrera Piscopo (2011), "Suspicion and perceptions of price fairness in times of crisis," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98 (2), 331–49.

Freud, Anna (2018), *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*, Routledge.

Glenn, Phillip J. (1991), "Current speaker initiation of two-party shared laughter," *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 25 (1–4), 139–62.

Greengross, Gil and Geoffrey F. Miller (2008), "Dissing oneself versus dissing rivals: Effects of status, personality, and sex on the short-term and long-term attractiveness of self-deprecating and other-deprecating humor," *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6 (3), 393–408.

Grimmelikhuijsen, Stephan (2011), "Being transparent or spinning the message? An experiment into the effects of varying message content on trust in government," *Information Polity*, 16 (1), 35–50.

Hayes, Andrew F. (2017), *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis, second edition: a regression-based approach*, The Guilford Press.

Hoyer, Wayne D. and Steven P. Brown (1990), "Effects of Brand Awareness on Choice for a Common, Repeat-Purchase Product," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (2), 141.

Janes, Leslie M. and James M. Olson (2010), "Is it you or is it me? Contrasting effects of ridicule targeting other people versus the self," *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 6 (3), 46–70.

Jin, Seung-A Annie and Kwan Min Lee (2010), "The influence of regulatory fit and interactivity on brand satisfaction and trust in e-health marketing inside 3d virtual worlds (second life)," *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 13 (6), 673–80.

Jourard, Sidney M. (1961), "Age Trends in Self-Disclosure," *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development*, 7 (3), 191–97.

Juni, Samuel and Bernard Katz (2001), "Self-effacing wit as a response to oppression: Dynamics in ethnic humor," *Journal of General Psychology*, 128 (2), 119–42.

Kotthoff, Helga (2003), "Responding to irony in different contexts: on cognition in conversation," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35 (9), 1387–1411.

Lampert, Martin D. and Susan M. Ervin-Tripp (2006), "Risky laughter: Teasing and self-directed joking among male and female friends," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38 (1), 51–72.

Lantieri, Tara and Larry Chiagouris (2009), "Brand trust in an age without trust: expert opinions," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26 (2), 78–86.

Lundy, Duane E., Josephine Tan, and Michael R. Cunningham (1998), "Heterosexual romantic preferences: The importance of humor and physical attractiveness for different types of relationships," *Personal Relationships*, 5 (3), 311–25.

Macdonald, Emma K and Byron M Sharp (2000), "Brand Awareness Effects on Consumer Decision Making for a Common, Repeat Purchase Product: A Replication," *Journal of Business Research*, 48 (1), 5–15.

MacKenzie, Scott B. and Richard J. Lutz (1989), "Am empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context," *Journal of Marketing*, 53 (2), 48–65.

Madden, Thomas J. and Marc G. Weinberger (1982), "The effects of humor on attention in magazine advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, 11 (3), 8–14.

Norrick, Neal R. (1993), *Conversational joking: Humor in everyday talk*, Conversational joking: Humor in everyday talk, Bloomington, IN, US: Indiana University Press.

Nunnally, Jum C. (1978), *Psychometric theory*, McGraw-Hill.

Oh, Haemoon (2000), "The Effect of Brand Class, Brand Awareness, and Price on Customer Value and Behavioral Intentions," *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 24 (2), 136–62.

Richardson, Jilian (2014), "5 Examples of humorous content marketing," *Contently*, (accessed October 21, 2019), [available at https://contently.com/2014/08/08/5-incredibly-self-deprecating-pieces-of-branded-content/].

Roy, Sanjit Kumar, James F. Devlin, and HarjitSekhon (2015), "The impact of fairness on trustworthiness and trust in banking," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31 (9–10), 996–1017.

———, AbdolrezaEshghi, and VaibhavShekhar (2011), "Dimensions Of Trust And Trustworthiness In Retail Banking: Evidence From India," 21 (1), 97–110.

Stocking, S. Holly and DolfZillmann (1976), "Effects of humorous disparagement of self, friend, and enemy," *Psychological Reports*, 39 (2), 455–61.

Vinson, Gregory Allen (2006), "Aggressive humor and workplace leadership: Investigating the types and outcomes of workplace leaders' aggressive humor," US: University of Minnesota.

Weinberger, Marc G. and Charles S. Gulas (1992), "The impact of humor in advertising: a review," *Journal of Advertising*, 21 (4), 35–59.

Yu, Changrong (2013), "Two interactional functions of self-mockery in everyday English conversations: A multimodal analysis," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 50 (1), 1–22.