

Impact of Humanized and Humorous Content on Social Media for Brand Metrics

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Abstract: Brands face the challenge of creating engaging content for their audiences. Brand managers must decide what and how to communicate effectively and cost-efficiently. Social networks provide an economical avenue for direct consumer engagement, especially among younger demographics. The growing prominence of video content on platforms like TikTok and YouTube highlights the need for carefully crafted social media video strategies. This study explores the impact of humanized and humor-based content on consumer perception metrics, such as brand personality, authenticity, leadership, and equity. It also examines generational and gender-based differences in these perceptions. Methodologically, it analyzes case studies of social media videos from Swee and Lidl, contrasting humanized and humorous content with rational, less humanized approaches. Data were collected from a sample of 122 respondents through a questionnaire, assessing their perceptions of the brands' social media content. Statistical techniques, including descriptive analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and chi-square tests, were employed to analyze brand perception differences across content types. Results reveal that humanized and humorous content outperforms rational content in enhancing brand personality, authenticity, leadership, and equity for both brands. The findings underline the importance of humanization and humor in social media strategies, especially for improving consumer engagement and perception. Implications for academic research, brand management practices, and future studies are also discussed, emphasizing the value of these approaches in contemporary digital marketing.

Keywords: Humanized Content, Humor, Social Media Videos, Brand Metrics, Brand Equity.

1. Introduction

In recent years, technological progress and evolving media landscapes have reshaped brand interactions with audiences (Jocić et al, 2024). Video-centric social platforms, including TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram Reels, serve as influential tools, enabling personalized engagement through captivating short videos (Molem et al, 2024). Yet, brand managers often struggle to establish effective content and messaging strategies (Brito and Pratas, 2015). These approaches typically rely on emotional or rational appeals (Taylor, 1999). Emotional strategies—particularly humanized and humorous content—demonstrate superior effectiveness in enhancing brand recall, likability, and purchase intent compared to rational content (Srivastava, 2016). Despite growing popularity, measurable impacts on brand metrics in social media remain insufficiently examined (Voutsas, 2024). This study assesses their influence on brand personality, authenticity, leadership, and equity through case studies of Swee, a vegan ice cream brand, and Lidl, a global retail giant. The data analysis delivers actionable insights for refining content strategies. Employing exploratory research, this investigation explores how these content styles resonate with audiences. Findings aim to assist brand managers in crafting impactful communication strategies, emphasizing emotional engagement and cultural relevance. Ultimately, this study offers a framework for audience-centric campaigns, strengthening consumer-brand relationships and boosting marketing effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media and Digital Marketing

Social media has redefined brand-audience interactions, shifting from a secondary marketing tool to a cornerstone of digital strategy. Video-based platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have grown exponentially, offering immediate access to billions worldwide. This dynamic environment demands rapid adaptation, particularly with platforms prioritizing storytelling and emotional engagement. Social media platforms allow brands to expand their reach cost-effectively while gathering consumer insights through analytics. TikTok's short-form videos facilitate both informational and emotional content, primarily influencing purchase decisions through influencer reviews. Meanwhile, YouTube provides a diverse content spectrum, from

music to educational tutorials, serving as a primary source for brand-related information (Pratas et al, 2024). By capitalizing on these tools, brands optimize engagement and enhance their marketing effectiveness.

2.2 Humanization in Social Media Content: Parasocial interaction and Social Identity Theories

Humanization in marketing makes brands more relatable, authentic, and approachable by incorporating human elements like conversational tones, real employees, and behind-the-scenes content (Jeong et al, 2022). This fosters emotional bonds, strengthens trust, and deepens consumer-brand connections (Labrecque, 2014). Parasocial Interaction theory explains how people form one-sided, emotionally invested relationships with brands or influencers despite their unawareness. Humanized content builds intimacy and trust, enhancing persuasiveness through personal connection (Tukachinsky and Stever, 2019). Conversely, Social Interaction theory explores how individuals shape identity within social groups or brand communities. Brands aligning content with shared values and cultural norms strengthen audience bonds. Humanized content reinforces group belonging, reflecting norms within brand communities (Haudi et al, 2022). By appearing more human, brands become approachable, trustworthy, and authentic, fostering consumer loyalty, advocacy, and engagement. These effects highlight the importance of humanized strategies in modern marketing.

