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**HUMOR IN ADVERTISING: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SUPER BOWL's
ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE 70's TO THE 20's + (1969-2014).**

της

ΤΙΜΑΜΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣ

Υποβλήθηκε ως απαιτούμενο για την απόκτηση του μεταπτυχιακού
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Abstract

Humor is one of the most employed techniques in advertising. The present study examines the evolution of humor and humor styles through a content analysis of actual Super Bowl advertisements combined with a historical and cultural analysis of the American society for a 45-year period. The results suggest a continuous increase of advertising humor since its acceptance as an effective advertising strategy in the 80's. Furthermore, it is suggested that the use of general humor is independent from a society's macro-environment; it is, indeed, humor styles that are influenced by and that, in turn, influence the historical and cultural environment within which a society grows.

Keywords: advertising humor; Super Bowl advertising; American culture; American history; content analysis

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Introduction

Humor is one of the most significant communication tools of all time. It is a form of communication that not only creates pleasant feelings but also evokes persuasion (Meyer, 2000). It is not surprising, therefore, that humor is a common advertising appeal. As early as the 70's, the percentage of advertisements that applied the humor technique reached from 15% (Kelley and Solomon, 1975) to 42% of all existing ads (Markiewicz, 1974). Notwithstanding, although humor was such a frequent advertising strategy, humorous advertising research was quite limited (Weinberger and Campbell, 1992)

The first humor literature review was conducted by Sternthal and Craig, in 1973. In this review, the authors tried to measure the effectiveness of humor on specific communication factors that humor was found to influence. However, since there were only a few humor studies specializing in advertising, their findings were of a general frame. In 1984, Madden and Weinberger conducted a survey of advertising practitioners in order to find out whether the marketers' views were in agreement with the existing literature. That was the first paper connecting humor research to actual advertising. Many studies examining humor on advertising followed, leading Weinberger and Gulas (1992) to conduct a new review, in order to update and, further, expand Sternthal and Craig's one. In their study they, also, examined some executional and/or situational factors that were found to, significantly, influence the results of humorous messages, such as ads' placement. Since then, a great number of papers on the subject have been published; most of them arriving at differential conclusions (Eisend, 2009).

According to Kilbourne, "Advertising often sells a great deal more than products. It sells values, images, and concepts of love and sexuality, romance, success, and perhaps more important, normalcy. To a great extent, it tells us who we are and who we should be" (1999, p. 74 cited in Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010, p.109). Advertising messages depict images of an existing culture (Pollay, 1985), while simultaneously shape an existing culture through the images they portray (Pollay, 1986), as the audience follows the message's illustrations (Belk, 1986). There seems to be an interactive relationship between advertising and culture. The belief that advertising is linked to societal changes (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2002), has led historians to start examining advertisements, in order to comment on societies' evolutions (Pollay, 1985). Advertising

effectiveness seems to depend so greatly on cultural schemas, that an advertisement's effectiveness may, significantly, range between countries of different values (Han and Shavitt, 1994).

Common advertising appeals are, also, influenced by the generally accepted advertising tactics and trends. Pollay (1985) conducted a content analysis of more than 2000 print ads illustrated from 1900 to 1980 in popular magazines, demonstrating the relationship between changing times and advertising strategies. In 2005, Beard conducted a longitudinal analysis of humor in advertising. In this study, which was based on advertising and marketing journals of the whole previous century, he examined the evolution of humor as an advertising technique. Humor's evolution was found to be, notably, influenced by societal changes. Based on these longitudinal studies one can draw the conclusion that humorous advertising appeals are particularly linked to the changes a society goes through.

According to Apte, humor "is primarily the result of cultural perceptions, both individual and collective, of incongruity, exaggeration, distortion, and any unusual combinations of the cultural elements in external events" (1985:16 cited in Raskin, 2008, p.311). The way humor is used (Martin, 2007), or whether it will be enjoyed or not (Speck, 1991) is, really, a matter of culture. Even the way humor is created is based on moral values that prevail in a society (Veatch, 1998). Therefore, an audience's cultural knowledge (Bourdieu, 1984) plays a key role to the effectiveness of a humorous attempt (Weinberger M.G., Gulas and Weinberger M.F., 2015). Advertising humor is vastly influenced by societal changes, both in a micro (advertising) and a macro (society) level.

Weinberger M.G., Gulas and Weinberger M.F. (2015) conducted the first content analysis of actual humorous advertisements covering a period as long as 100 years. Their study was based on a content analysis of billboard advertisements, combined with a historical and cultural analysis of the American society during the same period. The authors investigated the acceptance of humor and the evolution of humor styles, claiming that the evolving social and cultural milieu, along with the cultural knowledge of audiences and the context in which executives create advertisements, are closely related to the level, styles, and elements of humor employed.

The present study follows the logic and structure of that of Weinberger M.G., Gulas and Weinberger M.F.'s (2015) one. Through a content analysis of actual Super Bowl advertisements and an extensive analysis of the political, economic and social factors influencing the American society, the study tries to address the questions of how humorous advertising and humor styles (types of humor) evolved during the period from 1969 to 2014 in the U.S.A. It is the first longitudinal, content analysis of actual TV advertisements covering a 45 year period.

Choosing Super Bowl advertisements as the study's sample lied on multiple reasons. To begin with, Super Bowl has, for years, been one of the most watched shows in America. Its advertising significance is indisputable, as it is depicted by both the existence of "likeability measures" for Super Bowl advertisements and the number of surveys and studies examining successful Super Bowl advertising strategies. Most importantly, Super Bowl, after being broadcasted for more than 50 years, is considered one of the most significant expressions of the American popular culture.

Literature review

Humor in advertising

Humor and humor theories

Humor is an integral part of our everyday lives. In fact, it is the element that gives us the strength to compete with and overcome all kind of challenges, ranging from personal issues to social and political turbulences (Berger, 2008). Humor is a crucial component of every culture (Berger, 1987), as well as of every single individual, since our sense of humor reveals parts of our personal characteristics and of the way we, socially, interact with each other (Lynch, 2002).

As a matter of fact, humor is not a laughing, but a pretty serious, issue. Notably, even when we are joking, we are expressing feelings, thoughts and opinions based on our sense of the serious world we live in (Speck, 1991); and what is, certainly, not funny is try to define what humor is. For over 2000 years, humor has engaged philosophers, writers, psychologists and scholars - great minds such as Aristotle, Plato, Freud, Kant, Spencer, Cervantes, Moliere, Bergson and many more- working and commenting on the subject. Be that as it may, to this day there is no consensus regarding humor's fundamental aspects (Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Berger, 1987; Berger, 1993; Lynch, 2002); a sense of pleasure, as the result of experiencing humor, being the only element on which most researchers agree (Madden and Weinberger, 1984).

The existing humor literature covers a great variety of fields, with most of the studies focusing on psychology, sociology, communication, education, working environment or marketing. This variety of fields arises from the fact that humor has a double nature as it is both a personal and an

interpersonal trait, which leads to multiple humor analyses on both an individual and a social level (Lynch, 2002). The significance of humor in our cultures derives from the effect that it has on our societies. The social aspect of humor is vital, as humor is one of our fundamental ways of communicating and has, through the years, developed a great number of social functions by which it is and should be defined (Bergson, 1911; Meyer, 2000; Martin, 2007).

The paradox of humor is a humor's trait according to which humor's dualistic nature results in the creation of two opposite social effects (Veatch, 1998; Lynch, 2002; Martin, 2007). Humor, simultaneously, unifies and divides distinct social groups (Meyer, 2000). This simultaneous unification and division is one of the most significant functions of humor; a function with great communication and social consequences that has been pointed out centuries ago, when humor theories started being, originally, developed.

What makes people laugh is a, particularly, challenging issue as it is, firmly, linked to the concept of "humor perception", which is affected by a number of various factors. Regardless of which the cause of humor is, the necessary conditions, as well as the process of its creation seem to be the same for every individual. In order for an individual to experience humor, a kind of discrepancy, inconsistency, irrationality or incongruity, from what expected, has to take place (Apte, 1985; Lynch 2002; Martin, 2007). The individual's perception of normality needs to be violated (Veatch, 1998), while the level of both the individual's intimacy of the schema being violated, as well as of the violation's level itself play a significant part to the result. In case the individual is not familiar with the situation or in case the individual is already quite familiar with the incongruity of the situation humor will not be experienced (Meyer, 2000).

There are three prevailing humor theories (or processes) in humor literature; the relief (or arousal – safety) theory, the incongruity (or incongruity – resolution) theory and the superiority (or disparagement) theory. Although the process of humor creation sounds to be more associated with the incongruity theory this does not mean that the other theories are less suitable for explaining humor, but rather that laughter is mainly a mental process (Lynch, 2002). According to Speck, although the effects resulting from each theory are quite different, the theories share significant similarities as they all rest on a process sufficient to resolve a discrepancy, a violation of the ordinary world and subsequently generate a pleasant feeling (Speck, 1991). None of the humor theories can exclusively provide an interpretation of all humor aspects, while each and every one of them presents us with useful guidance (Berger, 1987; Lynch, 2002). None of the humor theories can explain every humor case, yet all humor cases can be interpreted by all of the theories (Meyer, 2000). The relationship among them is characterized by a complementary rather than a competitive nature.

Relief theory is connected to physiology and psychology. According to this theory, humor is processed when an individual is released from internal physiological or psychological pressure. Herbert Spencer laid the foundation of the theory in his essay "On the Physiology of Laughter" where he stated that through laughter we release nervous energy (Spencer, 1860 cited in Morreall, 1983, p.24), while some decades later Sigmund Freud further analyzed Spencer's theory suggesting that through laughter we release tension that derives from the suppression of hidden emotions, such as sexual or aggressive ones (Freud, 1905 cited in Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Martin, 2007). Although there are authors who oppose to both Spencer's and Freud's theories, positing that the relief theory is not adequate of explaining the humor process (Feinberg, 1978), this theory has influenced many bright minds during the last century. Relief or arousal-safety theory is closely related to emotions as well as affective mechanisms (Speck, 1991; Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Veatch, 1998).

Superiority is, perhaps, the earliest and oldest humor theory, attributed to Greek ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato (Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Martin, 2007) - though according to Perks the above mentioned philosophers commented on other humor theories in their documents, as well (Perks, 2012). Superiority or disparagement theory is based on comparisons (Berger, 1987), feelings of victory and triumph (Meyer, 2000), self-worth (Perks, 2012), aggression (Feinberg, 1978; Martin, 2007;) or insult (Feinberg, 1978). Some forms of superiority humor are satire, ethnic and put-down humor (Speck, 1991). This theory underlines a significant social function of humor (Feinberg, 1978; Berger, 1987; Speck, 1991; Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Meyer, 2000); that of humor dividing the society into two groups consisting of the superior and inferior citizens (Meyer, 2000). Superiority theory is related to conative mechanisms (Speck, 1991).

Incongruity theory is the most eminent of the prevailing humor theories (Feinberg, 1978; Berger, 1987), with many incongruity theorists arguing that superiority theory consists, in fact, of a sub-theory of incongruity theory (Berger 1987; Berger, 1993), that can only be interpreted as humorous when it involves incongruity factors (Speck, 1991). According to the incongruity theory individuals experience humor when their knowledge of normality is violated by a discrepancy, a disharmony or an unexpected event (Schutz, 1977; Feinberg, 1978; Berger, 1987; Berger 1993; Meyer, 2000; Perks, 2012). Nevertheless, there are arguments according to which an abnormal, unexpected event does not necessarily generate humor (Feinberg, 1978; Veatch, 1998). Incongruity theory is related to cognition and cognitive mechanisms (Meyer 2000; Perks, 2012; Speck 1991; Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997).

Humor mechanisms, typologies and HMT

As it can be concluded from the definitions above, there are three humor mechanisms that are related, and directly connected, to humor theories: the affective mechanism (related to the relief theory), the cognitive mechanism (related to the incongruity theory) and the social-interpersonal (related to the incongruity/disparagement) mechanism (Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997).

Many classifications of types of humor (humor typologies), that exist in the literature are based, mainly, on these fundamental theories. As cited in Madden and Weinberger (1982), Goldstein and McGhee, after reviewing the humor research for over 20 years concluded that, four decades ago, the most used types of humor were aggressive, sexual and incongruity (non - sense) humor which are, actually, mirroring Freud's classification of humor types.

Since then, numerous studies engaged in humor typology. In one of the most recent ones, Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004), using Berger's humor typologies and analyzing actual humor advertisements, came up with 41 humor techniques and 7 categories of humor arising from the humor techniques: slapstick, clownish humor, surprise, misunderstanding, irony, satire, and parody. Nonetheless, Speck's taxonomy of humorous messages –HMT- (1991) is, still, considered to be the greatest contribution to the typology field.

HMT, both extensive and analytical as it is, has influenced humor research to a groundbreaking extent. Speck, using the three fundamental humor processes came down to five humor types; combining these five humor types with different message types, as well as humor relatedness, concluded that there are 80 distinct humorous message types with different communication effects. Speck's five humor types are: comic wit, sentimental humor, satire, sentimental comedy and full comedy. Some of the types are based on just one humor process (comic wit, sentimental humor), while others are based on a combination of the processes (satire, sentimental comedy, full comedy). Incongruity - resolution humor, which is considered to be more effective than incongruity humor (Flaherty, Weinberger and Gulas, 2004) is the most used type of all (Speck, 1991). Pornpitakpan and Tan (2000), suggest a moderate level of incongruity, while for Alden and Hoyer (1993), as well as for Elpers, Mukherjee and Hoyer (2004) the element of surprise is necessary in order for humor to be achieved.

Speck's five humor types are widely used in humor literature. However, this is not the only, major, contribution of his 1991's paper in humor studies. In the same paper, Speck analyzed humor relatedness, the connection between humor elements and humor messages, pointing out its importance to communication effects. According to Speck, there are three types of relatedness: intentional relatedness, semantic relatedness and structural relatedness, which are all significant

determining factors of the results of a message involving humorous elements. Whether an advertisement is humor or message dominant, whether it aims at entertaining or informing, whether humor is related to the product or not, are significant questions the answers of which lead to different communication results, as well as to distinct levels or means of effectiveness.

Studying humor in advertising: the first attempts

The development of humor theories, mechanisms, techniques, types and styles contributed significantly to the humor studies of the different fields for which humor is an important analysis factor, such as marketing and advertising. Humor is one of the most defining communication tools and this characteristic of humor led to its extensive use in the advertising sector. Advertising is about attention, liking, persuasiveness and other factors that can lead to marketing goals, with product purchase and use of a service being the most desired ones.

According to Kelly and Solomon (1975), during the seventies, 15% of the advertisements were, already, applying humor techniques, while based on Markiewicz's research (1974), during the same period, the percentage of humorous advertisements, reached 42% of the total advertisements aired. Nonetheless, although humor use was such a frequent technique, humor research and theoretical contribution was limited (Weinberger and Campbell, 1992).

The first, extensive study specializing in humor in advertising was not published until 1973, when Sternthal and Craig released a paper discussing the results of the literature review they conducted. According to them, attention and source credibility are, positively, affected by the use of humor, whereas humor may have a negative effect on comprehension. The conclusions regarding persuasion are quite mixed, indicating that humor could positively affect persuasion only under specific conditions. Finally, based on the study's findings, audience is a significant factor of the effectiveness of humor in advertising (Sternthal and Craig, 1973).

In 1984, Madden and Weinberger conducted a survey among the most successful advertising practitioners, of that time, in order to find out whether the views of the people responsible for deciding whether to apply humor in their campaigns were similar to research findings. The advertisers' views were similar to those of Sternthal and Craig as far as attention, comprehension, persuasion, and audience are concerned. A discrepancy concerning source credibility was found, since 90% of the practitioners were of the opinion that humor harms rather than enhances source credibility. According to the results of the survey humor aids awareness and purchase intention, but negatively affects recall.

In their survey Madden and Weinberger (1984) examined other factors, such as media selection and product category, as well. They concluded that radio and TV are the most suitable media for applying the humor technique and that humor should be avoided in case industrial or sensitive products are being advertised. The findings of the survey, also, suggested that humor would better be related to the product being advertised.

The advertising practitioners, further, pointed out some of the difficulties arising from the use of humorous techniques, such as the risk of a humorous ad, the challenge of the creativity part, and the negative effect of repetition which is more intense and is attained faster when compared to serious advertisements.

Measuring advertising effectiveness

Many more studies, as well as literature reviews (such as Weinberger and Gulas' review in 1992) followed; all trying to provide fruitful guidelines regarding the effects of humor on elements that are, generally, related to the effectiveness of an advertisement, as well on secondary factors that could affect the ultimate result.

