



Stand Up for Purpose: Disability and Inclusion in Social Advertising Through Humor and Storytelling

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to analyze how humor used in social advertising can generate a more inclusive view of what disability is. The advertising spot "Stand Up with Purpose" of the Entel brand was chosen as a case study because it presents three people with functional diversity with a humorous narration, uncommon, in advertising about disability. The research has a naturalistic paradigm, applying a qualitative methodology and a phenomenological design to obtain information about opinions and thoughts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address research questions. Through the convenience sampling technique, 15 university students and/or graduates aged 21 to 26 years from Lima were contacted. The results indicate that the humorous message together with a first-person narrative can transform society's everyday perception of functional diversity; that is, from dependent people to people with self-control and autonomy to make decisions.

Keywords: Disability; inclusion; humor; storytelling; social advertising

1 Introduction

Advertising has been diversifying over the years, so it has various types, one of them is social advertising, which prioritizes social issues and aims to create desirable actions in the community [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]. Therefore, it has a great influence on education about the norms of coexistence in society and produces persuasion in the population [6] [7]. Along the same lines, it is proposed that advertising can act as a social and cultural agent where socio-cultural, political, ethical and ideological issues can be seen, and even as an educational agent [8] [9] [10] [11]. This type of advertising messages is usually developed by the public sector, which is a sign of problems in society and there is a greater effort in Latin American countries to implement this type of advertising, since there is a need to educate the population [12] [13] [14]. In addition, we can observe that the recipients of the message or "consumers" have become more aware of the social reality [3]. It should be noted that achieving a social objective requires perseverance and planning to position a value in people [1] [15].

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P. C. López-López et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Communication and Applied Technologies 2024 (ICOMTA 2024)*, Atlantis Highlights in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities 28, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-596-6_44

On the other hand, people with disabilities have suffered over time an insulting and humiliating lexicon linked to their situation [16] [17] [18]. Since the past, the body of people with functional diversity has been conceptualized in a negative way [16] [19] [20]. Indeed, there is a close link between disability and stereotypes, which is often seen in the media, as people can be seen as unprotected, dependent and vulnerable; in addition to not providing clear information on the social inclusion of these [21] [18] [22]. This is why reference was made to an unprotected population when persons with disabilities were mentioned; However, at present some authors highlight the empowerment of this community and social networks are shown as a possibility to speak more naturally about disability, as it becomes a positive influence that promotes respect for diversity [18] [23] [22]. We can now see in scenarios this group of people, since it is generating a greater social normalization on disability [23]. However, we still have a long way to go to ensure that all areas are covered [24].

In the past, many advertisements conveyed a gloomy image full of susceptibility towards people with functional diversity [25]. This usually occurs because there is, in a part of the population, a prejudice towards people who perceive differently [17]. However, today there is a different approach with a growing number of influencers and people with functional diversity recognized in digital media, followed by millions of users [23]. Therefore, it is now possible to present a narrative in first person and with humor [26]. Advertisements on disability were often exclusive, welfare-oriented and medico-rehabilitative; and linguistically excluded persons as independent and disability-focused beings [16]. They were considered "unattractive" bodies; in other words, they were denied aesthetic citizenship [18].

Analyzing the advertising in Latin America about people with disabilities, we find that in countries like Chile the representation of this group can also be observed through stereotypes, which continues to influence the Chilean public a negative perception about these people [27]. The situation in Ecuador is quite similar, since their communication is usually not inclusive [28]. Additionally, in Central America, specifically in countries such as Costa Rica, we can also observe within the advertising of people with disabilities that the narrative goes much more with welfare and personify them as heroes by following their daily routine [16]. However, as already mentioned, a change has been initiated in the advertising on disability, which shows a standardized image and that disability ceases to be the main center [23].

It is important to deepen this topic, because new representations are visualized in advertising about disability and inclusion. There has been little research within Peru on storytelling, humor, social advertising and disability and social inclusion. Given the above, the research question is: How does the humor used in social advertising generate a more inclusive look at what is disability in the "Stand Up with Purpose" case of the Entel brand?

