Use of humor in advertising and how it makes advertising effective in Karachi
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Communication Design
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Abstract
The relationship between business and humor is that the seriousness of business requires a serious interest in life, and so does humor, as it is considered as a form of tension release especially for business oriented people who are generally affected by the current economic turmoil in the Asian region. Indeed, some people can become so sensitive to business and financial turmoil that they feel hurt if disaster strikes them.

Also examined are the effects of humor on consumers. The subjectivity of humor and its dynamics in the act of persuasion can bring either success or failure to any business. However, as long as humor prevails, there is still a little hope left.

This paper will present humor as being the lighter or brighter side of the business. It will describe how humor functions in various ways of advertising.
Introduction
It has been a challenge to create this dissertation report every step of the way but at the same time it has been fun in many ways as well. During looking for and gathering information for this research, I have learnt a lot, both about how to conduct a study and how to come up with a valid topic and research about it in depth. There have been a lot of people and their views involved, directly or indirectly, in the work for this dissertation. First I would like to thank all the people who helped me out for gathering important information, and I would like to thank my supervisors for their support and guidance with our dissertation. It would have been difficult to achieve the goals we wanted to achieve without their support and constructive feedback. I am grateful to my friends and loved ones for the support they gave me through out this time.

I hope that this dissertation will interest the reader to learn more about humor in advertising. Since people are exposed to a great amount of humorous advertisements each day, this subject represents an area that could be of interest to all of us. The following quotation is memorable words that advertisers should consider.

“Humor in advertising is like a gun in the hands of a child. You have to know how to use it. Otherwise, it can blow up on you.” (Miller, 1992)

As far as I have researched, I found many different views on what exactly humor is and what function it serves. People of most ages and cultures respond to humor. Majority of the people are able to be amused, to smile or laugh at something funny that they come across, which is why they are considered to have a ‘sense of humor’. Humor is found everywhere. From radio,
movies, songs to TV, no matter where you are. The main reason why people like humor is that it makes them laugh. Everybody needs a good laugh every now and then. Thus comedy helps bring people’s spirits up. It makes people happy and puts a smile on their face. As a friend of mine while I interviewed her said, “life is hard and anything that helps me to smile and makes me laugh is a big plus for me.” Another friend said, “Something that would cheer me up and help me forget about problems I face or a bad day is all I need.” For many others, humor was an activity, to rest and enjoy, having a good time and peace of mind, sharing laughter and getting entertained after a stressful day, either by reading comic books, jokes, or watching comedy shows on the television.

People of different ages respond to humor differently. How funny an individual finds something to be, may depend on what culture the people are coming from, their maturity, their education level, and their intelligence. For example, children may find puppet shows and cartoons like Tom and Jerry to be hilarious. Teenagers or youngsters may find musical comedy or comedy in films and movies to be more amusing. Where as people of an older age group may enjoy political jokes and shows.

Comedy started to step into Pakistani media with puppet shows and funny dramas like Guest House, Fifty Fifty, Shosha, Studio 2 ½, Ankh Macholi, Haiga Sargam, Main aur tum (Zareena Khan), 4 man show, Hum sub ummed say hain and Candid Camera. Comedy shows with comedians like Omer Sharif, Moen Akhtar, Faisal Qureshi, and Anwar Maqsood, who present comedy on various topics of daily life and political humor, and funny
poetry by poets like Anwar Massod also became very popular and are enjoyed by viewers of an older mature age group. Musical parodies of funny political songs and songs of various artists like Abrar Ul-Haq’s ‘Preeto’, “Billo De Ghar”, “Jatt”, “Kuriyaan Lahore Diyaan”, “Sha reekan”, and other artists like Shehzad Roy’s “Laga Reh”, Ali Zafar’s “Chal Dil Meray” etc are enjoyed by the younger lot as they have a humor approach to highlight social issues and thus serve amusement. Songs as social commentaries became instant hit because they took adding humor to the song to their advan tage. The youth of today notice and are aware of these relevant social and political issues. Humor also became popular through cell phones as SMS jokes and soon it started being included in TV commercials as well as other various advertisements to attract more and more people towards a certain product. These include Commercials for various cell phone services like Ufone, Telenor and Warid as well as commercials for Pepsi (cricket of kids vs. Waseem Akram), Coca Cola (Brrr...), (khalay peelay jeelay) which I will discuss in detail later on in the chapters.