2.3 The Role of Humor in brand contents: The Relief theory of Humor, Emotional contagion and Affordance Theories

Humor plays a crucial role in capturing consumer attention and creating memorable brand experiences. It reduces psychological barriers, fosters positive emotions, and strengthens audience connections, enhancing engagement, positive affect, and purchase intentions (Eisend, 2009). On social media, particularly TikTok, humor fuels virality and shareability (Barta et al, 2023). Its effectiveness depends on context, varying across cultural and demographic groups. Younger audiences, especially Generation Z, engage more with playful, humorous content, associating it with creativity and modernity (Zhang and Chen, 2023). Humorous content generates higher engagement rates, encouraging interactions that amplify brand reach (Pandey, 2024). Relief Theory suggests humor relieves psychological tension, reducing stress and anxiety (Shurcliff, 1968). Emotional Contagion Theory highlights humor's ability to transfer positive emotions, boosting engagement and brand perception (Herrando and Constantinides, 2021). Affordance Theory explains how TikTok's design fosters humorous storytelling, helping brands deepen audience connections and expand their reach. Humor's multifaceted impact highlights its pivotal role in contemporary marketing strategies.

2.4 Brand Metrics

Brand metrics serve as indicators of a brand's overall health and its perception among consumers. In the competitive landscape of social media, measuring these metrics provides critical insights into the effectiveness of content strategies. The key metrics explored in this research (brand personality, brand authenticity, brand leadership and brand equity) offer a comprehensive framework for evaluating brand performance.

- **Brand Personality:** captures the human traits attributed to a brand, influencing how relatable and appealing it appears to its target audience (Aaker, 1997).
- **Brand Authenticity:** emphasizes transparency and genuine communication, crucial for building trust in digital environments (Beverland, 2005).
- **Brand Leadership:** assesses perceptions of a brand's ability to innovate, establish and maintain a strong position within its industry. Effective brand leadership can result in increased brand loyalty, market share, and overall brand equity (Aaker, 2023).
- **Brand Equity:** represents the overall value a brand brings to a company, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements. It refers to the value and strength of a brand in the marketplace, which is derived from consumer perceptions, experiences, and associations with the brand. It encompasses various dimensions such as brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations, which collectively contribute to a brand's financial performance and competitive advantage (Rojas-Lamarena et al, 2022).

Humanized contents directly impact all brand-related metrics, while humorous content specifically strengthens brand personality and equity. Both influence brand image and trust, which are widely studied. Brand image reflects consumer perceptions shaped by associations, beliefs, and attitudes. It is a multidimensional construct influenced by cognitive, emotional, and symbolic elements (Parris and Guzmán, 2023). Brand trust drives long-term consumer loyalty, built through consistent, transparent messaging. It reflects consumer confidence in a

brand's reliability and integrity, influencing purchasing behavior (Heim et al, 2024). Integrating humanized and humorous content into social media strategies enhances engagement, trust, and loyalty. By leveraging emotional connections and cultural relevance, brands can optimize their communication strategies to build stronger relationships with their audiences.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

The conceptual framework of this work is based on the impacts that humanized and humorous contents have on brand metrics, versus the impact of more rational and serious contents, mediated by socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. The formulated hypothesis are as follows:

- H1) Humanized and humorous contents in social media video format platforms have higher impacts on brand perceptions than rational contents.
- H2) The differences in brand perceptions are affected by socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative approach, collecting data through a structured questionnaire previously tested with three respondents. The final sample comprised 122 respondents. The data was collected using different social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, both by the study author and by colleagues and family, with the aim of reaching as many participants as possible. In addition, stickers with QR codes, which redirected directly to the questionnaire, were distributed to several people who were randomly circulating in the region of the Porto. This diverse approach to outreach helped ensure a broader, more representative sample for the study. In the survey, participants evaluated content from Swee and Lidl, distinguishing between humanized/humorous and more serious/rational approaches. Two videos were shown related with the Swee brand and two other from Lidl (each one with a more humorous and humanized approach versus a more rational / serious approach) in terms of their impacts on several brand metrics.

3.2 Analyzed Videos

All the analyzed videos were published in TikTok social media platform. The first video chosen to be included in the Swee brand study was published in 2023, more specifically on October 19th of that year. This video lasts 20 seconds, uses the song "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree" and has a Christmas theme. It is a video focused on the product, in its duration we can see just a few hands preparing a bowl of ice cream with some toppings that allude to the Christmas season. This video was chosen because, despite containing a good representation of the use of Swee's product, it does not have any obviously humanized or humorous element, as expressed in figure 1.