2 Methodology

The paradigm is the naturalist, who studies the construction on the perception of reality through people and is not in itself [29]. Therefore, the relevance lies in the appreciation

[30]. Therefore, the approach is qualitatively based on the behavior of a certain sector of the population [31]. A phenomenological design is employed, as it details the various perceptions of young people about disability.

A theoretical sampling was used for convenience, inviting fifteen young people, with a sample composition of eighty percent men and 20 percent women, for virtual interviews and willing to participate during the second half of 2022. Previously, this spot was selected because of its representation of three people with functional diversity participating in a function of Stand-Up Comedy, where they report personal experiences that show the situations faced by persons with disabilities in Peruvian society [32]. It ended when the theoretical saturation obtained in interview number fifteen was observed [33] [34]. The study population are young university students of last cycles and/or graduates of social sciences and exact careers from 21 to 26 years of Lima. According to research carried out by Ipsos Peru [35] focused on the profile of the adolescent and youth in Urban Peru in 2020, young people in this age range make up a quarter of Urban Peru and the most active in public opinion through social networks. The interview technique is used with a semi-structured guide, since it allows interpreting reality from the user's perspective and adjusting the interview according to the conversation [36] [30]. An interview guide was developed based on the research categories: disability and social inclusion, social advertising and storytelling, and the data were analyzed from the research questions.

3 Ethical considerations

Each interviewee was given informed consent explaining the risks, benefits and authorization to use their responses for academic purposes. Alphanumeric coding was used to maintain participants' confidentiality and anonymity, as it will only be used for scientific research purposes [37] [33].

4 Results and discussion

Interviewees were presented with the video of the advertising spot "Stand Up with Purpose" of the brand Entel [32]. In the announcement you can see a stage of Stand-Up Comedy with three people who relate, possibly, uncomfortable situations that they lived related to their disability in a comical way.

4.1 Storytelling and presentation of disability in advertising

The interviewees said that the story led them to reflect on the daily experiences of people with disabilities in the country. This suggests that storytelling can become an important component in raising awareness of these issues and examining their position on this issue [7] [38] [5].

"It is a different way of reaching people and understanding how the relationship with a person with disabilities should be" (E02, 23).

Likewise, the interviewed population mentioned that Peruvian society often has recurring stereotypes regarding people with functional diversity. For this reason, most citizens often act differently with them. As the different authors state about the uncomfortable situations that people with disabilities usually live [39] [40].

"There are people more developed in that aspect because there are others who do have difficulty speaking. Therefore, perhaps some of us are ignorant or think that we have to speak slowly or to the other person" (E11, 25 years).

A large number of respondents mentioned that one of the most common stereotypes within storytelling about disability is the representation of the population with disabilities as dependent on others and with little autonomy. That is why there is a connection between disability and stereotypes, where it is usually shown to the community with functional diversity through charity requests [21] [18] [22].

"The media agree, only remember people with disabilities in the month of the telethon, the telethon passes and from there many television stations no longer give importance to the issue of inclusion" (E01, 24 years old).

In addition, a large percentage of those interviewed stressed that the issue of disability is often overlooked in the contents that are often frequented in the media. This demonstrates the low visibility and importance of the media for the community of people with functional diversity, which constitutes a large percentage of the population [25] [18].

"The truth is that I have not seen much publicity about disability, at least the pages I follow" (E15, 24 years old).

The largest number of respondents indicated that the content is usually presented with different narrative elements that provoke a feeling of sadness or with the aim of generating pity towards them so that the public gives them some financial support. These elements are usually: sad music, characters visibly careless and defenseless and where the message of help is often repeated constantly. As the author Calvo mentions [2017], the presentation of disability in the media usually transforms people with functional diversity into victims of a disease, which is seen as a problem for their daily life.