Every day people are exposed to a large amount of television advertisements. There are thousands of products in the market and it would be interesting to find out why we respond to certain advertise ments and not to others. I thought that it would be interesting to concentrate on humorous advertisements since they are a great part of advertising today. Therefore the purpose of this study was to look both on how different types of humor are used and what the benefits of humor are. There are some big benefits of using humor in television advertising, but there are some considerations that might or might not
work for the products that have been thought of.

Richards and Curran, 2002 textbooks define advertising as “any paid form of non-personal communication of ideas or products in the prime media, i.e. television, the press, posters, cinema and radio.”

Advertising could be used to make the target audience aware of the existence of a product or service, and the benefits it confers to customers. Advertising is a part of the promotional mix that also includes trade promotions, sales promotions, personal selling and sales management. The marketing communication process is used to show how the promotional message goes from the sender to the receiver. For example, an idea that needs to be translated into symbols, words, pictures or numbers in order to be communicated, are all based upon a source. This message is translated to the customers through media such as television, radio, press or posters which are selected by the advertising company according to the medium through which it wants the message to be conveyed to the customers. Like if a message requires a certain product to be demonstrated through action and sound, television or cinemas would be preferred on that part, but if a message does not require any action or sound, then posters or press would do the job. But first, the communicators need to understand their target market to whom they would be selling their idea and product to, otherwise the response from the consumer’s side may not be so good and it might end up in disbelief or even rejection from the consumer to use the product that is being advertised. Feedback from the consumer on how much they like or dislike a specific product may depend on marketing research, to estimate how
people are reacting to the product’s advertisement and whether there has been an increase or decrease in sales. Though it is difficult to capture someone’s attention, keeping that attention becomes even more challenging.

Humor has proven to be one of the best techniques to have an ongoing consumer’s attention towards the product. It is effective in both getting attention and keeping it. Politicians, actors and actresses, public speakers, professors and indeed all of us at one time or another use humor to create a desired reaction. Similarly, advertisers also turn to humor in the hope to gain attention, to guide consumers on the product, to influence attitudes, and to create consumer action for them to keep buying the product. Today’s advertisements inform and guide many of the important decisions that we make in our lives, like what type of cars we drive, do we choose to live a healthy lifestyle, to plan ahead for retirement or to donate to charity. The way in which advertisements are affecting and shaping our attitudes, lifestyles and culture are too many to tally. The economic impact of advertising touches every customer-product industry, from cars to candy bars. Thus the overall level of advertising today is very high.

This paper is aimed to describe how advertisements that use humor in their content may seem more pleasing and attractive to consumers as compared to advertising a product seriously and straight to the point. A little twist in the story always adds a plus point, at least that’s what I personally feel. But then again, using humor in advertising a certain product alone not always works… I have analyzed this matter in the following chapters.
Chapter 1

Successful advertising
Advertising is defined in the Webster’s dictionary as “the action of calling something to the attention of the public especially by paid announcements, to call public attention by emphasizing desirable qualities so as to arouse a desire to buy or promote.”

Advertising is a mass media communication. For communication to be classified as advertising it must be paid for, delivered to an audience via mass media, and it must be attempting to persuade. In order to persuade or be effective, an advertisement must communicate to the audience the message that it wants to convey or either bring forward a message, in case of public service ads. If for example, the advertisement is aiming to sell a particular product then it must persuade the audience that very reason for which they need to or must buy that product.