The most significant and most frequently measured indicators of advertising effectiveness are attitude toward the advertisement (Aad), attitude toward the brand (Ab) and purchase intention (PI). Attention, recall (memory, or recognition), comprehension, and source credibility are other important indicators, often, measured. These elements are studied in almost any advertising research.

Some of these indicators are independent from others; whereas most of them can both affect and be affected by each other, making findings not only harder to obtain but also hard to be properly analyzed. In addition to this challenge, there are a lot of factors that influence or play a mediating role to the overall effectiveness, such as, most importantly, the audience and the product category. In the case of humor advertising research other significant factors, such as humor type used, or humor relevancy are, also, examined.

Attention

Attention is considered to be one of the most significant indicators of advertising effectiveness. Its significance to sales and marketing was pointed out as early as almost a century ago; attention was the first step of the AIDA (Attention - Interest - Desire - Action) model, attributed to Strong, in 1925 (cited in Barry and Howard, 1990). When an advertising practitioner aims at gaining attention (or awareness- as it is cited in some papers) applying the humor technique to a campaign is a choice that can definitely guarantee success. Attention is the only advertising goal for which there is a

humor literature consensus: humor enhances attention (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Madden and Weinberger, 1982; Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Weinberger and Campbell, 1992; Cline and Kellaris, 2007; Eisend, 2009), while positively influencing affect (Cline and Kellaris, 2007; Eisend, 2009). In addition, as it is not related or mediated by other factors, attention is one of the easiest advertising factors to measure, this, possibly, being the main reason of the findings' consensus.

Comprehension

A humorous advertisement will, certainly, grab viewers' attention, but will the message of the advertisement be accurately interpreted by them? The answer, is, that, probably, this will not be the case. The majority of humor studies shows that humor does not assist, and that it might, even, harm, message comprehension (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Kaplan and Pascoe, 1977; Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Duncan and Nelson, 1985). Only one study found that humor can, in fact, aid message comprehension; a study that, as mentioned by its authors, in contrast to the rest of the studies, examined the effects of "perceived" rather than "manipulated" humor (Duncan, Nelson and Frontczak, 1984).

Source Credibility

The credibility of the source is, yet, another factor, for which studies' results are mixed, with some supporting that humor enhances source credibility (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Belch G.E. and Belch M.A., 1984), and others claiming the exact opposite (Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Eisend, 2009). In 1981, Sutherland reviewed the 14-year existing literature to find that, by that time, there were seven studies concluding that humor has a positive impact on source credibility, three concluding the opposite, and four concluding that humor is an insignificant factor, as far as source credibility is concerned. The results of his own study indicated that serious advertisements are perceived as more credible by the viewers.

Attitude towards the advertisement and the brand

A humorous advertisement's message may not be well understood by the viewers, who may have second thoughts of whether or not the advertiser (the source) is trustworthy. But both message comprehension and source credibility are, elements, mainly, related to "thinking" rather than "feeling", whereas emotions, or affective responses, are, in fact, an equally significant factor of advertising effectiveness (Ray and Batra, 1983; Holbrook and Batra, 1987). Affective responses can

influence, important effectiveness measurement elements, such as Attitude Towards the Ad (Aad) and Attitude Towards the Brand (Ab) (Eisend, 2011), elements that may, in turn, influence purchase intention (PI) (Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Lutz, MacKenzie and Belch, 1983; Duncan and Nelson; 1985).

Despite the fact that Aad, is susceptible to many factors, such as the ad's stimuli, the audience (Eisend, 2009), the audience's perceptions of advertising, and others (Lutz, McKenzie and Belch, 1983), it is generally considered an element, positively, affected by the use of humor (Gelb and Pickett, 1983; Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A., 1984; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Costley and Graby, 1995; Zhang, 1996; Pornpitakpan and Tan, 2000; Alden, Makherjee and Hoyer, 2000; Zhang and Zinkhan, 2006; Eisend, 2009).

As far as research on attitude towards the brand is concerned, according to some authors, humor can, directly, enhance Ab (Pornpitakpan and Tan, 2000; Eisend, 2009), whereas most of the researches have shown that humor enhances Ab, indirectly, through a positive Aad (Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981; Lutz, McKenzie and Belch, 1983; Gardner, 1985; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Geuens and De Pelsmacker, 1998; Janssens and De Pelsmacker, 2005; Zhang and Zinkhan; 2006), especially, when consumers are unfamiliar with the brand (Chung and Zhao, 2003). However, according to Chattopadhyay and Basu (1990), humor, positively, enhances Ab only if customers have a prior -to the advertisement- positive Ab. In case the prior- to the advertisement- brand evaluation is negative, humor will, on the contrary, harm Ab.

Purchase intention

Predictions of humor's influence on Aad and Ab are very important to advertising practitioners, and they can function as a very useful guideline to the potential choice of a humorous advertising campaign. Nevertheless, there is an indicator that is even more significant to those discussed above, that of purchase intention (PI). PI is the action that defines what is, nearly always, the most crucial advertising goal, which is, of course, profit. Most of the studies looking at humor's impact on Aad and Ab have, also, studied PI, with the results not being, particularly, encouraging. Only a few studies have shown a positive correlation between humor and PI (Perry, et al., 1997; Eisend, 2009), while most literature supports that humor has not a direct impact on purchase intention (Gelb and Pickett, 1983; Belch G.E. and Belch M.A., 1984; Duncan, Nelson and Frontczak, 1984; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Zhang and Zinkhan, 2006). However, many studies support that, humor may have an indirect impact on PI, as PI can be affected by the attitude towards the advertisement (Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Duncan and Nelson, 1985), the attitude towards the brand (Nelson, 1987; De

Pelsmacker and Geuens, 1998) or by both of them (Pornpitakpan and Tan, 2000). Thus, Aad and Ab have an even more principal role in advertising effectiveness than already discussed; by functioning as mediators, they can help increase purchase intention leading to the “sacred” marketing goal of product selection.

Memory and recall

Advertising memory and recall is another field widely examined in advertising humor studies. The results are, again, quite, contradictory. Some studies support that humor has a positive effect on ad or brand recall (Kaplan and Pascoe, 1977; Duncan, Nelson and Frontczak, 1984; Zhang and Zinkhan, 1991; Perry, et al., 1997; Hansen, et al., 2009), others support that it has little (Sutherland, 1981), or no effect (Duncan and Nelson, 1985), at all, whereas according to Gelb and Zinkhan (1986), humor has a negative effect on recall. Sutherland’s literature review, in 1981, revealed that of the 16 studies, conducted from 1961-1981, only three showed a positive relation between humor and ad recall. Of the rest, nine supported that humorous ads have the same impact on recall as that of serious ads, while four of them suggested a negative effect of humor on recall.

Many authors attribute the effect of humor on recall to specific factors, such as the program context, the humor relevancy or the level of humor. Thus, a humorous advertisement has less effect on recall when it is broadcasted during a humorous program (Perry, et al., 1997; Furnham, Gunter and Walsh, 1998), humor relevancy increases recall (Krishnan and Chakravarti, 2003), while higher levels of humor lead to significantly higher recall levels (Perry, et al., 1997). When humor is not highly related to the ad, humor affects recall through a U-shaped model (Krishnan and Chakravarti, 2003).

Recognition is a memory trait that is, usually, used in order to examine humor’s impact on purchase intention (Berg and Lippman 1997, cited in Berg and Lipmann, 2001). Studies have shown that there is no correlation between humor and recognition (Berg and Lippman, 2001; Krishnan and Chakravarti, 2003), although humorous ads enhance the connection between products and brands (Berg and Lippman, 2001).

Humor’s negative relation to memory and recall can be attributed to the “wear-out” effect, according to which when an ad is broadcasted repeatedly its performance is harmed (Zinkhan and Gelb, 1990). The wear-out effect is more intense in the case of humorous advertising (Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A.1984; Gelb and Zinkhan, 1985; Zinkhan and Gelb, 1990). The phenomenon’s negative results can be mediated when advertisements are watched by more than one person, since laughter holds the special property of being able to be transmitted to an entire group (Zinkhan and Gelb, 1990; Zhang

and Zinkhan, 1991). It can, also, be avoided through varied operations of a humorous campaign (Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A., 1984; Gelb and Zinkhan, 1985).

Humor and product categories

FCB (Food, Cone and Belding) matrix is a product categorization that was created by Vaughn (1980) as a useful tool in strategy planning (cited in Weinberger, et al., 1995). The FCB matrix places products into categories according to two dimensions; that of risk and that of cognitive/affective reactions. Consequently, there are four categories in one of which a product can fall into: the high risk – cognitive (thinking) category, the low risk- affective (feeling) category, the high risk - affective (feeling) category and the low risk- cognitive (thinking) one. Each category has a different link to consumer's persuasion and this is the basis and the usefulness of the product classification in the FCB matrix (Cochran and Quester, 2004).

Product classification was found to be a very beneficial tool to advertising effectiveness. In 1995, Weinberger, et al., surveyed the use of humor in different media (TV, radio, print media) and tried to make some conclusions regarding ad effectiveness, taking into account the category a product falls into and humor relatedness to the product. They used the PCM (Product Color Matrix), a matrix based on the FCB and that was originally created by Weinberger, Campbell, and Brody in 1994 (cited in Weinberger, et al., 1995, p.20). The PCM classifies the products into four categories considering risk level and the consumer's objective, while naming each product category to a specific color. PCM's product categories are the following: White-high risk/functional tools, Red - high risk/expressive toys, Blue - low risk/functional tools and Yellow - low risk /expressive toys. The main findings of the survey were that humor should be better related to the product regardless of the product category and that (yellow) low risk products are the most suitable to humor advertising. Humor may be better avoided when the product being advertised falls into the high risk categories.

These findings are, in fact, similar to, almost, every research studying humor and product classification. Advertisers should choose humorous campaigns when the advertising product falls into the yellow / low risk/ low involvement categories and avoid it when it comes to high risk / high involvement, blue and red goods (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; Weinberger and Campbell, 1992; Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Chung and Zhao, 2003; Flaherty, Weinberger and Gulas, 2004; Zhang and Zinkhan, 2006). Indeed, Chung and Zhao attribute the humorous advertising's effectiveness on low involvement products to the peripheral cue to persuasion under Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (Chung and Zhao, 2003).

Humor and audience

According to Lynch (2002), humor is a message that, regardless of the transmitter's intention, is interpreted as funny. An advertisement is, clearly, a message transmitted from a source (marketer/advertiser) to a recipient (audience/target audience), and as is the case for all messages, the result of the message is affected both by the source, that creates and transmits the message, as well as by the recipient who interprets the message in a certain way. Humorous advertisements are, therefore, humorous messages the communication effects of which are substantially affected by the audience (recipient) they are addressed to.

The importance of the audience as a defining factor of advertising effectiveness has been underlined by many authors examining humorous advertising (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Speck, 1991; Buijen and Valkenburg, 2004). An advertisement may be considered humorous by its creators, but it is the audience's interpretation of the advertisement's humorousness that matters; the perceived (by the audience) humor. Humor perception is a factor that has been found to be more significant than others, such as humor type or product classification. In fact, if an advertisement intended to be humorous is not perceived as such, the communication effects will differ from those expected (Smith, 1993), while the creators of the ad will face a high risk of failed humor, which provokes, notably, negative results (Flaherty, Weinberger and Gulas, 2004). Almost every humor type can lead to failed humor but the risk of, actually, offending the audience is higher when the humor type used in the advertisement is that of negatively, aggressive, arousal-safety type (Beard, 2008).

Humor perception and preferences are, extremely, important to humorous advertising attempts. These kind of perceptions and preferences are defined by a variety of audience's characteristics, such as gender, age, generation, ethnicity, culture, education level (Whipple and Courtney, 1981; Madden and Weinberger, 1982; Speck, 1991; Veatch, 1998; Shammi and Stuss, 2003; Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004), or even more personal characteristics and traits, such as need for humor (NFH) (Cline, Altsech and Kellaris, 2003; Cline and Kellaris, 2007), need for cognition (NFC) (Cacioppo and Petty, 1982; Zhang, 1996; De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 2002; Cline, Altsech and Kellaris, 2003), self – monitoring (Lammers, 1991), affect intensity (Geuens and De Palsmacker, 1999), or sensation seeking (Galloway, 2009).

According to Cantor, “affective dispositions” are a determining way of predicting an audience's reaction to a humorous message (Cantor, 1976), whereas, according to Costley, Koslow and Galloway (2002), an audience's humorous responses cannot be predicted, as they are influenced by multiple personal factors.

Gender and age are the most common factors on which marketers and advertisers rely their classifications into audience segments and target groups, within a society. These factors are characterized by distinct traits that make the segmentation both easy and useful; humor preferences being one of those. Veatch argues that age influences humor perceptions due to the different principles and morality characteristics that are related to each aging group (Veatch, 1998), while according to Shammi and Stuss (2003) different effects of humor on aging groups are based only on the cognitive, and not the affective, responses of the groups.

It is considered common knowledge that men and women react differently to the messages they receive. Males and females do have different response to humorous messages and advertisements (Futch and Edwards, 1999). Although, both men and women are in favor of humorous advertising (Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015; Eisend, 2007, cited in Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015), it is, actually, the types of humor and humorous executions that are responsible for the distinguished gender effects. Men seem to enjoy irony, slapstick (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004), disparagement (Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015), satire humor (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004; Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015), word play, ethnic and racial jokes (Madden and Weinberger, 1982) more than women, while arousal-safety type of humor and sentimental comedy seem to be more suited to females (Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015). Comic wit and incongruity types have been found to work equally for both genders (Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015).

According to Berger (1987), sexual humor is the only way women can accept sexual and aggressive expressions. However, whereas, there are studies supporting that men are in favor of sexual humor, more than women (Madden and Weinberger, 1982; Perry, et al., 1997), Whipple and Courtney (1981) argue that women, too, enjoy sexual humor, as long as it is not interpreted as sexist. As far as violent humor is concerned, lower intensity violent humor is favored by both genders (Swani, Weinberger and Gulas, 2013; Yoon and Kim, 2014), especially when the victim is not a female (Whipple and Courtney, 1981).

Gender and age are characteristics that are, genuinely, helpful in dividing audiences, with the aim of predicting their responses and purchase decisions. However, the existence of individuals of different personal traits inside an audience segment makes it impossible for a whole segment to have the same reactions to responses. Need for cognition and need for humor are representative examples of personal traits that make predictions to humorous responses quite vague.

Need for cognition is an individual's willingness to carefully examine messages, in order to respond to them (Cacioppo and Petty, 1982, cited in Mayer, 2015; De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 2002), while need for humor describes "a person's tendency to generate and seek out humor" (Cline, Altsech and Kellaris, 2003). Although, according to some studies, both low and high NFC individuals may find a humorous ad, equally, funny (De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 2002; Mayer, 2015), their responses might be different (Mayer, 2009) and the result of the message may be obtained through different procedures (De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 2002; Mayer, 2015).

An individual's level of NFH increases the chances of a humorous ad to achieve greater effectiveness, since NFH is found to have a positive impact on both recall (Cline and Kellaris, 2007) and attitude towards a humorous advertisement (Cline, Altsech and Kellaris, 2003). On the contrary, NFC is found to have a completely, negative impact on audiences' reactions to a humorous ad (Zhang, 1996), making NFC and NFH contradicting indicators of predictions.

Humor cross cultural studies

Cross cultural studies are extremely important to marketers as globalization has turned international marketing into a substantial field of the advertising sector. In order for global marketing to be successful, marketers need to take the right decision on the debating issue of standardizing their marketing campaigns or adapting them to different countries' cultures. As humor is closely linked to culture (Berger, 1987), with humor perceptions being, actually, a culture's product, it does not come as a surprise that many researchers have studied humorous advertising inside a cross cultural frame.

In 1989, Weinberger and Spotts conducted a survey in order to compare the use of humor in advertising between the UK and the USA. Some of the most important findings were that humorous advertising was more spread in the UK than in the USA, that humor was more integrated into the ad and more related to the product for humorous advertisements in the UK, that both countries applied humorous techniques for the low involvement product categories, and that the way in which humor was used differed from one country to the other. Twelve years later, Tonkar (2001), conducted a similar survey in order to examine whether the findings differed due to standardization. According to his findings, the percentage of humorous advertisements was equal for both countries, humor integration continued to be more intense for UK ads, and the way in which humor was used continued to be different; leading him to the conclusion that cultural differences require different humorous ad executions.