"I have seen many TV shows where they invite a person with physical or mental disabilities, (...) they play sad songs and treat him like a small dog that needs help" (E14, 23 years old).

4.2 Uses of humor in advertising

The interviewees reported that it was not a comedy intended to offend or in mocking tone towards people with disabilities but that the message was transmitted in that particular way to be more attractive, being a faster way to draw attention. As stated by the different authors who indicate that working with humor can be captured by the audience both positively and negatively, depending on how it is transmitted [41] [42].

"The best mood is not the one that ridicules others, it is the one that ridicules oneself, and gives meaning to the phrase "I am not mocking you, I laugh with you"; then technically they do not mock other people, they mock themselves and make others laugh" (E04, 23 years old).

Also, most of the interviewees stressed that what caught their attention most of the use of humor is that they were experiences of each character and not of third persons. According to Xu [2022], first-person humor is not common in advertising and can be presented through personal experiences combined with teasing yourself, with the aim of providing a judgment within society about a problem.

"Presenting people who really suffer, who tell their story from how they have lived it themselves with a touch of humor (...) is important because it is not the same as me telling them "listen to my aunt or people who use wheelchairs it is not necessary to treat her in that way, is very different from the same person who has experienced it" (E10, 25 years).

Also, within the interviewed audience highlighted that probably the characters have lived these experiences in a not so pleasant way but expressing it with irony gave much more meaning and strength to the message. This coincides with several authors who mention that irony accentuates the humor of stories and obtains deeper reflections [44].

"They take themes that maybe for the day to day of these people is something strong and uncomfortable, they handle it with humor and irony as to make them laugh but at the same time arrives to convey the message they want" (E12, 22 years old).

4.3 Young people's perception of the social advertising "Stand Up with Purpose of the Entel brand.

Most interviewees commented that most of the social publicity they know was disseminated by the State, since this institution tends to work problems within society. This coincides with the authors Muñoz and Orozco [2018] who indicate that this type of messages is usually transmitted by state public bodies, since it is a symbol of problems within our society.

"I am surprised that this spot has not been done by the government, since many times this type of inclusion is done by the government, (...), does a private entity like Entel, which is not even Peruvian" (E01, 24 years old).

Also, a large part of the interviewed population mentions that it has been carried out as a commercial strategy by the Entel brand with the aim of obtaining more sales. Thus, it coincides with various studies that indicate that at present there is a greater suspicion on the part of the population, which questions whether the ultimate goal of social advertising is simply to sell or really want to create awareness within society [45] [46].

"To be on everyone's lips, to earn people's affection, to say 'Entel supports this, then I also want to support them', then I buy an Entel chip or a cell phone in Entel" (E14, 23 years old).

Most interviewees mention that one of the main objectives in this type of advertising is to get a green light from society. Thus, advertising for social purposes has now become a method to achieve greater proximity to the audience [47].

"Always when you try to reach this type of audience is more than anything to see you as an inclusive company and always that draws attention, (...), maybe they do not care much about the issue or do not give much importance but achieving their goal is attracting people" (E12, 22 years).

The interviewed population indicates that their perception is of a spot with an innovative format, whose main objective is to convey a message with social purpose and appeal to the Peruvian public for change. They comment that the information about the social problems that is treated in the advertising video was transmitted in a light, attractive and trendy way, as is the Stand-Up Comedy format. Therefore, we can observe that social advertising prioritizes social issues within the population with the aim of invoking some desired change [3] [4].

"They try to reach the Peruvian as the Peruvian sees things, the Peruvian sees everything funny, all jokes, all humor (...) and as they know that the Peruvian is like that, they try to get to the issue of disability. (...) through humor, such as mocking themselves, mocking the situation that happens in the day" (E01, 24 years).

4.4 Uses of humor used in social advertising from an inclusive disability perspective.

The participants considered that the way in which the humorous narrative was presented appeals to the harmonious coexistence of citizens. For this reason, humour becomes an essential resource for a common objective within the population: to stimulate common life peacefully and with respect for all its members [41] [48] [44].

