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## Serve Men's Brands Up With a Good Laugh

By Carol Davies

Super Bowl XLII was one of the greatest extravaganzas ever for marketing to men. Outrageous, over-the-top, in-your-face-hilarious (not to mention expensive), Super Bowl advertising may not be the everyday approach for speaking to today's male, but it does prompt an obvious question:

Why does humor sell to men?

With pundits talking about the extended adolescence of today's men—who often delay career, marriage and fatherhood—some might hypothesize that it's as simple as saying, "men like to be boys." But there are other reasons—some logistical, some deeper—why humor can be an effective tool for brands to connect with men.

In commercials, humor works for males because the type of humor men characteristically prefer—one-liners with a clear punch line—fits neatly within a :30 or :15 slot on TV or on-line. By contrast, women relate better to stories, which can't easily be compressed into such media formats.

Another reason humor reaches guys is that, often, it is fundamentally about power and competition. Someone is telling the joke, and someone else is the butt of the joke. Often this competitiveness manifests itself in slapstick of the Three Stooges variety, as shown in commercials like the slapping spot from Budweiser Light. Men not only feel comfortable with aggressiveness, they thrive on it. Cars, razors, after shave, sports drinks—deep down men are all about winning, and so is humor.

Lastly, and perhaps most critically, humor is a way to speak truth, even if it's politically incorrect or socially unacceptable. Today, with the definition and "rules" of masculinity in flux, humor hurdles social sins and allows brands to speak authentically to men.

Axe, for example, sidestep female equality to speak openly to what men really want—to get the girl. When the Axe guy hears a woman say, "I'll go back to your room, but I'm not taking my high heels off," everyone knows the Axe brand isn't really being serious. Or is it?

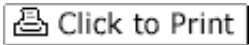
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