Many more studies followed, trying to shed a light to the fundamental question of whether humorous advertisements can or should be standardized for different countries, many of which used Hofstede's cultural dimensions' theory (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Hatzithomas, Zotos and Boutsouki, 2011; Kalliny, Cruthirds and Minor, 2006; Lee and Lim, 2008; Hoffmann, et al., 2014). According to Hofstede's theory, cultures can be divided based on, among other criteria, their individualism (versus collectivism), their level of uncertainty avoidance, or their masculine (versus feminine) prevalence (Hofstede, 1991).

Relative studies support that humor types and executions differ between collectivistic and individualistic societies (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Hatzithomas, Zotos and Boutsouki, 2011; Hoffmann, et al., 2014), and their effectiveness depend both on the society's uncertainty-avoidance level (Lee and Lim, 2008) and on the placement of a society's mass culture as masculine or feminine (Hoffmann, et al., 2014). Although there are some advertising elements that can lead to similar communication effects for different cultures, such as basic (versus to social) emotions (Huang, 1998) or the incongruity (and incongruity- resolution) type of humor (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993), most findings have shown that humorous advertising is distinct for different cultures, either, as far as humorous ads' percentage, or as far as communication effects are concerned (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; Biswas, Olsen and Carlet, 1992; Huang, 1998; Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Unger, 1995; De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 1998; Tonkar, 2001; Lee and Lim, 2008; Hatzithomas, Zotos and Boutsouki, 2011). Based on these findings humorous advertising would better not be standardized (Biswas, Olsen and Carlet, 1992), at least not without some alteration (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Koudelova and Whitelock, 2001).

Humor and persuasion

Persuasion is, most often, the ultimate goal of communication. Whether humor, one of the oldest and most prominent communication tools, enhances persuasion is a subject that has engaged a great number of researchers in communication fields, over the years. To advertisers persuasion is equal to achieving significant communication goals, from brand awareness to increased sales.

For the majority of humor studies, the effect of humor in persuasion is linked to the "distraction hypothesis". According to "distraction hypothesis", humor functions as a distracter to counter argumentation, thus the message is easier accepted by the audience; the more, initially, opposed to the message, the more persuaded the audience will be (Markiewicz, 1972; Petty, Wells and Brock, 1976). Although there are studies that have found that humor increases persuasion through the distraction hypothesis theory (Festinger and Maccoby, 1964; Zhang and Zinkhan, 1991; Cline and

Kellaris, 1999), others support that the result is defined by the relevancy of the distracter (Buller, 1986), while others suggest that humor does increase persuasion but through other mechanisms rather than that of the distraction hypothesis' (Eisend, 2009). On the other hand, there are studies according to which humor does not influence persuasion at all (Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A., 1994), while, according to Markiewicz (1974) humor reduces rather than enhances message persuasion.

In 1986, Petty and Cacioppo introduced the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), in order to explain why humor, when functioning as a distracter, can lead either to increased or to reduced persuasion. According to the ELM, there are two routes that can lead to persuasion, the central route that is more cognitive and the peripheral route, which is a less cognitive one. Recipients of a persuasive message can use either route; the choice of the route will define the levels of persuasion. The lack of evidence of how the procedure of persuasion, exactly, works leads to the uncertainty about the efficiency of humor as a persuasive communication tool. For the advertising sector it is translated to inefficient results concerning the effects of humor on purchase intention.

Humor and public service advertising (PSA)

Whether humor increases persuasion or not, is a particularly significant question when it comes to public service advertising, where the advertising goal concerns health or safety. In order to increase persuasion, public advertisements often combine humor with threat, as both elements are thought to be persuasive. According to relevant literature, there are many factors that define whether combining humor with threat, in this kind of advertisements is efficient; need for cognition (NFC) – “an individual’s tendency to engage in effortful and challenging information processing” (Cacioppo, 1982, p.116, cited in Yoon and Mayer, 2014, p.728)- and individual involvement being the most significant ones.

According to Yoon and Mayer (2014), humor can enhance persuasion for low NFC individuals in case the advertisement includes a high level of threat (the opposite effect occurring for high NFC individuals), while according to Yoon and Tinkham (2013), humor can enhance persuasion for low involvement individuals in case the advertisement includes a high level of threat (the opposite effect occurring for high involvement individuals). Consequently, the results depend on audiences’ personal characteristics, making predictions, especially, challenging. Researches that do not take into account specific personal traits come to, even, more ambiguous results. Some studies support that the use of humor with negative appeals can, indeed, enhance persuasion (Voss, 2009), others have concluded that humorous messages are not more persuasive than non-humorous ones (Brooker, 1981), while others support that including humor into a threatening ad, *ceteris paribus*, will not have an impact on the ultimate result (Yoon, 2015).

Humor advertising research and counter-arguing findings

It does not come as a surprise that many of the findings on advertising effectiveness are, sometimes, ambiguous or contradictory, as advertising effectiveness is closely connected to consumer behavior, which is ambiguous itself. There are many theories revolving around the methods through which consumers make their final decisions, like behavioral learning theories, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, cognitive response approaches, and hierarchy of effects models, to name a few (Belch, G.E. and Belch M.A., 2003). Hierarchy of effects models (HOE), for instance, support the assumption that consumers go through cognitive, affective and conative stages, in order to make a final decision (Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008). According to many of the traditional HOE models, such as the one presented by Lavdige and Steiner in 1961 (AIDA), or the one presented in 1968 by McGuire, message effects have a specific order which is cognition, affection and, ultimately, intention (Smith, Chen and Yang, 2008). However, later in literature, several models which supported different sequences of effects emerged, such as the affect-cognition-conation, the affect-conation-cognition or the conation-cognition-affect one (Barry and Howard, 1990). The acceptance and implementation of different HOE models by humor advertising authors could be a possible explanation for their counter arguing findings, the same way their different views on cognition and affective mechanisms can lead them to contrasting results.

Cognition and affective mechanisms or responses are the basis of consumer behavior theories. Attention and comprehension are believed to be related to cognition, while Aad and Ab are believed to be related to affection (Chung and Zhao, 2004). Both, cognition and affection are significant to effectiveness, and while some authors support that, that when it comes to emotional, such as humorous, advertising affection is a more important indicator than cognition (Janssens and De Pelsmacker, 2005; Eisend, 2009), according to most studies cognition and affective processes function simultaneously (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1984; Janssens and De Pelsmacker, 2005; Eisend, 2011), thus they should not be seen as conflicting procedures (Kim, Jeen-Su and Bhargava, 1998).

Other reasons on which discrepancies or inconsistencies of advertising humor research lie, are the analysis under different measures (Scott, Klein and Bryant, 1990), the use of sample groups that may not be the most representative ones (Whipple and Courtney, 1981), or the fact that some studies examine the effects of manipulated humor while others examine the results of perceived humor (Scott, Klein and Bryant, 1990).

In addition, the fact that there are many indicators of measuring humor's effectiveness makes it impossible for a study to include all of them. Researchers should, at least, try to include as many

factors as possible in their studies, in order to obtain more enlightening results (Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997). An extensive humor research would better examine both the communication (e.g. persuasion) and situational factors (e.g. products) that influence the outcome of the message (Madden and Weinberger, 1984). Most importantly, since humor advertising studies have the potential to function as useful guides for marketing, it would be quite useful if researchers account for differences between target segments while trying to examine certain communication goals (Duncan, Nelson and Frontczak, 1984). After all, since humorous messages are often the most popular and most memorable of all advertising messages (Belch, G.E. and Belch, M.A., 2003), adopting humor advertising studies to marketing goals is worth the challenges arising.

Super Bowl Advertising

A championship game named “Super Bowl”

Super Bowl’s history begins in the late 60’s when NFL and AFL decided to create a championship game between the winner of the American Football Conference (AFC) and the winner of the National Football Conference (NFC) (Earnhardt, 2011). Super Bowl is more than just another sports game. Having been broadcasted every year since 1967, it is considered to be one of the most important American television shows (Schimmel, 2011), and the most expected and discussed one. As a matter of fact the Super Bowl event is not important only to Americans. The fame and significance of the event has, for years, surpassed the geographical limits of the American territory. Already in 1999, Super Bowl was broadcasted in 188 countries. (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001).

Being, beyond the shadow of a doubt, one of the greatest events for the American country as a whole, the Super Bowl’s significance is even bigger for the states and cities that host it. The selection of the host cities does not follow the normal procedure of other sport games in which teams participating in the contest is the determinant factor of the selection. Host cities win the contest after a competitive bidding process (Schimmel, 2011), while the selection is, usually, completed five years before the actual game (Earnhardt, 2011). The issue of Super Bowl’s social responsibility is handled with great seriousness, by the NFL (Babiak and Wolfe, 2006). The city that is, eventually, selected to host the game benefits from its popularity, and its local businesses, especially the ones belonging to the touristic sector, enjoy great financial gains (Smith, A.D. and Smith, A.A., 2008). However, there

are authors arguing that, after a more meticulous and detailed analysis, the financial impacts of the contest on the host city are not of that great a scale (Matheson, 2006).

Although, the host city has more reasons than the others to celebrate the event, the Super Bowl broadcasting is a party for the whole country. Super Bowl is one of the most eminent elements of the American popular culture. After being broadcasted for more than half a century it is considered to be an integral and vital part of the American history. The event is linked to fundamental values and institutions of the American society; it is linked to the concepts of patriotism, nationalism and democracy (Butterworth, 2008), while the NFL preserves a close affiliation with the military service (Schimmel, 2011). The advertisements aired during an event with such gravity could not be anything other than original expressions of the American society's culture.

Super Bowl as an advertising vehicle

The commercial campaigns airing during the Super Bowl are so significant that are, usually, broadcasted for a long period after the game, while they are spread to other media, as well (Kim, McMillan and Hwang, 2005). The advertising part of the game is considered as “must watch” television (Kelley and Turley, 2004), many times overshadowing the actual game and transforming advertising into a “sanctioned form of entertainment” (Mc Allister, 1999).

According to Horovitz, in 2003, 14% of the Super Bowl viewers watched the game only for the commercials, while a Nielson study, in 2010, revealed that more than half of the viewers (51%) enjoy the commercials more than the actual game. Taking these numbers into account, it is more than reasonable that advertisers spend, annually, millions of dollars for the development and production of their Super Bowl commercials (Siefert, et al., 2009).

The Super Bowl is, without doubt, the “marketing event” of the year (Taylor, 2016), But this was not always the case. The whole idea of Super Bowl advertising changed in 1984, when the Orwellian themed “1984” ad for the Apple Macintosh – one of the most successful advertisements of all times – was first aired (Gulas and Weinberger, 2006). After the game, Macintosh saw a 44% sales increase, compared to original predictions (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001). This unexpected fact transformed the way Super Bowl advertising was seen. “1984” not only enhanced the value of Super Bowl as a means of advertising (Gulas and Weinberger, 2006), but it also led to a consistent belief that Super Bowl advertising is, indeed, efficient for launching new products or advertising campaigns (Newell and Henderson, 1998; 2001; McAllister, 1999; Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, Tomkovick and Traczyk, 2004; Stengel, 2016). The advertising revolution which Apple's commercial brought about created an effect that would last for decades to come.

Super Bowl's viewership and advertising costs

The impact of the “1984” success on Super Bowl advertising, unprecedented as it was, consisted of one of the most important reasons why advertising during the game became such a crucial phenomenon for marketers. Super Bowl advertising costs are extremely high, but this cannot be seen as a surprise, since the event provides advertisers with an audience bigger than 100 million viewers (Rapaport, 2017). The biggest increase in advertising rates occurred during the 1990s when the game reached a viewership of more than 120 million viewers for each year of the decade (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians 2001). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the 30-second ad cost rates rose from \$700.000 to \$3 million, an increase over 300% (Yelkur, et al., 2011) and since 2000, advertisers have spent an average of over \$2 million to run 30-second advertisements during Super Bowl games (Yelkur, Tomkovick and Traczyk, 2004). According to Kantar Media, the average rate for a 30-second spot during the big game has increased 75% from 2005 through 2014, (Tadena, 2015) while according to Variety Fox this year the cost rose to somewhere between \$5 and \$5.5 million.

But is the result worth such amount of money? Well, there are arguments that support the opinion that it, actually, is. To start with, the cost of a Super Bowl advertisement may not be as high as it sounds, when compared to viewership. For instance, according to Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians (2001), during the 90's the cost of a 30-second commercial averaged less than \$0,01 per person, when total cost was divided by viewership. In addition, the financial impact the marketers gain, both by network advertising sales (Tadena, 2015) and the enhancement of the brand value of the product (Kim, Freling and Eastman, 2013) is, indeed, huge.

As cited in Tadena (2015), Kantar Media, reported that, from 2005 through 2014, Super Bowl has generated \$2.19 billion of network advertising sales from more than 130 marketers. Super Bowl advertising can raise brand awareness, influence the audience's buying decisions (Woodyard, 2016) and result in millions of new customers (Horovitz, 2003). Letting numbers aside, marketers can benefit from the social conventions of watching the Super Bowl and the increased prestige of advertising during the game (McAllister, 1999), as well. With so many benefits, nowadays' cost of \$5 million per ad is thought to be more than justified. In fact, in 2015, the NBC executive, Seth Winter, argued that the true value of Super Bowl exposure is closer to \$10 million. According to him, this price is based on four components; viewership, social media advertising, other media coverage of the ads and a component comprised of instant increase in brand awareness, company sales and stock prices (Smith, C., 2015).

Super Bowl and ads' Return on Investment (ROI)

One of the most important, if not the most important, goals of advertisers, is, by all means, an increased return on investment (ROI). ROI can show if an investment (e.g. a Super Bowl advertisement) is worth the expense (cost of the advertisement) by comparing it to the results (most often, stock prices). Although, Super Bowl advertising, from an equity position, can be seen, by investors, as an overly expensive rather than an efficient investment (Kim and Morris, 2003), most of the longitudinal studies that examined the stock prices of the companies advertised in Super Bowl have found a significant positive relationship between Super Bowl advertising and the companies' stock returns (Fehle, Tsyplakov and Zdorovtsov, 2005; Yelkur, et al., 2011; Kim, Freling and Eastman, 2013), even regardless of the advertisement's content (Kim and Morris, 2003; Yelkur, et al., 2011). Therefore, as far as ROI is concerned, the world's most expensive vehicle is worth the expense (Kim, Freling and Eastman, 2013).

Super Bowl and advertising recall

With so many advertisements competing for attention, advertisers need to assure that their advertisements will be remembered by the audience. Not surprisingly, Super Bowl advertising has been used as a meaningful advertising sample for studies examining the factors that could have an impact on advertising and brand recall. Most certainly, the presence of other ads significantly reduces brand recall, with its effect being more detrimental to brand recognition (Jeong, Kim and Zhao, 2011). Both length- which is considered to be a contradictory ad likeability factor (see Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011)- and the frequency of an advertisement are found to significantly affect advertising recall (Newell and Henderson, 1998; Newell and Wu, 2003), while as far as ad placement is concerned, the results are contradictory.

According to some studies the advertisements that are broadcasted in the beginning of the program (Newell, Henderson and Wu, 2001) or the ones that are placed first in the pod commercial of the program (Newell and Wu, 2003) are recalled more, while according to others there is no significant difference between ad placement and recall (Newell and Henderson, 1998). According to Lee et al. (2014), it is the creative nature of the advertisement and not its placement that will, actually, define its effectiveness. The impact of pleasure and arousal on advertising recall is, also, put into question with existing studies finding its impact either positive (Newell, Henderson and Wu, 2001) or negative (Pavelchak, Antil and Munch, 1988). Last but not least, humor is found to have a positive impact on advertising recall in case of low product involvement advertisements (Chuck and Zhao, 2003).

Super Bowl ad likeability

ROI, brand awareness and recall are all important goals for marketers and companies. However, in order to achieve these goals, an advertisement needs one determining characteristic; being likeable. And marketers are, well, aware of that. Every year since 1989, the USA Today has used the “ad meter” as a way of evaluating Super Bowl advertising (Gulas and Weinberger, 2006), publishing ad likeability scores for each Super Bowl commercial (Yelkur, et al., 2011). Apart from the “ad meter” scores, there are several surveys and studies by authors, reporters, marketers or companies examining advertising likeability in an effort to discover the recipe of success for Super Bowl advertising.

In 2005, FedEx, one of the leading U.S. companies, defined some items and/or elements of successful Super Bowl advertising, after studying the Super Bowl advertisements of the time. According to FedEx these included: celebrities, animals, children, aggressive humor, sex appeals, product relatedness, famous songs and surprising finales. The next year, Horovitz (2006), after interviewing some of the most experienced and knowledgeable advertising executives, published a list of what he called, “10 rules of Super Bowl ad success”. The items/ elements suggested were: humor, differentiation, visual media, animals and celebrities with human characteristics, catchphrases, integrated marketing (social media), sentiment, diversity without stereotypes and topic relatedness. Almost a decade after, Cheryl Hung (2015) commenting on Fed Ex’s study, in a Flamingo article, indicated that, with the exception of aggressive humor and product information, all the other successful factors remained the same, while Horovitz concluded that the main differences noticed, after ten years from his survey, were that advertisers had shifted to quality humor and to the implementation of the sentiment of nostalgia (Horovitz, 2014).