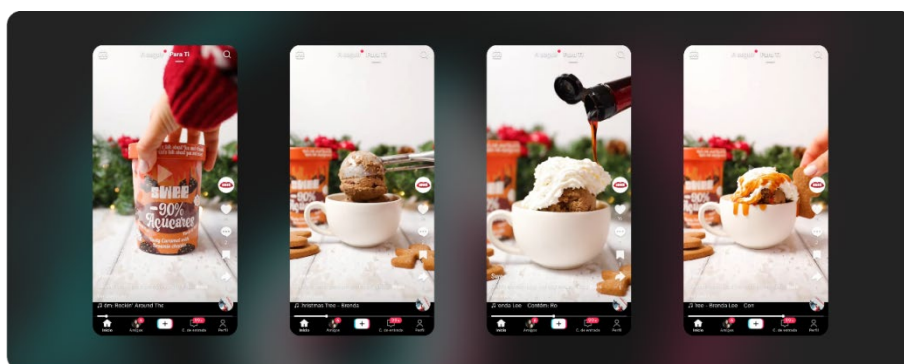


Figure 1: Frames from video A, published by Swee (rational tone)

The second video chosen from the Swee brand was published in 2024, July 8th, and lasts 27 seconds. It uses humanization and humor resources, as we can see a person from the Swee team (usually appearing in the social media of the brand). A joke is made about needing a budget to set up the set for a photo shoot, and as such Swee takes advantage of the displays and staging already set up in an IKEA store, as expressed in figure 2. This video was chosen because it clearly presents humanization and humor components, using people from the Swee

team and also being part of the trend relating IKEA with a humorous background that became popular among several brands during this period.

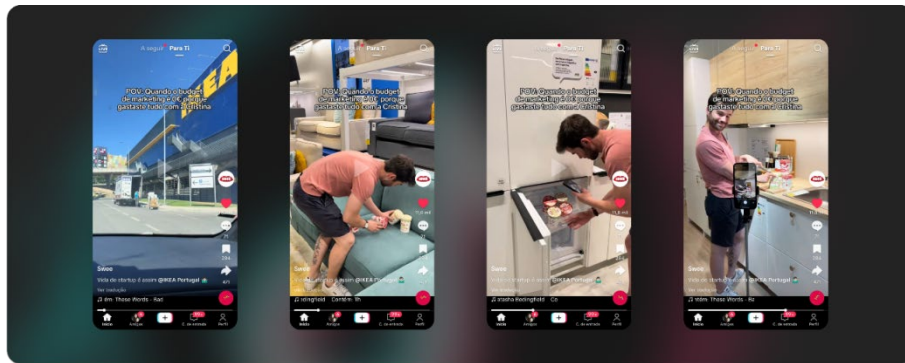


Figure 2: Frames from video B, published by Swee (emotional and humanized tone)

The first video chosen for Lidl was published on March 4th, 2024 and has 34 seconds. During the video, we can see a hand in the store showing new items from the Organic range available in Lidl stores, with simple music playing in the background, as expressed in figure 3. This video does not show many human and humorous characteristics.

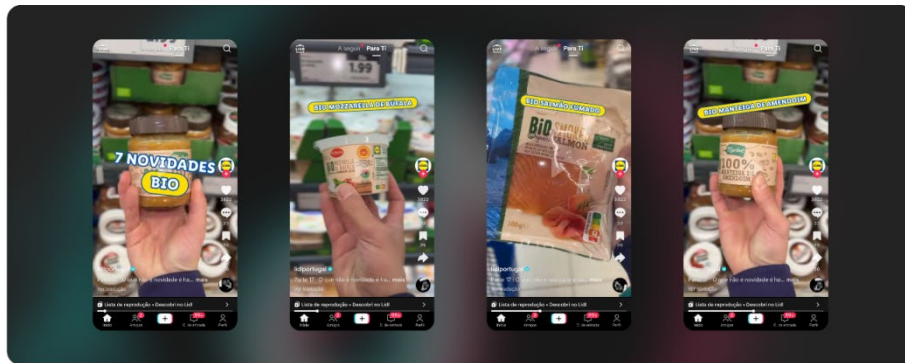


Figure 3: Frames from video C, published by Lidl (rational tone)

In the following video, we can see a very different approach to the previous one. Published on December 30, 2023, this video is one minute and sixteen seconds long. Its objective is also to show some of Lidl's new products for the upcoming festive season and to wish everyone a happy New Year, but with the help of an influencer this time. The video has a humorous connotation, and is part of a series of videos with other influencers in which in each clip, the respective influencer tries on items chosen by Lidl for them. In this video, we have the public figure Kikoishot who appears slightly frustrated by the items that were chosen for him compared to the rest of his colleagues, but deep down, he likes the choice. The frames of the video are expressed in figure 4.