Not only must the advertisement effectively communicate the desired message, but the individual audience must be willing to ‘buy into’ the desired message. In other words, for the advertisement to be effective, the communication must be sent from one end successfully, as well as received on the other end successfully. That’s the give and take relationship that the consumer then builds with a certain product. Thus, advertising is a two-way communication process, but it really is up to the audience how they take the message. They might accept the message, ignore the message or they might revolt against the message. So it’s actually the consumers who have more power than they often realize because they are the ones being persuaded and they are the ones who would decide in the end whether, how effective the advertising or its message is.

A successful advertising campaign is a
campaign that makes the product it represents sell better after the campaign, than it did before. In order to do so, you have to engage the viewers and get their attention and interest in the product you are advertising for, through the message that you are conveying in your advertisement. Getting the viewers interest in the advertisement is equally as important as getting the consumer’s interest in a certain product to make him buy that product. The primary purpose is always, at the end of the day, to sell the product. How you get the consumers attracted towards a certain product is what really matters. Certain advertisements might be beautiful and might win many awards, but if it does not help to increase the product sales with the consumer’s interest, it is not a successful advertisement. Building up of interest within the consumers, is all in the techniques that the creative use in their advertisement to persuade the consumers that they should buy so and so product. It’s how they advertise the product that makes it stand out from other products and brands that are there in the market. For example, product messages that are presented with a humorous context help to shape the overall experience of the ad. If the humor is removed, the ad does not make sense any more. Also, the message that needs to be conveyed has to be simple in order for the consumers to understand it easily. It should be short, sweet and to the point. Thus humor appears in general to be an effective way to capture initial attention of the people so that it’s easy for them to remember the product. Interestingly, during my research I read an interesting advertising fact that humor does not appear to increase the initial attention for the product that was already in notice of the customers. From cars to candy bars, generating
interest in the consumer is the key. For that, it is necessary to look into what the target market is, what would be the technique used for promoting a certain product, would that technique be compatible with what the target market would be receptive to or such that it would be able to generate consumer interest? How would including humor in the advertisement help in the increase or decrease of sales for a certain product? Weinberger and Gulas (1992) had stated that “humor is not, and never has been, a magic wand that assures more successful advertising, however success is defined. In spite of the wave of increasing numbers of humorous advertisements that may lead one into overstating the case for humor in advertising, it is important to understand that humor can be appropriate and effective in some situations and not in others.” Thus, whether including humor in an advertising is appropriate enough for the product and whether to use it to advantage or not, and how, are all necessary questions that an advertising agency must focus on before it decides to convey a certain message in order to advertise a product in an effective manner.
Chapter 2

Why use humor in advertising
Many of the advertising agencies use humor in their ads because it appeals to the consumers, as it makes them laugh, puts a smile on their face and lets them have a good time, relaxes the mind and makes them forget their worries for a while. Getting the consumer’s attention towards the product is the first step towards selling the product. By having their attention, conveying the desired message successfully, and getting the consumer to buy a certain product, is what really matters. However, how a consumer gets attracted towards a certain product or in what context they take the message being conveyed, also depends on the social and psychological factors, and what impact they have on his or her judgment about any humorous advertisement which can be found on Television, radio, print media or online.

Advertising humor can be extraordinarily effective when it is used correctly. People will actually look for your ads, and talk about them if they are good. But there are rules about using humor in advertising to represent your company, and following them is probably a good idea.

First, people like funny things. It puts them in a good mood, and it creates a more comfortable atmosphere and a more positive image for your company. It makes you easy to approach, and easy to remember. They tend to pay more attention to humorous commercials and tend to get more attracted towards it generally, as compared to commercials that have a more serious and direct approach towards the people, which at times, would seem to be boring for them. For example ads like Ariel, Surf Excel, Bright, and Robbin Blue in the category of detergents or Max and Vim in the category of Dish washing liquids, and various cooking oil ads like
Dalda, Kisan, Sufi Canola, Sun Flower cooking oil, Milk ads like Good milk, Milkpak, Tetra Pak, Olpers etc are usually all very serious ads but they do have the tendency to be good humorous advertisements, which would result in consumer interest at a much more greater level and eventually, it would result in the expand of the product’s market size.