The results of Super Bowl longitudinal studies have either, further supported or rejected the techniques and elements mentioned in the above articles, while for some of the advertising likeability factors the findings are mixed and lead to contradictory assumptions. Humor, animals and children, celebrities, sexual appeals, product information or category seem to be the elements and tactics that mostly concern both the authors of longitudinal studies and the authors commenting on the tendencies of Super Bowl advertising. A literature and survey review concerning the use of these elements in Super Bowl advertising could shed some light on the success and failure factors of advertising during the most significant American TV show.

Humor

Humor is, undoubtedly, the element of success for Super Bowl advertising. Although it does not necessarily boost an advertisement’s effectiveness (Taylor, 2016), it has been found to be the most

powerful predictor of ad likeability for over two decades (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011). Humor is the only element that has been used in more than half of the broadcasted advertisements, reaching a percentage of 66% of all ads aired (Kelley and Turley, 2004). Studies have, also, shown that it has a significant impact on both affect (Kelley and Turley, 2004), and on memory and attitude – especially when it is used for advertising low-involvement products (Chuck and Zhao, 2003).

As one of the most entertaining TV shows, Super Bowl is supposed to create a celebrating attitude and the advertising part needs to contribute to this; therefore advertisements need to be funny (Horovitz, 2006). Super Bowl advertising, has, for a long time, been associated with humor, while multiple studies, have shown that the event's audience has a tendency to like more advertisements that are funny. There seem to be no reasons why marketers would not include the element of humor in their Super Bowl advertising campaigns (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001).

Animals and children

Using an animal seems to be the second most used and successful strategy in Super Bowl advertising. “Animal” advertisements are, usually, more likeable than others (Taylor, 2016), especially when they are humorous (Lancendorfer, Atkin and Reece, 2008). When the animals featured in the advertisement are dogs (Taylor, 2016), or when they have human characteristics (Horovitz, 2003), the chances of likeability, are, significantly, increased. The percentage of advertisements featuring animals remained at a steady 25%, with one in five of Super Bowl advertisements being an “animal” one, during the 1993-2003 decade (Horovitz, 2003) and it, even, reached 29,3% during the period from 1996 to 2002 (Kelley and Turley, 2004). Being one of the most significant likeability factors for over a 20-year period (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011), animals can, certainly, increase the possibility of Super Bowl advertising success.

Consistent with Super Bowl advertising surveys, longitudinal studies have found that children is, also, one of the most important likeability factors of Super Bowl advertising (Yelkur, et al., 2011). Although there is not a significant relationship between children and effect (Kelley and Turley, 2004), the use of kids in ads can sell products (Yelkur, et al., 2011) and this must be the main reason why they are used at a percentage as high as that of 19, 3% of the total Super Bowl ads (Kelley and Turley, 2004).

Product categories

As far as product category is concerned, there is a unanimous agreement, based on longitudinal studies' findings, that advertisements of low-involvement products are more likeable than those that advertise high-involvement products (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011; Kim and Cheong,2011); a finding which is consistent with humor literature, as well. Product information, on the other hand, seems to be inversely related to likeability – the less information an advertisement includes, the more likeable it is- (Yelkur, et al., 2011), which is in agreement with the idea that, generally, the Super Bowl is an entertaining program and not a program watched for serious information (Kelly and Turley, 2004).

Celebrities

Although marketers might believe that featuring celebrities in their advertisements could be a successful strategy, mostly because celebrities have many Twitter followers and can, therefore, help increase an advertisement's social media traffic (Woodyard, 2016), celebrity ads do not guarantee success (Taylor, 2016). In fact, celebrities have not been found to have a significant impact on ad likeability in longitudinal studies that examined the likeability of Super Bowl advertisements during the decades of both the 90s and the 2000s (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011). This, of course, does not mean that a celebrity ad could never lead to likeability. Some of the tactics that advertisers could use, when including celebrities into their advertising campaigns, are showing the human side of the celebrities (Horovitz, 2003), or integrate the celebrities into the message strategy of the campaign (Taylor, 2016).

Despite of the fact that celebrities may not be a guarantee of success for Super Bowl advertising, Super Bowl advertising seems to be a guarantee of success for Hollywood movies, as advertising during the Super Bowl can lead to 36% more revenue for a Hollywood movie (Yelkur, Tomkovick and Traczyk, 2004). This increased revenue impact applies mostly to movies that have a budget that is more than \$13 million. For movies with this scale of budget, advertising during the Super Bowl is more effective than regular television promotion (Ho, Dhar and Weinberg, 2009).

Sexual appeals

Even though, the percentage of women watching the Super Bowl has seen an incredible increase, with women audience jumping to 38,7% in 2008 (Nielsen, 2009), Super Bowl is still considered, by advertisers, as an event addressed, mostly, to a male audience (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016). Advertisements that depict women as sexual objects, although becoming more rare (Taylor,

2016), are still used in Super Bowl campaigns, especially for marketing products such as liquids and beers (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005). Apart from the fact that this technique can, effectively, be applied only to a limited number of product categories (Taylor, 2016) it would better, generally, be avoided since, according to longitudinal studies, sexual appeals are not linked to likeability, while they can negatively influence audience's perceptions (Yelkur, et al., 2011).

Other tactics

As Super Bowl is an entertaining, emotional-provoking event, addressed to a diverse audience, marketers can create campaigns of verified tactics. Super Bowl is addressed to the American people; and the American people seem to enjoy advertisements that are linked to sentiments, such as effect (Kelley and Turley, 2004) or nostalgia (Horovitz, 2014), as well as campaigns that are linked to American history and popular culture (Taylor, 2016). Advertisements that follow a cinematic, dramatic form, seems to be the new Super Bowl advertising trend (Kelley and Turley 2004; Horovitz, 2014; Quesenberry and Coolsen, 2014).

Though, cultural issues, such as diversity, are difficult to handle, in the frame of Super Bowl advertising (Horovitz, 2006), there are many companies that surpass the obstacles and take the risk so as to use their advertising campaigns as vehicles of promoting their values. For instance, the latest Super Bowl event was characterized by high attention to advertisements dealing with issues such as diversity, multiculturalism, inclusion and immigration, with many comments and debates taking place, especially through social media, in a time when the American people are politically divided (Godoy, 2017; Schultz, 2017; Boren, 2017; Maheshwari, 2017; Belson, 2017). This, surely, does not come as a surprise, since, as stated (or, maybe, more correctly, predicted) by Real, many years ago, "The Super Bowl is a communal celebration of and indoctrination into specific socially dominant emotions, life styles, and values and is seen as a "propaganda" vehicle strengthening and developing the larger social structure (Real, 1975, p.42).

Super Bowl's social media buzz

When Super Bowl was aired, for the first time, in 1967, advertising was not, yet, an important part of the event. A new era began in 1984, with Apple's advertisement, and for more than 25 years the advertisements that aired during the game became an integrated part of the overall success of the Super Bowl event. But, as times change, needs might change and as technology advances, success factors might change, as well. Nowadays, social communication is a crucial factor of advertizing success. Communication through social media is more effective, in influencing consumers' willingness to purchase a product, than exposure to advertising alone (Siefert, et al., 2009).

Social media has, certainly, altered the needs and goals of advertisers (Nielsen, 2017), and together with pressure for ROI has brought about another revolution to the existing marketing strategies of the Super Bowl game. Historically, and being influenced by the most successful Super Bowl advertisement of all times, companies used to keep their advertisements in secret, hoping that the element of surprise would boost the advertisements' effectiveness. Nowadays, nevertheless, both the pressure of ROI and the social media revolution have converted this approach to an obsolete one; advertisers are guided to an aggressive, early promotion of their advertisements as the mainstream tactic (Nail, 2007).

In order to achieve high returns on investments, marketers need not only a wide audience, but pregame media chatter and postgame buzz among consumers, as well (Siefert, et al., 2009). As it is quite risky, for an advertiser, to announce a campaign during the game, as other unpredictable events could come up and compete to the generation of social media buzz (Nail, 2007), some advertisers are announcing their campaigns, even, five months before the actual game (Horovitz, 2013). Studies have shown that advertisements that are exposed before the game lead to 2.2 times more views than those which are released during the game (Woodyard, 2016) and that pre-advertising publicity about an ad campaign enhances advertisement recall (Jin, 2004). Nevertheless, with the volume of advertisements exposed months before the game and the lack of the surprising factor for all of them, the pre-releasing strategy may not be as effective (Taylor, 2016).

Some of the keys to social media success are the ability of an ad to emotionally engage the consumers (Siefert, et al., 2009) or to leave them processing a controversial message (Lee, et al., 2014). Twitter is one of today's most used means of communication and, as a consequence, its activity has become a significant way of measuring the effectiveness of an advertisement or an advertising campaign. According to Nielsen, the advertisements that generate a great volume of Twitter activity are the ones that are more effortless to watch in the beginning, engage the viewer emotionally early on, end with a strong memory association and generate more smiles (Nielsen, 2017). These success factors seem to be well known and understood by marketers and companies that broadcast their advertisements during the Super Bowl.

According to Nielsen, during the "Super Bowl 50", in 2016, from the 16.9 million Super Bowl Tweets that were sent, 4.6 million were about the advertisements that were aired during the game (Nielsen, 2016). There are relative studies that show that Twitter message volume and sentiment pertaining to Super Bowl ads are positively correlated with ad likeability ratings (Oh, Sasser and Almahmoud, 2015), while Top-Tweeted ads are the ones that are more likely to be both recalled and associated with the advertising brand (Nielsen, 2017). In addition, the more media buzz an

advertisement generates, after the game, the more effective it is considered to be (Siefert, et al., 2009). Regardless of the keys to a successful online activity, advertisers should, always, remember not to focus on just one advertising media but rather to create a message strategy and integrate this strategy across all media (Kim, McMillan and Hwang, 2005). Therefore, an integrated marketing strategy that includes both broadcasting during the Super Bowl event and social media promotion seems a quite promising marketing choice.

TV humorous advertising and the society: filling a gap

The numerous studies regarding humor in advertising that have been conducted through the last decades can certainly, when examined properly, lead to the right choice of a campaign. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of studies taking into account the factor of the society. Although there is a significant and strong relationship between advertising and society (Pollay, 1985) and even though humor is a social function (Bergson, 1911; Meyer, 2000; Lynch, 2002; Martin, 2007), the existence of studies examining the relationship between humorous advertising and society seems to be limited.

As emerging from Beard's (2005) longitudinal study, the use of humorous advertising is affected by the society in the frame of which the advertisements are created and promoted. Types of humor are, also, closely related to a society, as it is revealed by the many cross cultural studies that have been conducted (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; Biswas, Olsen and Carlet, 1992; Huang, 1998; Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Unger, 1995; De Pelsmacker and Geuens, 1998; Tonkar, 2001; Lee and Lim, 2008; Hatzithomas, Zotos and Boutsouki, 2011), many of them supporting that humor advertising cannot be promoted to societies of distinct characteristics without prior adjustments (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993; Koudelova and Whitelock, 2001). The many studies of humor typologies shed a light to the different types of humor and offer useful information about its use. Nevertheless, types of humor are not analyzed on the basis of societal change.

In 2015, Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger M.F. conducted the first longitudinal content analysis of humorous advertising examining the evolution of humor and humor types (styles), while commenting on the relationship between society and the use of humor in advertising, as well as the relationship between the societal transformations and the humor types used. Their study examined an outdoor sample of actual billboard advertisements for a 100-year period.

Since the 70's the emergence of the television, as a means of mass culture, started transforming the way people were informed and entertained; it changed communications, the same way social media is changing our world nowadays. Nonetheless, there are no longitudinal studies of actual TV

advertisements that account for humorous advertising and societal changes. This study, taking into advantage, not only the significance of Super Bowl as a TV show and cultural event, but also the longitudinal sample of actual advertisements it provides, tries to fill this literature gap; through a content analysis of Super Bowl advertisements, for more than 40 years, in an effort to reach some useful conclusions about the relationship between the evolution of humor and humor styles and the societal transformations occurring during the referring period. Whether the percentage of humor in advertising remained stable, increased or decreased and what factors influenced its evolution is the first question this study tries to address. The second research question concerns the changes regarding the humor styles used and the relationship between the changes in humor styles and the changes the society went through.

Data source and methods

The present study follows the structure of that of Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s one (2015). In order for the results to be easily compared, the study adopted the same methodology; that of combining a content – analysis of actual advertisements and a historical analysis in order to comment on the results (Belk and Pollay, 1985; Smith and Lux, 1993, cited in Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015, p.3). The historical analysis was based on secondary sources.

Content – analysis has been recognized as a valuable methodology in examining consumer behavior (Kassarjian, 1977; Kolbe and Burnett, 1991). It is a method that allows the systematic analysis of large samples (GAO, 1996, cited in Stemler, 2001), while focusing on the message and not the messenger (Kassarjian, 1977). Furthermore, it is considered as an appropriate tool for examining TV advertisements (Mulvey and Stern, 2004).

The Super Bowl advertisements' sample, was obtained from Adland (Adland, 2014) and was content-analyzed for five time periods; 1969-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2014. From the 2453 ads obtained from Adland, 1586 ads, that were broadcasted on a national level, were analyzed. The content – analysis of these 1586 ads was based on Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s (2015) analysis. The humorous advertisements were classified into the five following humor styles: 'wordplay', 'warmth/sentimental', 'nonsense', 'aggression' and 'sexual'. These five humor styles were retrieved from McCullough and Taylor (1993, cited in Weinberger, Gulas and Weinberger, 2015, p.4). The sample ads were, also, examined in terms of containing some of the following elements: vulgarity, stereotyping, comic/cartoon characters, children and animals. As in Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s study (2015), each ad could be coded into multiple style and element categories.

Weinberger M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.’s descriptions of humor types (styles) and elements (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas, Weinberger, M.F., Appendix 1, p.26) was provided, along with many other sources, to the coders of the study as a means of training. Humor types’ and elements’ descriptions are provided in this study through the explanatory table that follows, and which is taken from Weinberger, M.G, Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.’s appendix table.

Table 1. Humor types and elements
Humor Types (Humor Styles)
<p>Word play, puns, playful language:</p> <p>This form of humor uses wit and skillful use of language. It often includes double entendre. It is possible that the double word meaning is sexual and, if it is, the ad would be coded as a word play as well as sexual. Audience response to puns and word play is more often a groan than laughter. Sometimes the double meaning of a word may be a spelling that implies a possible different meaning.</p>
<p>Warmth or sentiment:</p> <p>Gentle humor based in love, friendship and positive emotion. This type of humor often revolves around children, families, and/or pets. It may be the result of kids doing saying or doing something very adult which is unusual for kids to be doing</p>
<p>Sex, sexual innuendo, sexual allusion:</p> <p>This form of humor includes humor that is overtly sexual in nature, using nudity and/or direct sexual references. It also includes less overt suggestive sexual references. It often makes use of double entendre where one interpretation of the words or images in an ad is innocent and the other is sexual.</p>

Nonsense:

Silliness. This type of humor includes ridiculous pictures. Many of the children's books written by Dr. Seuss make use of nonsense humor as does Alice in Wonderland. Unusual, peculiar, absurd, silly, clownish, or odd situations, clumsiness, ignorance, grotesque, eccentric behavior, or characters, or exaggeration

Verbal or physical aggression:

Physical, social psychological putdown of one's self, another person, or some other group of people or public figure, institutions using satire, sarcasm, ridicule, parody, or taking malicious pleasure in a person's situation or appearance. Slapstick humor in the style of the Three Stooges and pratfalls fit into the classification of aggressive humor. If the target is the joke teller, then this style of humor is self-deprecating.

ELEMENTS

Vulgar

Crude indecent, or obscene, particularly with regard to sex or bodily functions, showing a lack of taste or reasonable moderation.

Cartoon/comic

A drawing, sketch, or computer animation with humorous intent.

Children or animals

A humorous ad where children or animals are a central focus of the ad. These ads generally capitalize on the

'cute' nature of kids and animals. E-Trade ads feature a talking baby.

Stereotyping or racist

Is this ad racist or stereotyped toward a group? (i.e., a race of people, a religious group, gender, or country, a region or with a physical characteristic _ i.e. blonds, people from foreign countries, Indians, a city, etc.). Bald jokes, fat jokes, blond jokes, etc. are all forms of aggressive humor.