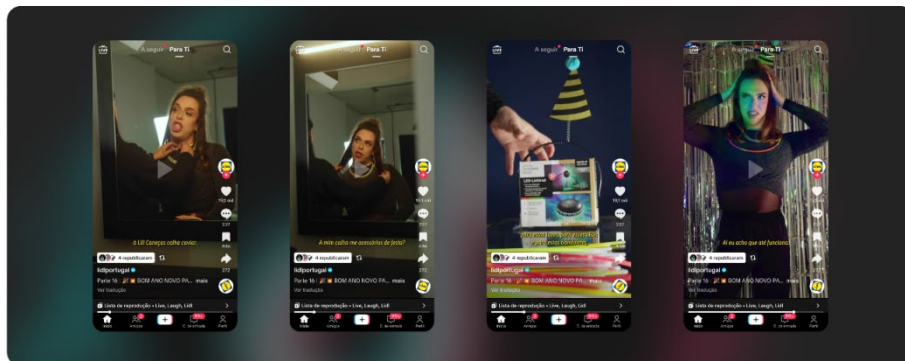


Figure 4: Frames from video D, published by Lidl (emotional and humanized tone)

3.3 Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire involved three main sections regarding the socio-demographics of the respondents, the perceptions about humanized and humorous content, and the constructs related with brand metrics potentially affected by videos in social media platforms. The two sentences regarding the general evaluation of the humor and humanized contents in social media videos were “*The use of humor and humanized characters improves brand perception*”, and “*I would be more inclined to buy products/services from a brand that uses more humanized and humorous themes in its social media posts*”. The sentences used to measure the constructs (brand personality, authenticity, leadership and equity) are expressed in table 1.

Table 1: Constructs and sentences used in their evaluation.

Construct	Sentences
Brand personality	This video made the brand seem more friendly and approachable. This video made the brand seem fun and engaging. I felt like the brand was making an effort to genuinely connect with its audience.
Brand authenticity	The video made me feel that the brand is honest and transparent. I felt the brand was being sincere in its message. This video made the brand feel more genuine to me.
Brand leadership	The video gives the impression of authority in the market sector. I felt the brand stood out from its competitors after watching the video. In this video, the brand demonstrates leadership in using new trends.
Brand equity	This video increased my brand awareness. The brand seems more valuable to me after watching the video. The brand image improved in my perception after watching the video.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

The data analysis employed descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and chi-square tests. These techniques were used to identify significant differences in consumer perceptions across content types and socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

The statistical analysis was performed using the IBM-SPSS 25 version.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The sample was based on convenience. Most of the respondents belong to the generation Z (born between 1997 and 2010) with 76,2% of the respondents belonging to this generation. 13,1% of the respondents belong to Millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996), 5,7% of the respondents belong to generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), and 4,9% of the respondents belong to Baby Boomer generation (born after 1964). In gender variable, 78,7% of the respondents are female, 20,5% are male, and 0,8% of the respondents said “other”. In frequency of use of social media platform TikTok, 66,4% of the respondents said they used TikTok daily, 8,2% weekly, 0,8% monthly, 10,7% rarely, and 13,9% said that never used TikTok.

4.2 Differences in Impacts of the Various Videos

All the sentences related with brand personality, authenticity, leadership and equity have significant statistical differences in averages of the four analyzed videos. Aggregating the metrics, seems that brand personality has the greatest increase in the sum of two brands, followed by leadership, equity and authenticity respectively. In all the sentences, and for both brands, Swee and Lidl, the videos with emotional and humanized tone have higher values than the videos with rational tone. The comparison between Swee videos and Lidl videos, as well as P-Values for each sentence are expressed in table 2.

Table 2: Videos average and statistical differences, using ANOVA results using Generalized linear model.