On the other hand, more people look out towards humorous ads simply because they generate a more pleasing environment, a feeling of happiness and satisfaction, light heartedness, and are easier to be conveyed to the consumers successfully. People generally pay more attention to an ad as soon as they perceive that there is humor in the advertisement, which enables a more positive image and a more approachable product to the consumer as is stated in a book, “Advertising humor is at its most effective when it is being used with established and frequently purchased goods. This is because a more established company has a stronger brand identity than an unknown product” (Humor in Advertising, A Comprehensive Analysis by Charles S. Gulas, Marc G. Weinberger, 2006, 240 pages).

Advertising humor also needs to be well suited to its audience. If your customers don’t get the joke, then the joke will be on you. A sophisticated audience will understand your puns, but a young audience may only understand slapstick comedy or a silly cartoon caricature. Inside jokes can be effective if the recipient understands that it was done for them, but nobody else will get it.

A factor that must be taken into consideration, however, is that a lot of people simply do not have the sense of humor. They simply do not find the joke funny or either they don’t relate to it, resulting
in their lack of interest to view the advertisement or even to buy that particular product. So there are chances of losing such customers easily, resulting in shrinkage of the potential size of the market.

Another thing to worry about while using humor in advertising is that a lot of people misinterpret the humor or the joke being carried on in an advertisement for a particular product. They don’t understand the joke properly, or even if they do, they don’t understand how it’s related to the product. Many people do not get the joke, so the market size shrinks again.

Sometimes, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, using humor in an ad might result in insulting the potential customer. They may simply get offended thinking that the ad is making fun of them. Some people might take it to their heart and others might get angry. It’s like fire playing with humor in ads. There are chances of the market getting shrunk again but then before making an ad, you really want to wonder if it’s worth the risk, before hand.

Advertising humor also needs to be product specific. We have all seen funny ads we liked so much that we forgot what was being sold. Advertising humor must relate directly to your business or products if you want to be remembered.

Advertising humor has a relatively short life. The first time we see it we may laugh out loud. But after a while, although we still may smile at the joke, it’s not so funny any more. Funny ads need to be replaced periodically.

Advertising humor works best with established and commonly purchased products. Humor in advertising works for business services, familiar items, and products we all know. But corporate
image and industrial advertising are serious business. Unknown, risky, expensive, or sensitive products are not normally suited to the lighter touch of advertising humor.

Thus, yes, humor in advertising is a risky job but at the same time it can also be amazingly effective. When done in the right manner, putting everything together properly, humor can work really, really well. “Humor is a delicate process of attracting a viewer or listener’s attention to the client’s product. Done right, it achieves success. Doing it right means not only engaging the prospect, but getting them to remember the product. On a national level who can forget the Budweiser Frogs and Wendy’s “Where’s the Beef” on television. The VW bug intro campaign was a great one in print.” Humor in the advertising Business: Theory, Practice and Wit by Fred K. Beard 2007.

However, humor does not always pull it off. It’s a risky job, and it does not always work. For example, they tried to take the Honda CC motor bike ad towards the funny ad but it just doesn’t relate to the whole concept of fun and laughter. It does not make any sense at all to me. Thus humor can sometimes work in favor of the product but it can also work against it. If the humor in a certain product is effective, it helps to draw more and more people towards the product, and helps to keep the consumer’s attention. More and more people would easily remember the product that the humor is associated with, they will talk about it, and eventually the ad would be popular in no time. But, on the other hand, an ad agency needs to be careful while dealing with humor for their product’s advertisement because if the humor turns out to work against the product’s selling point, then it’s a big turn off at the end, both for the ad agency as
well as for the consumers. For instance, in an ad for a medical product, which it self people or patients take very seriously, using humor for its advertising would just leave a very negative impact for the con-sumers. For example “Teeku- bacho’n ka dost” an ad for children’s vaccination in which there is an illustration of a happy injection standing with a small child, is so pointless, it wouldn’t persuade me on any level at all to convince children to ever have their vaccinations done, be cause looking at the low quality of how the product is being advertised, I don’t even want to imagine how bad the prod-uct itself would be.