All coders received the explanatory table, along with other sources regarding humor styles. Additional written instructions on how to classify the ads into humor – style categories were, also, provided. Prior to the main study, each coder was trained on a sample of 200 non-Super Bowl commercials to ensure the reliability of the coding process. In the main study, each one of the coders analyzed approximately 210 commercials. The coders worked independently in order to determine whether a commercial was humorous or not, and to which humor- style category each advertisement could fall into. Each coder watched each commercial twice. Inter-coder reliability coefficients ranged between 80% and 89%. Discrepancies amongst the coders were discussed and resolved

Results/Discussion

The quantitative results of the study are shown below, in tables 2 and 3.

The tables are followed by a historical and cultural analysis of each period as well as by a thorough discussion of the results.

Table 2. Overall percentage of humor and humor styles in Super Bowl advertisements

Decade	Humor	Word - play	Warm/ Sentimental	Non-sense	Sexual	Aggression
1969-1979						
Mean	.38	.17	.03	.23	.01	.04
N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Std. deviation	.486	.375	.181	.422	.075	.208
1980-1989						
Mean	.49	.28	.05	.32	.00	.05
N	227	227	227	227	227	227
Std. deviation	.501	.449	.215	.466	.000	.224
1990-1999						
Mean	.53	.26	.05	.40	.02	.07
N	403	403	403	403	403	403
Std. deviation	.500	.438	.227	.490	.131	.255
2000-2009						
Mean	.58	.19	.04	.47	.04	.11
N	495	495	494	495	495	495
Std. deviation	.556	.391	.188	.500	.187	.312
2010-2014						
Mean	.63	.17	.05	.49	.05	.12
N	283	283	283	283	283	283
Std. deviation	.484	.379	.224	.501	.210	.330
Total						
Mean	.54	.21	.05	.41	.02	.09
N	1586	1586	1585	1586	1586	1586
Std. deviation	.518	.410	.208	.491	.155	.281

ANOVA Results: Overall humor*Decade $F(4.00) = 7.899$, $p < 0.001$; Word Play * Decade $F(4.00) = 4.312$, $p < 0.02$; Warm sentimental*Decade $F(4.00) = 0.671$, $p < 0.612$; Nonsense*Decade $F(4.00) = 12.206$, $p < 0.001$; Sexual*Decade $F(4.00) = 4.412$, $p < 0.002$; Aggression*Decade $F(4.00) = 4.228$, $p < 0.002$

Table 3. Percentages of the elements found in Super Bowl humorous advertisements

Decade	Elements of Vulgarity	Elements of stereotyping	Elements of Comic/ Cartoon Characters	Elements of Children	Elements of animals
1969-1979					
Mean	,00	,02	,03	,03	,02
N	178	178	178	178	178
Std. deviation	,000	,149	,166	,166	,129
1980-1989					
Mean	,03	,01	,03	,04	,04
N	227	227	227	227	227
Std. deviation	,161	,094	,173	,196	,196
1990-1999					
Mean	,02	,00	,10	,07	,08
N	403	403	403	403	403
Std. deviation	,140	,050	,296	,263	,278
2000-2009					
Mean	,05	,02	,04	,03	,13
N	495	495	495	495	495
Std. deviation	,219	,126	,197	,177	,331
2010-2014					
Mean	,03	,03	,05	,10	,14
N	283	283	283	283	283
Std. deviation	,166	,166	,217	,299	,349
Total					
Mean	,03	,01	,05	,06	,09
N	1586	1586	1586	1586	1586
Std. deviation	,170	,120	,225	,229	,291

ANOVA Results: Vulgarity*Decade $F(4.00) = 3.615$, $p < 0.006$; Stereotyping*Decade $F(4.00) = 2.313$, $p < 0.056$; Comic/Cartoon*Decade $F(4.00) = 5.357$, $p < 0.001$; Children*Decade $F(4.00) = 5.473$, $p < 0.001$; Animals*Decade $F(4.00) = 8.683$, $p < 0.001$

The Seventies (1970-1979)

Political, economic and social milieu

Overshadowed by the creative and revolutionary decade of the 60's, 70's were by many considered to be a relatively, not impressive, decade. Through deeper analysis, though, one can detect the decade's great significance, which was, primarily, lying in the fact that what, was declared or required during the 60's revolution, had to come into practice. After half a century later, 70s, eventually, gained their right place in historians' perceptions, being now deemed the decade that influenced and sculptured the main values and characteristics, of modern America (Schulman, 2001, cited in Briscoe's review, 2012). Nonetheless, adjusting to the new scenery was not the only challenge. The 1970s had the challenges of their own, and they were many. The ongoing Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, the oil and energy crisis, the stagflation phenomenon, a foreign market competition and tense international events that directly affected the country's political and economic conditions. When the seventies ended Americans had lost their trust to the government, and had, for the first time come to believe that the American dream might be, just, a myth. Their "crisis of confidence", was, accurately, captured in 1979's president Carter's speech.

Richard Nixon (1969-1974), Gerald Ford (1974-1977) and Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) were the politician figures that ran the country through the 70's. Nixon's presidency ended with his resignation in 1974, after he was impeached for the Watergate scandal. This was the first (and single, until today) resignation of an American president. The event's shock was not the first for the American people during the decade. It was, actually, preceded by, another shock, an economic one; that of 1973's oil crisis. In 1973, OPEC imposed a six month embargo to the USA, due to the country's interference in the Arab-Israeli war, an embargo that led oil prices to double. The country faced its greatest inflation, which, together with high unemployment rates, led to the phenomenon of "stagflation", a phenomenon that was, later, linked to the abandonment of Keynesian economics and the adoption of the emergent new-liberalism economic theories (Stein, 2011).

In 1975, the fall of Saigon marked the end of the Vietnam War, but in an unpleasant way for the USA, as the Vietnam was reunited as a communist country. The Watergate scandal, the outcome of the Vietnam War and the economic crisis were serious reasons for the American people to doubt American's authorities and their actions. There were, actually, reasons to increase the already high percentage of 66%, of Americans that stated their distrust for the government as early as the decade's beginning (Zinn, 1980). The political and economic turbulence scaled even more in 1979, when the country faced both the "second oil shock"; the 1979 energy crisis, and the capture of the American

hostages in Iran's USA embassy, as a result of the country's interference to the 1979 Iranian revolution. Although, Jimmy Carter lost his elected presidency to Ronald Reagan in 1981, 1979 seems, in fact, to be the year when his political influence ended. After his "crisis of confidence" speech, in July of 1979, he started being seen as a president that does not have the traits to successfully rule the country, an impression that was, somehow, reassured and strengthened by his following incompetence, as interpreted by many, of successfully negotiating with the Iranian authorities over the hostage crisis.

The dawn of the 70s saw the emergence of a brand new concern; that of the environment. American peoples' environmental consciousness had begun to develop as a result of the realization that environmental resources are not infinite. In April 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated. Meanwhile, the main social concerns of the previous decade were still there. During the 60's, black people's fights, the emblematic figure of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had changed the perception of previous generations. The participation of African American athletes' in sports, along with the growing percentage of black people in businesses and educational institutions were significant proof of societal change. Mexican-Americans (Mendoza, 1996) and Native-Americans (Cliff notes, n.d.) were, also, gaining more rights, at a time when immigration rates were rising, especially for Asian and Latin America people, as a result of the Immigration Act, which was voted in 1965 (Cliff notes, n.d.).

Women's movement was, also, a significant landmark of the 70's, as feminism (Williamson, 2003, cited in Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009), sexual revolution, economic liberty and political awareness were vastly developing for women. Organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women's Political Caucus (1971) were established, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was voted (1972), and in 1973 the government legalized abortions.

The consequences of these developments were mirrored in demographic trends and changes. In the 70s, a growing percentage of women would choose education, careers and fun over marriage and maternity (Lehman, 2011, cited in Elkins, 2013). In 1979 the percentage of single people had risen to 20%, in comparison to 14,9%, in 1965, while the divorce rates had jumped to 50% (Lemann, 1991). Nuclear family as the dominant family structure of America was coming to an end. In addition, domestic and family violence was becoming a more common phenomenon (Gelles, 1980).

Reflections on entertainment and advertising

There seems to be a link between film and politics awareness in the late 60s and early 70s. People engaging in cinematography seemed to be the same people engaging in political action, trying, by both means to face the social and existential crises being developed after the 50's decade. Most

Hollywood movies, of that period, can be characterized by their resemblance and reference to great older movies, perhaps, this way, depicting, the feeling of nostalgia that was there in the 70s and culminated during the decade of the 80s (Carroll, 1982).

1970s was, also, the decade of a huge turning point in TV programming, which, ultimately, abandoned 1950's programs and started depicting the ongoing times, trying to capture, especially, younger audiences of different values and cultural needs (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.). Most TV programs were, truly, depicting the decade, by presenting minorities as central characters or by presenting the new role of women in society (Lehman, 2011, cited in Elkins, 2013). American TV was, by promoting both shows of the decade's social concerns and nostalgic shows capturing the feeling of confusion that was central to the 70s (Leopold, 2015). The majority, however, of the most famous TV programs of the times, regardless of their subjects shared one common characteristic; that of humor (comedies and sitcoms).

The advertising sector was facing its own challenges, directly connected to the political, economic and social scenery. At the beginning of the decade, as a result of the great inflation and the general economic situation, the agencies had limited budgets. The financial difficulties continued until the mid-70s but the sector experienced a great upward shift at the end of the decade (Scott, 2017a). The pressure of both the economic recession and the foreign markets' competition resulted in the promotion of couponing and economy solutions as the basic strategy to attract customers (Pollay, 1985).

The greatest challenge, though, was conforming to the extensive regulations imposed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the National Advertising Review Board, which, significantly, reformed the world of advertising (Scott, 2017a). Cigarette advertising was banned, automobile companies started running less exaggerating advertising campaigns (Bergh, Krugman and Salwen, 1983) and comparison advertising became a widely used technique, after being permitted by the FTC, in 1972, as a better and more direct way of informing consumers (Williams and Page, 2013). Additionally, the 70s was the first decade when moral concerns about advertising aimed to children came to the fore (Pecheux and Derbaix, 2002).

The economic recession, FCT regulations, as well as the general feeling of skepticism, as a result of lost of trust to the government, are, possibly, the main reasons for the transition from the 60's creative resolution to the 70's hard sell and positioning (Beard, 2005), and the emphasis on the attributes of the products (Pollay, 1985). Technology's revolution gave to advertising agencies the ability to analyze demographics and study consumer behavior in a quantitative way for the first time in advertising history (Scott, 2017a).

In accordance with the mainstream TV programs which belonged to humorous categories, the 70's advertisements were, also, characterized by wide use of humor. Although, humorous advertising studies were limited (Weinberger and Campbell, 1992) and not indicative of, particularly, encouraging findings (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Kaplan and Pascoe, 1977), the use of humor in advertising ranged from 15% (Kelly and Solomon, 1973) to 42% (Markewicz, 1972). Ignoring Ogilvy's (Beard, 2005), and other important advertising personalities' doubts about humor's advertising effectiveness (Cone 1969, as cited in Duncan, 1979), agencies and companies seemed to both apply humor and benefit from their humorous advertising campaigns (Duncan, 1979; Marshall 1979, cited in Duncan, 1979), with only a few exceptions (Monica, 1971, cited in Duncan, 1979; Winski, 1978, cited in Duncan, 1979).

According to the present study, 38% of Super Bowl advertisements used some type of humor (see Table 2), while according to Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F. (2015) 43,8% of billboard advertisements were humorous. Non-sense humor was found to be the prevailing humor type (23%), followed by word-play (17%) , while the rest types of humor were not applied so often (aggression: 4%, warm-sentimental: 3%, sexual: 1%) (see Table 2). These findings are similar to those of Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F. (2015), with the main difference being that according to their findings word-play was used quite more often than non-sense humor (85,2% and 43,2%, respectively). This deviation could be explained by the fact that Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F. (2015), analyzed advertisements on billboards, a mean where word-play is practically more easy to apply, in comparison to non-sense humor that is, objectively, easier to capture in TV ads, the sample of the present study.

The high use of humor, and especially, non-sense humor, found by both studies, could be attributed to the confusion of the decade, which was depicted in other art expressions, such as music (disco), as well. The greater percentage for the aggression type compared to the warm/sentimental type of humor can be linked to the changing family structures and to the feeling of uncertainty defining the, as described by Tom Wolfe, ME decade. Personal freedom, was, particularly, promoted by certain projects, such as beers. According to Messner and Montez de Oca (2015), whereas during the 50's and the 70's beer advertising was promoting the use of the product in a couples' scenery, during the 70s most beer advertisements were illustrating men using the product alone.

The low percentage of sexual humor (1%) (see Table 2) possibly, depicts the effort of women to, while gaining equality and sexual liberty, not letting the society depict them as sexual objects; efforts that were made, especially, through organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), an organization fighting for that cause (Anglely, 2015). Nevertheless, stereotyping was

found to be one of the most highly used elements (2%) (see Table 3). This finding is consistent with those of other studies' that found a high percentage of advertisements in which women were portrayed either as sexual fantasies, or housewives (Kilbourne, 1970, cited in Angley, 2015). The wide use of the depictions of women as housewives revealed that the new role of women in the society was, still, not captured by advertisers (Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976), as was, further justified by many studies of the times (Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009). At the end of the decade another female stereotype, that of the “superwoman” emerged (Angley, 2015).

The eighties (1980-1989)

Political, economic and social milieu

The eighties was one of the most crucial decades of America; a turning point for American history and the American society. At the beginning of the decade, the country was facing both an economic and political crisis, and, most importantly, a crisis of confidence. During the 80s confidence was restored. And it all goes back to Ronald Reagan. There is not any other American president marking and influencing the period of his leadership as much as Reagan did. He was a conservative president that promoted nostalgia of a time when peace, safety, family values, and prosperity were the grounds of the American society (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). He gave hope and strength to the American people and managed to make America the greatest economic and military power of the world.

In 1981, the year when Ronald Reagan was elected, the Iranian hostage crisis was resolved (Katzman, 2016). During his political campaign Reagan had promised to defeat both inflation and the Soviets (Farber, 2010) and he fulfilled those promises, regardless of the consequences and implications. And either it was Gorbachev or Reagan the political figure that greatly contributed to the cease of the tensions (Knopf, 2004), the result was the same; the INF Treaty signed by the USA and the Soviet Union, in 1987. At the end of the decade the world experienced the fall of the communist empire, mainly, signaled by the fall of the Berlin wall, in 1989.

During the 80s economic prosperity was unprecedented, with money flowing in the Wall Street. Reagan's regulations, tax reduction, the implementation of supply-side economic theories (Zelizer, 2013), and enhanced investments (Rossinow, 2015) led to an economic boost that favored the concepts of consumerism and materialism. Yuppies, worked hard and their affluence combined with their decreased, compared to their parents' generation, ability to climb up to a career ladder led them to turn into materialism and consumerism, in order to reward themselves (Belk, 1986). America re-

elected the president that seemed to have changed the country's course, in 1984, and it wasn't until 1987 that Reagan would start losing his popularity. In 1987, Americans discovered that their president was involved in illegal political actions in Iran and Nicaragua, while during the same year the stock market collapsed losing 22.6% of its total value in one day (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). Reagan founded the basis of current's worldwide economic policies (Zelizer, 2013), policies of extended, free-market capitalism. A huge debt and a collapsing economy followed the termination of his presidency (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007).

Violence rates sharply increased during the decade, a fact that is, most possibly, attributed to the rising rates of youth violence (Butts and Travis, 2002), while drugs was another huge social concern. Although the decade started with Nancy Reagan's campaign against it, the country seemed to start losing the war against drugs when the crack epidemic broke out after 1983 (Moynihan, 1991). And it was the second greater epidemic of the decade, followed by that of AIDS. Although, society, stayed silent about the issue for some years, as AID's was thought to be a disease concerning homosexuals and drug users, in the mid-80's, after the famous actor's Rock Hudson speech about his infection from the virus, America realized that this was an issue that was affecting everyone and had to be, immediately, dealt with (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). And it was true. By the end of the 1980s, more than 100.000 cases of infection were reported (Bonner, 2016), making this epidemic the greatest cause of human loss since Vietnam.