	A – Swee (Rational tone)	B – Swee (Emotional and humanized tone)	C - Lidl (Rational tone)	D – Lidl (Emotional and humanized tone)	P- Value
This video made the brand seem more friendly and approachable.	3,70	4,39 $\Delta = 0,69$	3,34	4,12 $\Delta = 0,78$	0,000
This video made the brand seem fun and engaging.	3,67	4,48 $\Delta = 0,81$	3,00	4,26 $\Delta = 1,26$	0,000
I felt like the brand was making an effort to genuinely connect with its audience.	3,48	4,27 $\Delta = 0,79$	3,38	4,16 $\Delta = 0,78$	0,000
The video made me feel that the brand is honest and transparent.	3,34	4,04 $\Delta = 0,70$	3,50	3,74 $\Delta = 0,24$	0,000
I felt the brand was being sincere in its message.	3,57	4,07 $\Delta = 0,50$	3,62	3,82 $\Delta = 0,20$	0,000
This video made the brand feel more genuine to me.	3,38	4,21 $\Delta = 0,83$	3,28	3,90 $\Delta = 0,62$	0,000
The video gives the impression of authority in the market sector.	2,78	3,14 $\Delta = 0,36$	3,20	3,62 $\Delta = 0,42$	0,000
I felt the brand stood out from its competitors after watching the video.	2,93	4,04 $\Delta = 1,11$	3,21	4,03 $\Delta = 0,82$	0,000
In this video, the brand demonstrates leadership in using new trends.	3,21	4,14 $\Delta = 0,93$	3,25	4,10 $\Delta = 0,85$	0,000
This video increased my brand awareness.	3,20	3,96 $\Delta = 0,76$	3,12	3,71 $\Delta = 0,59$	0,000
The brand seems more valuable to me after watching the video.	2,99	3,72 $\Delta = 0,73$	3,01	3,58 $\Delta = 0,57$	0,000
The brand image improved in my perception after watching the video.	3,11	3,89 $\Delta = 0,78$	3,06	3,82 $\Delta = 0,76$	0,000

4.3 General Evaluation of the Humor and Humanized Contents in Social Media Videos

More than 90% of respondents agrees or strongly agrees that the use of humor and humanized characters improves brand perception. About 87% of respondents agrees or strongly agrees that they would be more inclined to buy from a brand that uses more humanized and humorous themes in its social media posts, as expressed in table 3.

Table 3: Percentages of responses for the humor and humanized contents impact on brand perception and purchase intention.

	The use of humor and humanized characters improves brand perception.	I would be more inclined to buy products/services from a brand that uses more humanized and humorous themes in its social media posts.
1 – Strongly disagree	0,0%	2,5%
2 –Disagree	1,6%	1,6%
3 – Neutral	7,4%	9,0%
4 – Agree	23,0%	25,4%
5 – Strongly agree	68,0%	61,5%

4.4 Brand Perceptions and Purchase Intention Impacts and Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

In order to analyze the differences between gender and generation with brand perceptions and purchase intention, several chi-squared tests were performed. The variations among gender were not statistically significant, as P-Values were higher than 0,05. Furthermore, generations did not seem to affect purchased intention. Although that, generations affected the level of brand perception after the brands used humor and humanized characters in their videos, as P-values were higher than 0,05. Only the generation Z (born between 1997 and 2010) strongly agree that the use of humor and humanized characters improve brand perception more than expected in about 6% (as P-Values were less than 0,05).

5. Discussion

This study shows that humorous and humanized content significantly enhances brand metrics, especially for Gen Z and women who use TikTok daily. The general evaluation of humor and humanized content on brand perceptions and purchase intentions is also positive, but with a positive bias for generation Z in brand perception increase. No other age or gender differences were found. While humor boosts brand engagement, it might deter comments (Barry and Graça, 2018) and varies in effectiveness across cultural contexts (Núñez-Barriopedro et al, 2019). The research also highlights that such content most strongly impacts brand personality and leadership, with moderate gains in brand authenticity. Managerially, it confirms that short, humorous, and humanized videos on social platforms drive brand metrics growth. In summary, this study contributes to the academic knowledge by emphasizing the critical role of humanized and humorous content on social media platforms, particularly those centered around short video content. For brand managers, this research advocates for the adoption and support of such approaches.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the strong appeal and effectiveness of humanized and humorous contents on social media over rational approaches. These contents positively impact brand metrics like brand personality, authenticity, leadership, and equity. However, the limitations of this research include a small sample size and reliance on survey data. Future research should use broader, more diverse datasets to validate the findings of this research. Moreover, the integration of qualitative methodologies, such as direct observations within corporate settings or in-depth interviews with brand managers, could yield richer insights into the real-world effectiveness of these strategies. Future research could also explore the influencer traits, brand audiences, and pre-existing brand associations. It could also be interesting to explore additional factors influencing consumer responses, such as cultural variations or content nuances specific to different industries, or cultural differences related with other geographies, and to study contents used in other social media platforms.

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Ethics Declaration

No ethical authorization was required for the research. However, questionnaire respondents were asked to consent to the use of the collected data, collected anonymously.

AI Declaration

AI was used to review the grammar of the text in english language.

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