Will advertising humor work in your ads? Absolutely – if you can make it appropri-ate to your products and customers, if they understand it, if it is related to your business or message, and if you change your ads frequently enough so that they don’t wear out. Advertising humor definitely gets attention. And if your ads don’t get attention first, they will be anything but funny. But when done right, advertising humor can send your ads light years ahead of the competition, and that’s what Professional Advertising is all about.
Chapter 3

Ways of using humor in ads, and its benefits
There is Henri Bergson’s theory of laughter, also called Taxonomy, which divided humor into four parts, that is, either physical or verbal humor and either romantic or satiric. First, the theory specifies the distinction of the physical comedy of action used, or verbal comedy, also called “wit.” This distinction between physical and verbal humor was important because it differentiated between the use of humor on radio and television that verbal humor could only work on radio where as television was a medium through which both physical and verbal humor could be showed but at the same time it stated that television most often uses physical humor, and that it’s the only medium that could show action. Humor is physical when it shows action, that is, various distinct expressions and different body languages, which can not be seen on the radio. A good example of physical comedy can be “tom and Jerry”, a popular action based cartoon often with no words at all. Thus, physical comedy is best stated on television to show gags and tricks which are most difficult to represent in a media that has little or no room for showing movement, because such a media for example radio, is only good for verbal humor as it emphasizes on speaking more rather than emphasis on action.

There are seen to be different ways in which humor in ads is used. For example, some jokes have cute humor (Airtel ad in which a child complains to his father on his toy phone about his mother scolding him thinking that Airtel made the call possible. Another example is a Surf Excel ad in which there is a little boy trying to fix the knots of his shoes and while doing so he gets him self all dirty in mud). Some ads are witty (example one of Mountain dew’s ad in which a person rolls down a steep hill after a bottle of dew in order to
catch it so that he does not have to lose his dew). Some ads may contain content about making fun of a person or situation (Ufone ad in which two guys tell another person that he should get Ufone while making fun of the service that person was using as it was not working) which is basically about humor in comparison. There are ads which use exaggeration to build up humor and make the ad look lively (example Ufone ad with Faisal Qureshi). There are some ads which use sarcasm in a way that it looks or sounds funny (example the coke ad “Khalay peelay jeelay” in which there is a family sitting on the dining table and the brother is serious, but when he agrees to have coke giving a smile to everyone, the whole family cheers up and starts putting coke in each other’s glasses).

Also, there are different products that are more or less appropriate for television advertising. There are some big benefits of using humor in television advertising, but there are some considerations that have to be thought of; otherwise the whole idea behind the ad can lead to lack of its effectiveness and thus bringing great loss for the company on the market side.

“Humor in advertising is like a gun in the hands of a child. You have to know how to use it. Otherwise, it can blow up on you.” (Miller, 1992)

On the other hand, Henri Bergson’s theory states that romantic humor aims at sharing pleasure. This type of comedy is subtle; it includes playfulness, and human responses. Romantic comedies are ideally suited to advertising, where consumption is routinely presented as a solution to life’s ills, and they focus on uniqueness, originality, ritual and product consumption benefits. For example, Lipton ad in
which a young couple ask their parents when they fell in love and the parents in reply tell them that it happened just on their wedding day when they saw each other for the first time.

When happy endings occur, humor moves from being romantic to “satiric” where generally a comic expression of an individual or a certain situation leads to imperfection of them, which results in laughter of the viewers at the characters or at the situation. Example of such an ad would be the ufone ad with Faisal Qureshi in which he’s being making fun of because of the low quality service of cell phone that he was using. Another example of an ad is a ufone ad again where the husband and wife are sitting face to face but having an argument on sms using the ufone service and in the end the husband’s battery dies off and the pun in the ad at the very end, is a good example of this type of humor and how it is used in advertising. Therefore, humor in advertising can be used in a number of different ways, including situations due to comparison, exaggeration, pun, sarcasm, silliness or surprise which have been discussed above, to arrive at a hilarious outcome.