The 1980s were, certainly, characterized by great antithesis, especially when it came to wealth and values. There were the rich on one side and the poor on the other, the conservatives on one side and the liberals on the other (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). Following the president's conservatism and effort to restore older times, the "religious-rights", a group that was in favor of abortion outlaw, school prayer enforcement, family structure restoration, and against gay rights and feminism (Rossinow, 2015), emerged. Nonetheless, American society had taken a different course and nothing could reverse that. During the 80s the number of divorces and single parent families saw a 40% increase compared to the previous decade when these phenomena began to rise (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). AIDS epidemic led to the unification of the gay community, to organized political action for gay rights (Rossinow, 2016) and helped break the taboo of homosexuality, especially when celebrities took action (Zelizer, 2013). The women movement continued facing its own challenges. Although, a great percentage of women were working and raising children at the same time (Commuri, Ekici and Kennedy, 2002), feminism was attacked by the conservatism representatives of the Reagan's era (Napikoski, 2017).

Most African Americans were, still, struggling to enjoy greater integration into the society, which was the case for only a small percentage of them who were integrated in the business world.

Reflections on entertainment and advertising

During the 80s, technology made its first significant developments, as represented by two attempts to reach space (1983/1986), the introduction of personal computers by Apple in 1984, the rising of Microsoft in 1986, and the birth of the Internet, at the decade's closure (1989). Media, also, experienced momentous transformations as cable TV and MTV came on the scene in the beginning of the decade. Mass communication became easier achievable, in a way that fashion, styles and trends, especially when represented by celebrities, could define the mainstream popular culture. Baby boomers were not only informed about and influenced by fashion, but were, also, able to spend the necessary amounts of money in order to follow it. Tom Wolfe's "ME generation" of the 70s had turned into the "MTV generation" in the 80s (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). The 80s was, also, the decade when America turned to a healthier lifestyle, as expressed, in terms of fashion, by being dressed in wear-out clothing and sneakers.

Art reflected the changes American society was going through. Television not only included more sex and violence (Zelizer, 2013), but it was, also, dealing with issues such as birth control, abortions, or teen marriage (Patterson, 2017). Even sitcoms made a difference through their progressive ideas on crucial topics of social concern, such as feminism, homosexuality, racial discrimination and poverty (Ross, 2015). An African American family present at American people homes once a week was a great surprise that illustrated significant steps to the group's integration. From 1984 to 1992, Thursday nights were dedicated to "The Cosby Show", a high rated sitcom that was an exception to the stereotyping American African TV programs (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007).

Most of the decade's films were sequels (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), representing the nostalgia for older times. Other genres that thrived were science fiction movies and musicals while films that illustrated the pursuit of wealth and success (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), enhancing the notion that for once again American people have the chance to follow the American dream (Litt, 2010), were extremely popular. Materialism, which was one of the most dominant elements of the decade, was, also, found in many works of art (Friedman, 1985, cited in Belk, 1986). And just after the mid-1980s, when the AIDS silence broke, the epidemic became a music and TV topic (Bonner, 2016). Counterculture, was, also, present; expressed through music lyrics searching for an escape (Sanderson, 2010) or music bands promoting anti-consumerism (Litt, 2010). Hip-hop and break-dance emerged as a form of liberation for the black people community, while eccentric, modern art was, also, being produced in places such as the Warhol's Factory (Platt and Young, 2015).

The 80s was the era of media revolution and consumerism, and it was all reflected to its advertising. It was, also, the decade of merging. By the end of the decade only 33% of the advertising agencies were independent (Rasure, 2015a). During the decade, TV became the most significant advertising vehicle, especially after the president's re-election TV campaign (Rasure, 2015a). Audiences were "merging" too, with CNN and MTV taking up almost half of the viewers (Scott, 2017b). New advertising trends were coming to light, such as direct home shopping, infomercials, usually presented by celebrities, and 15-second ads (Rasure, 2015a). However, these great advertising opportunities were set off by the challenges that the advanced technology of the decade brought about, such as the remote control and VCR, both giving viewers the potential to, deliberately, miss the ads (Scott, 2017b). Yuppies became a distinct advertising segment (Morgan 1985, cited in Belk 1986), and athletes were starring in a great number of ads (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), promoting a healthier way of life which was one of the decade's trends.

1980s was the era that, really, embraced consumer culture. The rich were targeted through advertisements that depicted success, while the poor were targeted by advertisements presenting them with the commercial commodities that could ensure a higher life quality (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). It was during the 80s that advertising focused on the feelings more than the products, when advertising imposed a deeper engagement between the products and the consumers (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007). And it was the era of humor in advertising.

In 1982, one of the most significant advertising figures of the previous century, David Ogilvy stated that humor can increase sales (cited in Weinberger and Gulas, 1992), after opposing to the implementation of humor as an effective advertising technique for more than a decade. Although positioning was, still, a regular advertising technique (Pollay, 1985), almost every advertising executive (94%) agreed that humor can enhance attention and help launch new products (Madden and Weinberger, 1984). Apple's 1984 advertisement, broadcasted only once during the Super Bowl, was a great example, that changed marketer's perceptions for ever (Madden and Weinberger, 2006).

The spread of the media, further, influenced the use of humor (Beard, 2005). It was found that, during the 80's, 24% of prime-time television advertising used humorous messages (Weinberger and Spotts 1989). The use of humor in radio ads, was increasing, too. The percentage of humorous radio ads that won a Clio award saw a 29% increase from the mid-70s to the mid-80s (Murphy, Morrison and Zahn, 1993, cited in Gulas and Weinberger, 2006), while the percentage of billboard ads using humor increased more than 17% compared to the previous decade (Weiberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015).

According to the present study's findings, almost half of the decade's Super Bowl commercials (49%) implemented a humorous technique (see Table 2). Non-sense and word-play continued to be the most frequently used types of humor (32% and 28%, respectively) (see Table 2). The great increase of word-play compared to the previous decade (17% in the 1970's) is consistent with Weiberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s (2015) findings suggesting, also, an increase of word-play for billboard advertising. According to Phillips and McQuarrie (2002), during the 80s, advertisers started to use more complicated rhetorical figures in magazine advertising, on the basis that consumers were aware of a context needed to interpret them. The media and mass communication revolution can be a well founded reason why during this decade advertisers, acting on that basis, implemented an extensive use of the word-play technique.

Warmth and sentiment, also, increased (see Table 2), possibly, due to the conservatism and the feeling of nostalgia promoted by the president and the prevailing social groups. The use of animals and children, as main characters of humorous advertisements, also, saw a rise (see Table 3) with the increase of warm/sentimental type of humor. That finding is consistent with Alsop's findings (1989, cited in Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), according to which the most successful advertising campaigns of the 80s illustrated children and dogs. Aggression (see Table 2) and vulgarity (see Table 3), covered in humor, saw a significant increase, during a decade in which violence rates were higher than any other's.

Although, erotic advertising was mastered by Calvin Klein who created a new perspective for the Madison avenue (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), sexual humor was found to decline, compared to the 70s, for both our study (see Table 2) and Weiberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s (2015) one. In addition, stereotyping was found to be less present in humorous advertising (see Table 3). In fact, during the 80s, women were depicted less in traditional and more in occupational roles (Sullivan and O'Connor, 1988, cited in Zotos and Tsihla, 2014). Nevertheless, portraying women as sex objects was, still, a main advertising tactic (Sullivan and O'Connor, 1988; Mager and Helgeson, 2011, cited in Zotos and Tsihla, 2014). Women portrayals were not linked to power, (Ruggiero and Weston, 1985, cited in Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009), as women seemed to play decorative roles in advertising (Lysonski, 1985, cited in Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009). Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F. (2015), also, found a decrease in the use of stereotyping in humorous ads. Both studies' findings contradict those of Goffman's content analysis according to which stereotyping was an eminent advertising type in the 80's (cited in Bell and Milic, 2002). This inconsistency can be attributed to the fact that Goffman's analysis was not specialized in humorous advertising.

Advertising stereotyping was changing not only for women but for every individual in America's society. Specific products, such as liquor, continued with the 70s pattern of depicting images of men alone, trying to promote an independent way of life, full of power and free of stress, in contrast to the previous decades (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005). Family and children stereotyping was changing, too. Mothers stopped being portrayed as housewives. Instead, they were portrayed as powerful members of the family, making important decisions or even working full-time, while the value of children as independent individuals, also, grew, along with the significance of the youth in society (Commuri, Ekici and Kennedy, 2002).

The nineties (1990-1999)

Political, economic and social milieu

America entered the nineties having defeated the Soviets. In 1989, the historian Francis Fukuyama stated that history had come to its end and, although, the, still, alive, history would prove him absolutely wrong (Farago, 2015) his statement seemed true about the America during the nineties. It was the decade between two wars; the Cold War which had just ended and the war on terrorism which was not, yet, declared. The turbulent international political scene (Middle East conflicts, Rwanda's genocide, the end of Apartheid, the Yugoslav wars), little seemed to affect most of the Americans who were leading the happiest decade of their lives. Economic prosperity and advances in communication technology that were transforming everyday lives (Luke, 2014; Hampson, 2014; Andersen, 2015; Coupland, 2017), peace (Luke, 2014; Hampson, 2014) and low crime rates (Andersen, 2015) were the main characteristics of America's best decade.

By the end of the 80s, the country had been transformed to the greatest economic and military power on earth. In 1991, George H. W. Bush decided to present the country's military supremacy by intervening in and winning the first Gulf war (Ochoa, 2006, cited in Luke, 2014), giving, afterwards, a speech about the "new world order" (Kiger, n.d.). And, although, Bush's competence in international affairs was, well, appreciated by the American people, the slight economic recession in the beginning of the decade, possibly, caused him a second election (Luke, 2014). In 1992, America elected Bill Clinton, a democrat, who was, also, known for his diplomatic competencies. Clinton had proposed a different economic policy and had more liberated ideas on social issues, such as abortion (Learn NC, n.d.) or homosexuality (Swisher, 1993, cited in Rohlinger, 2002). Clinton was re-elected,

in 1997, for a second term, but was impeached in 1998 due to having an affair with a White House intern. As he was not convicted, he continued serving his second term which ended in 2001.

USA's economy, during the decade, was characterized by increased productivity, increased incomes, a thriving stock market and a significant unemployment decrease (Hampson, 2014). There was a 40% rise in GDP (Hampson, 2014), an annual 3,6% growth (Luke, 2014), the biggest budget surplus after 30 years (Learn NC, n.d.), while unemployment reached the insignificant rate of 4,1% (Luke, 2014). Technological advances that led to soaring productivity are thought to be the main cause of the decade's prosperity (Luke, 2014). Clinton's economic policy contributions were enacting NAFTA and minimizing government regulations which both led to greater business flexibility (Luke, 2014). At the same time, the gap between the rich and the poor was enlarged (Hampson, 2014), with inequality percentages doubling through the decade (Pethokoukis, 2015). The credit card debts rose to unprecedented rates, especially, for those of low-incomes (Draut and Silva, 2003), exposing the free-market capitalist economy's drawbacks (Kotz, 2003).

Economic prosperity, although defining as it was, may not be the greatest characteristic of the decade. The 1990s saw the emergence and wide use of personal computers, mobile phones and WWW way of getting information (Luke, 2014); the technological advances that shape our lives nowadays. During the decade the percentage of people owning a PC jumped from 15% to 50% (Hampson, 2014), while the website pages rose, from one page in 1991 to 17.1 million website pages (Kiger, n.d.). These were the advances that shaped Generation X; the generation that bridged the gap of baby boomers and the next generation, Generation Y, both in terms of points of views on important social issues and in terms of experiencing everyday life (Learn NC, n.d.). The 1990s was, also, the decade during which crime rates (Ford, 2016) and use of drugs (Robison, 2002) decreased, and a time when American society had become more acceptable of diversity groups (Blendon, et al., 1999). However, vulgarity was, still, a society's element (Golway, 2000), and the hate crimes rose (Polland and O'Hare, 1999). In 1993, the World Trade Center's attack, that was actually the first terrorist attack against the USA (Bergen, 2017), disturbed America's peace but it was not as fatal as Oklahoma's bombing, in 1995, which was, indeed, a hate crime, one that was followed by others, by the same culprit, targeting homosexuals and abortion clinics. The 1990's was a defining decade for minority groups, especially African Americans and homosexuals, as well as women who were still trying to gain equality in a more substantial way.

Most African Americans were going through an improved period. For the first time, their incomes were getting higher, while poverty rates and unemployment were decreasing. Nevertheless, the

financial and life quality gap between them and the “prevailing” American groups remained high (Westphal, 1998). The 1991’s tape of an African American getting beat up by police officers, who were not found guilty after trial, and the O.J. Simpson’s trial, which was the most watched TV broadcast of the decade, surfaced race and social issues the society was trying not to deal with (Irvine, 2014).

The gay movement, also, experienced some significant transformations during the 1990s. Although, in 1996, the Defense of Marriage Act was voted, prohibiting same sex marriage (Franke-Ruta, 2013), the 1994’s “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, according to which homosexuals could serve the military, the emergence of gay characters in media (Rohlinger, 2002), as well as the public support of celebrities (Morris, n.d.), significantly, contributed to the way society treated, the previously, taboo-issue of, homosexuality. By the end of the decade, 87% of the American society supported equal job opportunities for the gay community; a great progress in relation to past decades (Blendon, et al., 1999).

At the same time, women, who continued their own race, also, met progress. In the 1990’s, 60% of the women were occupied in a full-time job position (Francis, n.d.), more than half of them were obtaining bachelor degrees, while the percentage of women working for the government had risen from 4,5% in 1971 to 21% in 1993 (Harrison, 1997). And even though women were increasingly occupying “male” professions (Kleiman, 1996), they were still being denied high paid positions while receiving unequal earnings (Kleiman, 1996; Francis, n.d.); facts that proved that the next step to equality should be increasing female economic productivity and bridging the income gap (U.N., 1991).

Reflections on entertainment and advertising

Social transformations were depicted in almost all of media expressions. Technology had brought a cinema and a TV revolution. 1990’s cinema main characteristic was its great diversity (Hendricks, 2015) both in terms of productions, with Hollywood movies and independent films reaching great success (Clarke, Calhoun and Huddleston, 2016; O’Falt et. al., 2017), and in terms of content (O’Falt et. al., 2017). American television was, also, altering. New shows, related to Generation X’s concerns, emerged. Some of the most successful sitcoms were about single people leading their ordinary lives, animated sitcoms became a common way of TV entertainment, while the first reality show was broadcasted by MTV, in 1992 (Irvine, 2014). The majority, if not all, of the TV shows shared one fundamental trait; commenting on social issues, the same way music industry was.

Music genres, previously marginalized, came to the scene and rebuilt the popular music culture (Lane, 2016), in a decade of great music variety. The popular music genres ranged from rock, grunge and alternative rock -which thrived after the mid-1990s- to hip hop and rap (Kiger, 2014). Rap, once being a musical expression for certain groups, during the 90s, turned into a mainstream genre mirroring the feelings of the majority of the youth (Irvine, 2014). Literature and theatre were, also, covering subjects of social concern, in a time when art was circled around ordinary, everyday life (Kiger, 2014).

The technological advances of the decade brought about a huge revolution in the marketing sector; advertising was entering the process of its greatest transformation since the beginning of the century. But as it is the case for all traditional periods, this period of advertising was characterized by alterations which could be interpreted as both (either) opportunities and (or) challenges. Many supported the view that traditional advertising would be threatened and, at last, overthrown by the new marketing tactics (Rust and Oliver, 1994). In fact, the traditional advertising sector was faced with income stagnancy and personnel cut downs, and marketing agencies had to go through many changes affecting both their structure and their strategies; separate technological divisions, web advertising budgeting, integrated communications and niche marketing, to name a few (Adage, 2003).

Advertising was laying the foundations of nowadays marketing. As a matter of fact, advertising has not changed much since its 90's technological revolution and the innovations this revolution brought about; that being true not only for the marketing strategies but for the content of advertising, as well. The 90's introduced the concepts of celebrities, supermodels, and famous brands in advertising; concepts that are, still, prevailing in mass media (Viswanath and Smith, 2017).

53% of the Super Bowl advertisements of the decade implemented the humor technique (see Table 2). It was the first decade that more than half of the ads broadcasted during the Super Bowl were humorous. An increase of humor was, also, found in billboard advertising, with nearly 68% of the advertisements employing humor (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015). In the longitudinal analysis of Super Bowl advertisements of the decade, which was conducted by Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians (2001), humor was found to be the most significant predictor of ad likeability. Although, academic studies gave mixed results about humor's efficiency superiority to non-humorous advertising (Weinberger, et al., 1995), many of the most eminent marketing practitioners had, by the nineties, recognized the value of humor as an advertising technique (Beard, 2005).

