Humor as Reward and Relief in TikTok Influencer Videos: Effects on Parasocial Relationships

Hatzithomas Leonidas[a], Margariti Kostoula[b], Riskos Kyriakos[c], Voutsa Maria[d], Boutsouki Christina[b]

[a] Department of Business Administration, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece;
[b] Department of Economics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece;
[c] Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands;
[d] Department of Communication and Marketing, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus

Abstract

The use of humor in TikTok videos is a timely and interesting topic for advertising researchers and practitioners. However, there is insufficient evidence on how followers form parasocial relationships with TikTok influencers through humor, and this study seeks to address this gap. Specifically, the present study investigates the impact of playfulness and motive consistency on perceived humor, which in turn affects parasocial relationships through entertainment experience and perceived loneliness. An online survey of 285 Gen Z TikTok users demonstrates that when TikTok videos are playful and consistent with followers' motivations, they create humor that enhances parasocial relationships through increased entertainment and reduced loneliness. This study provides valuable insights into both theory and practice regarding the psychological processes underlying the effectiveness of humor in influencer marketing.

Keywords: TikTok, Playfulness, Humor, Entertainment, Loneliness, Parasocial Relationships