The fact that different media uses certain types of humor more often suggests that the effectiveness of the type of humor may be different by medium. It has been observed that different types of humor in advertising are more effective and better suited to different types of media, in the sense that humor is seen to be used more in television advertising as compared to using humor in print advertisements or on radio. Consumers as a whole, enjoy advertisements that can make them laugh. Something that is funny has intrusive value and can grab attention. By looking
at various ads in print and on TV, it has been observed that humor is used in about 30 percent of all advertisements.

It is observed that there are two related humor types. Incongruity and incongruity-resolution. There is only a slight change that distinguishes between these two types. Firstly for incongruity, the clash of objects or situations can create humor. Where as incongruity-resolution results in amusement to be specific.

Both of these approaches are commonly used in advertising as they help to create unexpected situations to create a greater humorous impact on the customers.

Tough there are many different ways to categorize how humor in advertising is used; incongruity seems to be the most important factor.

“Incongruity theory does not allow for the socially constructed nature of humor as an interaction between the humorer and the humoree (giver and receiver of humor). In other words, it considers humor as an individual rather than as a social phenomenon, despite considerable evidence to the contrary.” (Stern, 1996).

Incongruity alone may be enough to generate humor, but incongruity-resolution is considered to be a stronger humor type.

One reason for the success of humor in advertising may be that the population is aging, thus, with increase of maturity, people usually tend to develop a more comedic view of life. Also, humor helps individuals to adjust to situations that they can not control. It also helps people to cope up with life’s problems generally, as laughing allows people to escape from reality for a while. Comedy shows, programs, jokes, etc have increased in content over the past years; therefore, humor is an effective approach for
reaching a wide audience. While inter-
viewing Raiha Ahmed, who works in the
marketing department of an International
company named Herbion, she said that
the success of humor as an advertising
tactic is based on three factors. One,
people like to watch it, two, people laugh
and smile, and most importantly three,
they remember the message. She added
another important point along with this,
that to be successful, the humor being
used in an ad should connect directly to
the product’s benefits. It should tie to-
gether the product features, advantages to
the customers, and their personal values.

The nature of the product, the medium,
target audience factors, the communi-
cation goal, the type of message to be
conveyed, and the placement of the mes-
sage, all influence the cognitive, affective
and behavioral responses of customers in
the market place. In a broader sense, how
well a person may be able to understand
the humor being used in an ad, depends
on people’s individual sense of humor,
which may include some factors like
their individual sense of playfulness,
their ability to use humor to achieve
social goals, their personal recognition of
humor, their appreciation for humor and
how they use or perceive it. For instance,
the industries while advertising their
products make sure that funny material
does not divert attention from the mes-

gage that they want to convey to the
customers, thus they use subtle humor
rather than making it a hype. They also
make it a point to relate humor with the
product and they work on integrating it
with the message to be conveyed, making
sure at the same point not to make fun of
customers, and being alert of the humor
from dying out soon.

Humor is naturally and inherently
attractive to most consumers because it is a major component of our cultural value system. A positive relationship between humor and attracting attention has been found across many different types of situations. It has been recommended for use in sales presentations, educational settings, training sessions, after dinner speeches, and in the advertising for many different types of products, either on TV or in print. While the use of humor is high, the effectiveness of humor as a means of communication remains uncertain. Humor has proven to be hard to pin down and advertising agencies find it hard to understand the impact of humor and how to use it successfully.

