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The humour strategy

You might not expect the Swiss to be overflowing with humour. And yet those advertising tourism on behalf of the country have consistently reaped laughs since the 1950s, generating attention for Switzerland at the same time.

April 1957: eight million people were amazed by the masterful TV documentary on the “spaghetti harvest” in Morcote, Ticino, shown on the UK’s weekly news programme “Panorama”. BBC cameraman Charles de Jaeger showed, in all seriousness, farmers’ wives busily picking the ripe spaghetti from the trees, with the narration noting that, thanks to an extremely mild winter and successful Swiss breeding techniques, the pasta strands had all grown to exactly the same length. The SNTTO office in London provided considerable support to the filming. The strategy bore fruit – the humour paid off, and Switzerland was on everyone’s lips. In contrast to provocative campaigns, this humorous type of advertising engenders positive emotions, which can be associated with Switzerland as a holiday destination.

A flair for sophisticated jokes

Years later came the second prank: on 1 April 2009, a short TV piece went viral. It was a report on daring men and women who do everything possible to ensure that their country remains clean – which

is why they were seen devotedly scrubbing away at cliffs and mountaintops. ST Director Jürg Schmid himself lent the story even more credibility by launching it on the radio at 7 o’clock in the morning. Thousands wanted to get stuck in and scrub the Matterhorn and other peaks clean of dirt. The Swiss joke was viewed over 100 million times, and Time Magazine online nominated the April Fools’ Day prank as the fifth best in the world – at Spiegel online it even reached number one. And even better: the PR gag became a reality, in the form of cliff-cleaning courses.

A joyful heart. Again and again the SNTTO/Switzerland Tourism have produced advertising with its tongue firmly in its cheek. Other witty campaigns include:

- 1966: A jovial step for mankind – “Before you travel to the moon – travel to Switzerland” campaign.
- 2006: Mountain men, not football players – a call for football World Cup “widows” to discover real Swiss men.
- 2007: Hot snowmen – bare-chested ski instructors enjoy the winter sun.
- 2016: Bruno and the fantastic stuntman – to shoot the coolest selfies you need a cool stunt double.

1953

Swiss television began: the first studio was situated in a converted tennis hall.



1957

Beginnings of European unity (Treaty of Rome)



Launch of joint marketing of the Alpine region in the US (Alpine Tourist Commission ATC).

1958



"Spaghetti Harvest in Ticino" (1957), filmed by the BBC with the support of the SNTU in London.



Giving their all for a clean Switzerland:
the cliff cleaners on 1 April 2009.



BERGLUFT MACHT SCHLANK



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