According to the present study's findings, non-sense and word-play were the most dominant types of humor, with non-sense humor increasing and word-play decreasing, compared to the previous decade (see Table 2). These findings are consistent with those of Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s study (2015). The word-play type of humor had reached its peak the previous period (see Table 2); being addressed to a very well content-aware audience. The non-sense type's increase (see Table 2), along with the increase of elements such as comic/cartoon, animals and children (see Table 3) can be explained by the optimistic and cheerful feeling describing the whole decade.

In a study of Super Bowl advertising, for the period from 1993 to 2003, Horovitz (2006) found that animals were used in one out of five Super Bowl advertisements. The increased use of animals is, further, supported by Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians' (2001) results according to which animals were found to be the second (following humor) most important factor of Super Bowl ad likeability, for the decade. The vast increase of the comic/cartoon element, which more than tripled, can, as well, be explained by the emergence of adult animation which was a new form of prime TV entertainment.

Aggression type of humor, in Super Bowl ads, saw a significant increase during the decade (see Table 2). This finding is consistent with the increase indicated by Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger's (2010) study according to which, in 1999, nearly 34% of the humorous, Super Bowl advertisements were aggressive. The increase of aggression in advertising is not that surprising in a decade when hate crimes were on the rise and during which popular media were linked to feelings of aggression (music genres, TV shows, such as adult animation, etc.). Warm-sentimental type of humor, on the other side, was found to be decreasing both for Super Bowl (see Table 2) and billboard advertising (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015), in the first era that the American society was feeling satisfied with its time and not nostalgic for the previous ones.

Traditional stereotyping was not a significant element of Super Bowl humorous advertisements (see Table 3), while sexual humor was found to increase (see Table 2). Even though women were portrayed in other than traditional roles (Mager and Helgeson, 2011, cited in Zotos and Tsihla, 2014), sexual images of women were increasing (Mager and Helgeson, 2011, cited in Zotos and Tsihla, 2014; Carpenter and Edison, 2005, cited in Zotos and Tsihla, 2014). An important progress was that these female sexual images were interpreted in a different way; not that of taking advantage of the weaker sex (Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009). The emergence of another image; that of the erotic male, was another stereotyping benchmark of the decade. Being targeted either to progressive females or to other males (the new type of male consumers or homosexuals), its significance

illustrated not only the marketing need to address to new segments, but also the liberation society was going through (Rohlinger, 2002).

The twenties + (2000-2014)

Political, economic and social milieu

The turning of the century was anticipated with great enthusiasm by the whole world, and especially for Americans who were welcoming the new millennium at the end of one of their greatest decades. Their only concern was that of the Y2K bug, but that would turn out to be the least of their problems. History was back and the 1990's party was over. The dot-com bubble would be followed by a terrorist attack, two wars (Hampson, 2014) a fatal hurricane, a deficit federal budget (Luke, 2014) and the Great Recession at the decade's closure, making the 2000s the decade during which the biggest financial crises, since the Great Depression, would appear (Smith, N., 2015). The first years of the 2010s, America (along with the rest of the world) was trying to overcome the aftermath of the huge economic crisis, as well as build defenses against terrorism.

All of that occurred inside the frame of a high-speeding changing society, driven by technological advances. Smart phones, digital music players, video games, on-line shopping (Batchelor, 2009) and the social media would change people's communications and interactions, both as individuals and as consumers (Edosomwan, et al., 2011). The "digital decade" (Billy Gates, cited in Rasure, 2015b) had arrived and it was a milestone one.

The aftermath of the 2000's debated elections, in which people and electoral did not share the same view (Levy, 2009), was Al Gore losing the presidency to George W. Bush, a political figure that would be criticized as being one of the worst presidents in the American history (Wilentz, 2006; Soergel, 2014). In 2001, the 9/11 terrorist attacks caused the death of nearly 3000 people. Two months later, according to a video, Osama Bin Laden took responsibility for the action (CNN Library, 2017a). Before even the video was released, the USA invaded Afghanistan (October, 2001) in order to overthrow the Taliban government (Batchelor, 2009) and the Patriot Act was immediately enacted. This legislation of enhanced government's surveillance targeted to terrorism suspects would be later criticized as a measure linked to citizens' privacy violations, and to increased law enforcement (Duignan, 2011; Rosen, 2011), a story that would hit its peak with Snowden's leaks in 2013 (Ackerman, 2016).

In 2003, Iraq became the 9/11 attacks' culprit (Burnett, 2011) and America declared a war against it, with the intention of attaining the "mass destruction weapons" the country possessed, ready to use it against the American people (Batchelor, 2009). Iraq's invasion triggered a worldwide reaction as a result of the tortures and crimes during the war (Butterworth, 2008). On top of that, in 2005, hurricane Katrina hit the country causing more than 1800 casualties, and the Bush administration's, delayed, response to the disaster was highly criticized (Batchelor, 2009). The final stroke for America came in 2007, when the real estate crisis occurred, leading the country to the 2007-2009 Great Recession, which would result in the loss of more than 8 million job positions (Mishel, et al., 2012). America was in chaos when hope arose again with the candidacy and, eventually, election of the country's first African American president, Barack Obama, in 2008 (Burnett, 2011) - an election that was believed, for the most of the world, to improve America's, destroyed, international affairs (Dimock, 2017). Obama was re-elected in 2012 and although in 2011 Osama Bin Laden was, finally, killed and America retrieved its troops from the Iraqi territories, the general turbulence occurring in the Middle East and Africa, as a result of the "Arab spring", continued to raise concerns about global peace.

The stock market crises (Jacobsen and Mather, 2010) and the simultaneous increase in defense spending (Burnett, 2011), at the beginning of the 2000s, led America to the Great Recession. The country's economy was damaged to levels compared to the Great Depression of the 1930s. In 2008 the GDP, immediately, decreased by 3.9% (Smith, N., 2015), as a result of the home bubble explosion. During the first years of the 21st century, incomes saw the greatest decrease since the 1960's (Seitz-Wald, 2010), unemployment rose to 10% (Jacobsen and Mather, 2010; Smith, N., 2015), and job growth was stuck to zero (Seitz-Wald, 2010; Kroll, 2011). As the products' prices were still high (Smith, N., 2015), American families, even the wealthy ones (Kroll, 2011) experienced vast decrease in their quality of life (Burnett, 2011). The house debt rose to nearly 120%, during the period from 1999 to 2008 (Irwin, 2010), the country's loss of wealth was the greatest in the last five decades (Jacobsen and Mather, 2010), all in a time when China was becoming the world's biggest economic power (Smith, N., 2015; Saad, 2016), causing a further job loss (Dollar, 2016). The 2008 economic crisis was for long linked to the Lehmann Brothers' bankruptcy, although, that, now, seems far from the cause (Michel, 2013). The ineffectiveness of policies, previously capable of reconstructing the economy (Kotz, 2009), to help overcome the crises led to the accusation of the neoliberal economics for the time's economic situation (Dumenil and Levy, 2004).

Nevertheless, the economic crises were not the only factors resulting in the enormous transformation of American society. Technology played a huge part, too; creating a differentiated culture and shaping the youth. In 2000, there were only 100 million Internet users. By the end of the decade, with the wider use of 2000's My Space, the birth of Facebook, in 2004, and that of Twitter in 2006, billions of people were interacting online (Hale, 2015), while smart phones, which were used by 270 million of the 307 million of adults (Bernoff, 2010), enabled users to be online in any place, any time. The social media transformed not only the way people were informed, but also the way they were communicating with each other and the way they presented themselves to the social media society; it changed culture (Boyd, 2015), raising many questions concerning its wide use's consequences (Unwin, 2012).

The decade's youth, Generation Y (or Millennials,), was shaped by both the recession and the technological advances of the times. Although, one of the most educated groups (Thurman, 2010) many Millennials are unemployed, under-employed or constantly changing careers (Thurman, 2010; Howe, 2014). A great percentage of them seek for financial support from their families as they are facing difficulty in paying their bills (Thurman, 2010). In some cases they even move back with their parents (Batchelor, 2009; Thurman, 2010; Ittenbach, 2013). Delaying big purchases, such as houses and cars (Howe, 2014), is a main characteristic of their economic behavior and one that could have an even more negative effect on the economy (Bovino, 2015). The Millennials seem to care more for experiences, such as travelling, than for working stability (Asthana, 2008).

Family structure, significantly, changed after 2000. Women started occupying high salary professions (Batchelor, 2009), while experiencing a greater increase in education level than that of men, their education and career focus, possibly being, one of the most important reasons of the family structure's transformations. The percentage of women getting married by their 30s dropped from 90% in 1970 to 60% during the 2000s (Batchelor, 2009), while the percentage of both males and females refraining from marriage increased, too (Jacobsen and Mather, 2010; Ittenbach, 2013). The percentage of a traditional nuclear family had dropped to 16%, by the end of the decade (Batchelor, 2009). Millennials' marriage delays, due to, possibly, financial reasons (Ittencach, 2013; Howe, 2014), as well as the continuing rising of the numbers of divorces, can be added to paint the whole picture of family structure in the 21st century.

The decrease in the numbers of nuclear families was not the only challenge for traditional views during those years. In 2000, "civil unions" between homosexuals were permitted, while in 2003 same sex marriage started being legalized in some U.S. states (Morris, n.d.). AIDS was transformed from a fatal disease to a curable one and the Internet assisted in promoting the rights of the LGBT

community (Morris, n.d.; Weststrate and McLean, 2010). In 2012, Barack Obama publicly supported LGBT rights, while in 2013 federal benefits were, finally, assured for same sex couples legally married (CNN Library, 2017b). LGBT community seemed to be moving to a brand new era of conquered rights and equality.

The 2000s, was a better decade for African Americans, too. Although, the Katrina hurricane fiercely hit the community, the decade was one of many progressive events. At the beginning of the decade, an African American became Secretary of State, celebrities' adoption of children from Africa strengthened the equality views (Nittle, 2017), Walt-Disney introduced a black princess, and an African American actress won the Oscar award for the first time (Anderson, 2017). Near the decade's closure, the election of America's first African American president raised hopes for a "post-racial" America (Nittle, 2017).

The first years of the millennium were characterized by low crime rates, possibly due to the increased security measures (Kiprop, 2017), as well as by a decrease in homicide rates, violent crimes (James, 2015) and young peoples' use of drugs (Office of National Drug Control Policy, cited in Batchelor, 2009). However, violent images occupied the minds of Americans who had witnessed a fatal attack against their country at the beginning of the decade and a terrorist attack, in 2013. The rise of the ISIS, in 2014, further increased the feeling of fear. And, although, those years were quite progressive for minority issues, and Americans seemed to support multiculturalism and express positive views for minority groups (Huddy and Feldman, 2011) a specific minority; that of Arab Americans faced huge challenges. Muslims were connected to fear (Powell, 2011) and Arab Americans started being treated with suspicion (Nittle, 2017).

Reflections on entertainment and advertising

The entertainment sector was, also, witnessing a revolution, but in contrast to previous decades, it was not, so much a revolution of content; it was more a revolution of context. The digital revolution was changing the way people enjoyed long lasting forms of entertainment, such as listening to music, while adding new ones, such as interacting in social media.

Many films reflected the challenging issues of the time, such as the economic situation and the war on terrorism (Batchelor, 2009; Corrigan, et al., 2012), while the distribution channels were changing. People were watching 3D movies, blue ray movies or watching movies via You Tube or other web channels (Corrigan, 2012).

Television went from analog to digital and by the end of the decade nearly 35% of the American households owned a high definition TV (Thompson, n.d.). The programs with a high audience were

changing, too. During the first years of the new millennium, sitcoms misperformed, game shows made a turnback and reality, as well as talent shows gained vast popularity (Thompson, n.d.). American television was, truly, diversified with the emergence and expansion of cable TV, as most of the cable shows provided the audience with higher quality programs (Batchelor, 2009).

In 2001, Apple introduced i-pod which, significantly, changed the way people were enjoying their favorite tracks; digital music came into the scene (Batchelor, 2009). Pop, dance and hip-hop music prevailed among the music genres, in the most challenging time for music industry (Lamb, 2017). At the beginning of the decade, Napster; a free way of sharing music files, was created and web users starting accessing music for free (Goldman, 2010). Until I-tunes introduction by Apple, in 2003, which requested the audience to pay for digital music (Goldman, 2010), people were accustomed to downloading music for free (Batchelor, 2009). As 90% of the audience continued to exploit the, free of charge, option of downloading music (online download tracker Big Champagne Media Measurement cited in Goldman, 2010), the music industry saw a revenue loss of 57% from 1999 to 2009 (Goldman, 2010) and a 36% decrease in CD sales from 2002 to 2007 (Batchelor, 2009).

The advertising sector was remarkably challenged by technology's integration into consumers' lives. The 1990s had, already, shown marketers signs of need for change but had not really warned them about the speed or the scale of the transformation. Although, during the years from 2000 to 2014 most of the advertising budget continued to be spent on traditional marketing channels, such as TV, radio and print media, the progressively increasing numbers of on line consumers, as well as of the average time consumers were spending online, inevitably, turned the sector's attention to digital marketing (Rasure, 2015b). By the end of the decade, digital marketing spending had increased by almost 76%, counting for a 12% of the total advertising spending (Bernoff, 2010). Advertisers started focusing on the new channels that could attract the consumers and enhance sales; it was the first era of social media and viral advertising (Batchelor, 2009). The great opportunity was that through these channels advertising was more cost-effective; the great challenge was that it gave an unprecedented power to the consumers (Edosomwan, et al., 2011). The new idea was to recognize that kind of power and include consumers into the advertising process (Batchelor, 2009).

In the beginning of the millennium, humor, faced its own challenge; the appropriateness of its use. After the 9/11 attacks there were many discussions concerning whether and how comedy could function normally. During the first days after the attacks, some comedy shows were postponed, while the ones that went on air included hosts' introductions about how difficult performing comedy, under the circumstances, had become (Sneed, 2013; Khazan, 2014; Thompson, n.d). However, in less than

a month this awkwardness came to an end and comedy performances went back to normal (Thompson, n.d).

The first Super Bowl show after the attacks was at first postponed, while when it was finally aired the security measures for the event were strengthened (Schimmel, 2011), and the half time show was dedicated to the victims of the tragedy (Bentley, 2017). However, there seemed to be an agreement that Super Bowl had to serve American's entertainment (Friedman, 2002). Advertisers, also, expressed some initial concerns about the effect the attacks would have on the use of advertising humor, especially the aggressive type one (Beard, 2005), but comedy was on sooner than expected (Vagnoni 2002, 8, cited in Beard, p.63, 2005).

During the decade the percentage of Super Bowl humorous advertising increased more than ever before, reaching 58% of the total number of the show's advertisements, while by the end of 2014 it reached the unprecedented percentage of 63% (see Table 2). The results are quite supported by other studies. During the 2000s, humor was found to be the most significant element of likeability for the Super Bowl ads (Yelkur, et al., 2011), while in the period from 1996 to 2002, 66% of all Super Bowl ads used the humorous technique (Kelley and Turley, 2004). The advertising practitioners, were, also, convinced that humor was the most successful advertising strategy for the Super Bowl (Horovitz, 2006).

The first year's concerns about the appropriateness of implementing violent humor could and should be replaced with concerns of the increasing implementation of the technique during the following years. Aggression type of humor was found to be increasing to no prior levels, with more than one in ten humorous Super Bowl advertisements including violence (see Table 2), while the element of vulgarity more than doubled (see Table 3). The same tendency remained until 2014, as far as aggressive humor is concerned (see Table 2); the element of vulgarity, although reduced, continued to remain on a high level (see Table 3). These results are consistent with those of many other studies finding an increase in violence, aggression, or comedy violence, during the 2000s.

As early as 2004, comedy violence had reached an unparalleled level (Goodman, 2004 cited in Beard, 2005). The advertisements that involved violent acts or combined violence with humor tripled among 2007 and 2009 (Blackford, et al., 2011). In 2009, more than 70% of Super Bowl ads employed some form of aggression (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010). In billboard advertising, aggression humor more than doubled (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015). Comic violence had turned into one of the most successful strategies for Super Bowl advertising (Sauxy, 2012). It seems that as, although, the decade was characterized by low violence rates, after the 9/11 attacks

violence kept occupying Americans' brains. The rise of films about the war and the commentary of shows on the issue made the society accustomed to violent images.

Non-sense was the most used type of humor from 2000 to 2014, followed by word-play humor which saw a significant decrease compared to the previous years (see Table 2). The use of animals as a humorous advertisement's element experienced a significant increase, while the use of cartoon characters declined (see Table 3). Increased use of animals is, further, supported by the Kelley and Turley's (2004) longitudinal study, according to which "animal" Super Bowl advertisements increased to a percentage as high as 30%, during the period from 1996 to 2002. In the 2000s, the use of animals was considered one of the most significant Super Bowl tactics (Sauxy, 2012; Horovitz, 2006); a tactic that could guarantee success.