Thus, participants consider that the spot generates an empathic perception. In this way, humour functions as a channel of communication with the aim of challenging certain social problems and inciting the population to inclusion and tolerance towards persons with disabilities [41] [48] [44].

"It only addresses the issue of inclusion because commercials based (...) on people with disabilities are not seen regularly in all brands" (E04, 23).

As a result, respondents indicate that the usual image of people with functional diversity in the media is transformed into people who are not vulnerable and able to laugh at themselves, who are not victims of their differences. Thus, advertising can bring a different look, less pejorative and welfare, it is shown as a possibility to normalize disability in society [23] [18].

"In a way that they don't accuse you of being a bad person for treating them differently, but they try to make you understand through humor that they're not as different as some people think, right? And that you can treat them like nobody else" (E10, 25 years old).

"A change in the way some people think about knowing when or when to help them, which is quite respectable when someone can fend for themselves" (E04, 23).

Likewise, the interviewed population believes that the humorous narration generates a reflection on the uncomfortable situations that the community of people with functional diversity suffers daily, since they are often stigmatized by people without being aware of it. This is consistent with several authors who indicate that society when observing some difference in the anatomy of another person usually judge and deduce that it needs some special treatment or support to develop its activities [19] [16] [20].

"You think you have to be more careful to be special or be a little different from us" (E09, 25).

5 Conclusions

Today, as advertisers we know that it is increasingly difficult to send a message to the target audience for various reasons [49]. However, after having analyzed the responses of the participants of the interview, it is concluded that the advertising spot "Arise with Purpose" of the brand Entel, for the sample obtained, having been transmitted in a humorous way and with a storytelling in the first person transformed the everyday perception of society about the community with functional diversity as people dependent on others to people with autonomy over themselves; In other words, the welfare idea presented in the various advertisements of previous years was replaced by people who do not need help and who can continue their daily activities without anyone else, and above all show that they also have an opinion. about the treatment they receive.

The narrative elements presented in the advertising spot and the way the main characters express themselves appeal to a bilateral communication; that is, it is not necessary for third parties to speak for them, but it is the same person who communicates their emotions and needs directly. One of the most important elements, as mentioned above, is the humorous advertising narration in first person, since most of the interviewees mentioned that this is the differential element in this advertising spot, because being the same people who tell their experiences makes it closer and credible. Therefore, humour in testimonial format can generate the connection between the brand and the protagonists of the advertising spot, since a closer and informal storytelling is observed, where they express their opinions and emotions about what happens to them when they belong to the population with disabilities. Thus, creating a broader, real and deep storytelling that leads to the reflection of the public, in this specific case, of society on a social problem, since it is transmitted in a simple and didactic way, because in today's world if the information is heavy. You don't pay attention. In addition, when making use of humour and irony, one speaks of an important and perhaps delicate subject, but with the facility of being able to have a positive perspective on it.

Finally, the findings are in line with previous research on the frequent pattern of communication with people with disabilities, as is often established with stereotypes. On the other hand, first-person humour has been a key element in the campaign, since it usually goes beyond traditional standards in people with functional diversity who mock with irony the treatment they receive from society. Very different from communication about people with disabilities years ago, where they emphasized their disability and questioned their autonomy when making decisions. Therefore, a transformation is generated in terms of the vision of this community within advertising, in the past 10 years ago it would have been difficult to work this advertising spot with humor. Currently we can see changes of perspective on various topics that can be included in social advertising and generate greater closeness with the public.

In the interests of future research, it is important to recognize the limitations of the study. One of its limitations is the convenience sampling method, being a small sample obtained makes it difficult to generalize the results to a larger population. For future lines of research, it is recommended to replicate this study to the population with functional diversity to consider other perspectives and realities on what they perceive from the advertising spot "Stand Up with Purpose".

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