Sexual humor (see Table 2) and stereotyping (see Table 3), both, increased, during those years, as depicted in both this study's and Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F. (2015) study's results. And although women stereotyping was found to be detached from the traditional depictions, especially after the millennium (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016), a new male stereotyping was found to emerge (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005; Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016). During the decade, depictions of men started being linked to signs of weakness (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005), and loss of power (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016), while in many advertisements men were identified as targets of aggressive actions (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010). Men depictions, were, also, related to commitment avoidance, while, inside this frame, women were depicted either as dangerous, or as sexual objects (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005); another possible reason for the rise of female sexual images during the period.

The weakness of the male figure in advertisements has been linked to the economic recession and its social consequences (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005; Peterson, 2012 cited in Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016), as well as to the dominance of women and minorities' races during the last decades (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005). Whatever the causes of this new male stereotyping, and although if violence can be better disguised in comedy expressions (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010), both advertisers and consumers should be alert, as these illustrations of loss of power and male victimization could have harmful consequences to the modern society and its social structure.

Conclusions

The present study is the first longitudinal study combining a content analysis of actual Super Bowl advertisements together with an extensive micro and macro environment analysis. Following Weinberger M.G., Gulas and Weinberger M.F. (2015) study, it addressed the issues of humor and humor styles' evolution in advertising, in the American society context.

Humor in Super Bowl advertising was found to be increasing during the whole 45-year period of the study. It followed an increasing path from 38% during the 70s to 63% by 2014 (see Table 2). These results are consistent with Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F.'s (2015) results who, examining billboard advertising for the whole previous century, also, found an upward trend of humor as an advertising technique.

The growing percentage of advertisements employing humor can, mainly, be attributed to the acceptance of humor as an effective advertising strategy. Although during the 70s many advertising practitioners still doubted humor effectiveness in advertising (Cone 1969, cited in Duncan, 1979; Beard, 2005), during the 80's the scenery changed. It was the decade during which advertisers turned more to emotional advertising (Batchelor and Stoddart, 2007), Ogilvy accepted the effectiveness of advertising humor (cited in Weinberger and Gulas, 1992) and Apple ran the "1984" Super Bowl advertisement (Tomkovich, Yelkur and Christians, 2001). TV became the most significant advertising media (Rasure, 2015b) and the media spread positively influenced the use of humor (Beard, 2005). From 70s to 80s, humor in Super Bowl advertising saw its highest increase jumping from 38% to 49% (see Table 2).

After the 80's, the percentage of humorous Super Bowl advertisements continued to increase (see Table 2). During the 90s and the 00s the advertising sector had accepted the use and recognized the significance of humor in advertising, while the increasing number of academic studies concerning the subject could guide marketers through the project of humor implementation. And although, many of the academic studies focusing on humor advertising effectiveness found mixed results (Eisend, 2009), it was clear that the question was not whether or not humor was effective but rather under which conditions marketers could best take advantage of the technique (Chattopadhyay and Basu, 1990). During these decades both longitudinal Super Bowl advertising studies (Tomkovich, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Yelkur, et al., 2011) and advertising practitioners (Horovitz, 2006) suggested that humor was the most successful advertising technique for Super Bowl commercials, while the high percentage of its use was confirmed by other longitudinal studies, as well (Kelley and Turley, 2004).

The macro- environment, on the other hand, the historical and cultural milieu, does not seem to have an influence on the evolution of humor in advertising. People seem to enjoy humor both in good and in bad times. Naturally, people are fond of humorous expressions in good times as humor is linked to playfulness, joy (Martin, 2007) and affect (Kelley and Turley, 2004). Nonetheless, even through hard times people need humor. During economic recessions, humorous advertising, even though more difficult to create, has not been found to lose its effectiveness superiority over non-humorous advertising (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Zotos, 2014). The need of humor through difficult times can be explained by the mood management theory according to which people try to reduce negative feelings and prolong good ones (Zillmann, 1988). In difficult moments people usually feel despair; humor can help them hope again (Vilaythong, et al., 2003). The present study suggests that societal changes do not influence the overall use of humor in advertising; they do, though, have an impact on specific types of humor employed.

Non-sense and word-play (puns) were found to be the most frequently employed types of humor in Super Bowl humorous advertisements during the whole 45-year period of the study, with a great difference compared to the rest humor types (see Table 2). The frequent use of these types of humor have been supported by many other studies, as well (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; McCullough and Taylor, 1993; Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015), while the fact that they have been found to be enjoyed by different cultures (McCullough and Taylor, 1993) explains their extensive use in the most multicultural society.

Word – play is a low-risk type of humor (McCullough and Taylor, 1993); hence a safe marketing choice. Since it includes the resolution of a word-puzzle, it originates from the incongruity (incongruity-resolution) theory (Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007). On the other hand, non-sense humor, which, again, originates from the incongruity theory (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004) seems to be enjoyable due to its main characteristic of overcoming logical constraints and presenting to the audience images far away from daily life experiences. The fact that both types originate from the incongruity theory, further, explains their frequent use, since incongruity is the most used theory in advertising (Speck, 1991). It has been found to increase attention and produce pleasant feelings (Berlyne, 1971, cited in McQuarrie and Mick, 1996), while being enjoyed by different cultures (Alden, Hoyer and Lee, 1993) and, equally, enjoyed by all genders (Schwarz, Hoffmann and Hutter, 2015).

These types were, also, the most employed ones in billboard advertising, during the same period (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015). During the whole research period, from 1969 to 2014, non-sense humor was found to be the prevailing type of humorous advertisements for

the Super Bowl advertising (see Table 2), while word-play was found to be the prevailing type of humorous advertisements in outdoor advertising (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015). This deviation in the employment of humor types can be attributed to the medium of humorous advertising messages. Word-play is thought to be applied better in print (McCullough and Taylor, 1993); hence billboards would be a better—suited medium, while television, an audiovisual medium, offers greater potential for the employment of non-sense humor.

Warm/sentimental is a positive, mild type of humor (Aaker, Stayman and Hagerty, 1986). As it involves arousal (Aaker, Stayman and Hagerty, 1986), it is based either to arousal/safety (relief) or to a combination of arousal-safety and incongruity theory (Speck, 1991). According to the study's findings, warm/sentimental type of humor was, quite, frequently employed during the 70s and the 80s, reaching its highest percentage (5%), during the nostalgic period of the 80s (see Table 2). However, during the twenties sexual humor was found to be equally employed for the first time, while the aggression type vastly over passed the percentage of warm/sentimental humor, reflecting important societal changes (see Table 2).

As warm/sentimental humor advertising illustrates images of pleasant and loving relationships (Aaker, Stayman and Hagerty, 1986), it, often, involves elements, such as children and animals which are, significantly, related to affection (Kelley and Turley, 2004). Although, using children as an element of Super Bowl advertising has been quite supported by relevant studies (Kelley and Turley, 2004; Yelkur, et al., 2011), it seems that the use of animals is a more successful strategy (Tomkovick, Yelkur and Christians, 2001; Kelley and Turley, 2004; Horovitz, 2006; Yelkur, et al., 2011). According to the present study's findings, both the use of children and animals saw an increase from the 70s to the 90s, but during the 2000s the use of children significantly dropped (3%) while the use of animals increased to an unprecedented level (13%) (see Table 3).

As both elements serve similar causes, a suggestion is that the demographic changes and the family structure transformation had a negative influence in the use of children in advertising. In fact, the percentage of unmarried adults dropped by 21% from the 60's to the 00s (Cohn, et al., 2011), while the percentage of childless women doubled from the 70s to the 00s (Livingston and Cohn, 2010). On the other hand, animals, as time passes, are not only seen as companions and friends (Spears, Mowen and Chakraborty, 1996), but, also, as members of a family (Kennedy and McGarvey, 2008), perhaps constituting the feeling of interpersonal affection. In addition, animals in advertising have been found to transfer qualities to the products (Phillips, 1996) and the brands (Lloyd and Woodside, 2013). Surprisingly, the following years the percentage of advertisements including children more

than tripled. The comic/cartoon element was not found to follow some particular pattern. Its high use during the 90s, however, might be related to the emergence and wide viewership of adult animation series (see Table 3).

Aggressive and sexual humor falls under Freud's category of tendentious wit (McCullough and Taylor, 1993). As they arise emotions that are, usually, suppressed either by the individual itself, or/and by the society (Ziv, 1984, cited in McCullough and Taylor, 1993), they are related to the relief theory (Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007). These types of humor are particularly important, as they reflect societal issues of great significance. As humor, in order to be created, requires a violation of norms (Veatch, 2008), the use of these types may reveal important information about the beliefs and values of a society. Most importantly, these types of humor, have the ability to disguise the sensible moral subjects of violence (Speck, 1991) and sex (Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007), under the dress of humor, while, still, addressing certain messages to the society. Super Bowl advertising saw a significant increase for both types of humor from 1990 to 2014 (see Table 2). In fact, during the last decade of the century, sexual humor doubled, in comparison to the previous decade, while aggressive humor more than doubled in the same period, for Super Bowl ads (see Table 2). These findings were similar to those found for outdoor advertising (Weinberger, M.G., Gulas and Weinberger, M.F., 2015), suggesting a change of perspectives concerning societies' ethics and moral values. The element of vulgarity, which is related both to aggressive and sexual humor, also, more than doubled from the 90s to the 00s (see Table 2).

Particularly, the findings regarding aggressive humor – which is a form of hostile humor targeting an individual or a group of individuals (Hampes, 2010), and that can be related to all three prevailing humor theories (Scharrer, et al., 2006; Blackford, et al., 2011)- were, further, supported by other studies indicating an unprecedented comedy violence increase, in Super Bowl advertising during the 2000s (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010; Blackford et al., 2011). Since the 2000s, aggressive humor has become the subject of many academic researches (Scharrer et al., 2006; Swani, Weinberger and Gulas, 2013; Yoon and Kim, 2014; Yoon, 2016).

Low- intensity, compared to high intensity, violent humor is found to be a more effective advertising strategy (Yoon, 2016), especially, since, low-intensity comedy violence is, equally, enjoyed by both genders (Swani, Weinberger and Gulas, 2013; Yoon, 2016). Although this kind of information can be valuable to marketers, the most important subject is which are the implications of increased aggression advertising for the American society and culture (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010). Most of the aggressive advertising illustrate men (Scharrer, et al.,2006), while the amount of aggressive advertising for which males are portrayed as the victims of violence has, also,

significantly increased (Gulas, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010). In 2004, more than half of aggressive prime time advertisements combined violence and humor (Scharrer, et al., 2006), raising concerns about the increasing liking of the depiction of violent images (Blackford, et al., 2011).

Sexual humor, although found in a very small percentage of humorous Super Bowl advertisements during the 70s, saw a significant increase in the 90s and an even higher during the first years of the new millennium (see Table 2). The low percentage in the 70s was, possibly, the outcome of the women's movement and the actions of organizations promoting women rights, such as NOW (Angely, 2015). Nevertheless, during all the other decades, women being portrayed as sexual objects remained a main advertising technique (Zotos and Tsihla, 2014). As sex is an inherently offensive subject it stands great chances of offending an audience (Beard, 2008). Nevertheless, its use is continuously increasing (see Table 2). This increase, most times, best serves marketers, since provocative advertising increases audience engagement (Nam, Iyer and Frith, 2015), while sexual humor has been found to increase both attention and recall (Sabri, 2012). Nevertheless, even though combining humor with sexual appeals makes sexual appeals appear more ethical to the audience (Shabbir and Thwaites, 2007), when the appeals are sexist, they actually increase the audiences' intolerance to sexist attitudes (Ford, Wentzel and Lorion, 2001).

Stereotyping is, yet, another concept of high societal significance. The stereotyping element, for Super Bowl humorous advertisements, was found to be decreasing during the 80s and the 90s, but in the 00's it saw a significant increase and reached its 70s' percentage (2%) (see Table 3). Gender stereotyping was quite common during the 70s, with advertisement portraying women in traditional roles; not, yet, reflecting the changes of women's roles in society (Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009). After the millennium, though, traditional stereotyping was found to be decreasing both for males and females (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016). The non-traditional stereotyping element, which increased in the 00s, is, also, more effective as an advertising technique, especially when applied to humorous advertising (Eisend, Plagemann and Sollwedel, 2014). The increase in stereotyping for Super Bowl humorous advertisements, during the 21st century, occurred, mainly, to the increase of a specific male stereotyping, far from the traditional one; that of men as weak figures (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005; Green and Van Oort, 2013; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016). These images are, also, related to humorous aggressive advertising targeting males (Scharrer, et al., 2006; Weinberger, McKeage and Weinberger, 2010). The emergence of this new stereotype has been linked to the economic recession and its social consequences (Messner and Montez de Oca, 2005; Peterson, 2012, cited in Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou, 2016), as well as to the dominance of women and minorities' races during the last decades (Messner and Montez de

Oca, 2005). Advertisers should be cautious, as stereotyping, either concerning males or females, ethnicities or minority groups, is a really dangerous advertising technique; since stereotypes, significantly, affect the way we view and, ultimately, treat others (Plous and Neptune, 1997).

Limitations and Future Research

The results of the study are based on content – analysis of Super Bowl advertisements during a 45-year period, as well as on an extensive analysis of the historical and cultural content of the American society through secondary sources. Although the content-analysis was conducted and manipulated in the most efficient way in order to avoid issues concerning the objectivity and reliability of the analysis, known as the most vulnerable parts of the content-analysis methodology (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991), the possibility of subjective judgments on behalf of the coders cannot be fully excluded.

Super Bowl advertising is, undoubtedly, a powerful sample for measuring the dominant advertising strategies, while gaining information about the prevailing culture of the American society. Nonetheless, in order to, further, confirm the results of the evolution of both humor and humor styles, longitudinal studies based on different samples can be conducted, as well. Some suggestions, for instance, would be a longitudinal analysis of print (magazine) advertisements for the same period or a similar analysis of the Clio award nominated and winning advertisements.

The present study's results and research concern the American society, exclusively. Recognition of the method combining advertisements' content-analysis with historical and cultural analysis can lead to similar studies for other societies, worldwide.

Although conducting a similar study based on different samples or concerning other societies are important suggestions for future research, there is a significant need of examining a different advertising medium; that of internet which has brought about a groundbreaking revolution. After the millennium, and especially during the second decade of the 21st century, online and viral advertising have laid new foundations for the marketing sector. These innovative advertising means, which are greatly used for branding, are quite different from TV ads (Porter and Golan, 2006), mainly due to the fact that they have changed the role of consumers from a final advertising target to a medium integrated in the promotion of a campaign (Golan and Zaidner, 2008).

According to viral advertising studies, provocative advertisements are the most prevailing types of advertisements for a viral marketing campaign (Porter and Golan, 2006; Golan and Zaidner, 2008;

Brown, Bhadury, and Pope 2010). And, although the fact that humorous advertisements are widespread in viral campaigns (Porter and Golan, 2006; Golan and Zaidner, 2008) is not a matter of concern, it should be a matter of great social concern the fact that the majority of the most successful viral campaigns contain sexual (Porter and Golan, 2006; Golan and Zaidner, 2008) and aggressive depictions (Brown, Bhadury, and Pope 2010). Examining the evolution of humor and humor styles in advertising seems to be an effective way of analyzing the prevailing culture of a society as it gives a great opportunity to elicit information about the norms and beliefs of a society that have to be violated for a humorous attempt to be successfully achieved (Veatch, 1998).

The suggestions for future research are, mainly, appointed to the evolution of humor styles, as it seems that the percentages of the general use of humor do not undergo significant variations, since the recognition of its value as an advertising technique, at the end of the 20th century. On one hand, this is attributed to the effectiveness of humor as an advertising appeal, since it, undoubtedly, captures audiences' attention (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Madden and Weinberger, 1982; Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Duncan and Nelson, 1985; Weinberger and Campbell, 1990; Cline and Kellaris, 2007; Eisend, 2009). On the other hand, it can be attributed to the significance of the nature of humor itself, as “only humor (possibly the most original and brilliant of humankind's achievements) can accomplish the otherwise impossible feat of uniting all spheres of human life by bathing them in the iridescent light of its prisms. To live in the world as though it were not the world, to respect the law but to remain above it, to have possessions ‘as if not possessing’, to renounce things as though it were no renunciation: – all the things asked of us in such well-loved and frequently expressed words of wisdom can only be put into practice through humor” (Hesse, 1927 p.53).

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