Laughter is something that we hardly ever do alone. “Laughter is 30 times more frequent in social than solitary situations.” (Klugner et al, 2005). This is because most of the time laughter is more like a tool of communication. It attracts attention. It helps to minimize the gap between the company and the consumers by creating a feeling of good will, happiness and satisfaction. It makes it easy and comfortable for people to communicate across different levels. It increases the team spirit and encourages the advertising agency to work hard and make an effort to create even better ads than before. It also promotes positive, rather than negative reinforcement for instance, it encourages people to take risks and try out new things and have fun in life.
Chapter 4

Medium, and its effects on advertising humor
Media brings with itself different features that cause us to look at the advertisement differently. How clearly the message is being conveyed eventually results in the audience’s ability to process the information in that specific media. A clear message helps to engage the reader’s brain to watch, listen or read and get involved or take interest in the ad.

This chapter blends expert opinion, analysis and research about the impact of humor in different media. We first look at media strength and weaknesses in relation to where humor has the best chance to work. This approach includes Adeela Badshah’s view, a creative designer who is currently working in Manhattan Pakistan Private Limited, where she talks about media pacing. It was her politeness to personally review each media.

“Unfortunately here in Pakistan people do not really bother to research enough to compare the actual use and effectiveness of humor in advertising between different media. By research, I don’t necessarily mean formal research, but just going out and talking to people about what they would like to see” says Adeela. There is a range of media available for the advertisement of products, such as Television, radio, magazines, newspaper, direct mail, internet and outdoor advertisements. Out of these, Television and radio serve the ideal conditions for audience to process the message, as they provide active creative tools to develop and execute humor. “The executives feel that television and radio are best suited to the use of humor, while they give other advertising media much less support. Both provide useful starting points but neither provides actual evidence of humor’s use and performance in different media” was another point that Adeela forwarded.
Television and radio advertising are both highly attention getting because of production values and combination of their interfering nature and the fact that they are action media. There is also a difference between radio and television comedy. Visual humor can be developed much quicker than dialog-driven humor. You can see funny faster than you can hear it. Adeelas suggests that television is effective for obtaining both “recognition awareness” and “recall awareness”. The absence of visuals on radio is a handicap with recognition awareness but recall awareness is an objective where radio does help. TV advertising is usually “joke” oriented in design. Jokes work well in TV, especially given the relatively short 30 second and 15 second lengths of spots. Radio, on the other hand, is all “joke” oriented. There aren’t a lot of visual gags that work on radio. Radio also has the advantage of being able to have an element of sound effects and character voices as they all play a major part in radio advertising. Thus, from an attention and awareness perspective, it is not surprising to find a high percentage of ads on television and radio using humor.

Perhaps the devices to execute humor in print are more limited and the fundamental philosophy of using print may be different. Print may be less effective because audience processing is more intense and selective. Humor is also harder to execute in print because of fewer tools in media. Such differences would explain the huge difference in usage found between magazines versus radio and television. Magazine and newspaper ads require active reader participation, and as a result do not command attention as effectively as television or radio, tough there is opportunity for some recognition awareness for both through visual pre-
sentations. Recall awareness may be achieved with repetition of advertising in daily newspapers. Also, magazine advertisements tend to be serious publications and advertise products that use humor infrequently, as Adeela said, “clients do not usually welcome the idea of humor, as it’s a risky job. You have to hit the nail pretty well, and you have to sell the idea because the campaign is very serious to them and they can’t afford to take risks.” Thus after analyzing this, one can clearly see that the result for television and radio indicate positive conditions for the use of humor in advertising.

Media such as business and trade publications, catalogs, direct mail and internet websites offer slightly less favorable conditions for humor advertising. Hence the audience either has a past motivation to seek the message, in which case humor for attention-getting purposes is less important, or the nature of the products advertised is generally not as likely to fit with a humor appeal. This suggests that the contextual conditions and characteristics of the medium provide only a neutral environment for humor to work. It can work, but will be used much less often and more selectively.

About the outdoor, direct mailing and internet, there are very few traces of the usage of humor for advertising purposes. According to Adeela, “in direct mailing, the problem is that the designers don’t really care about making the message funny, they care about making some thing that sells because it’s hard enough to get people to read direct mail and if you annoy or offend them, you are making a hard task even more difficult.” The use of humor appears relatively strong in outdoor advertising. Outdoor has all the same preconditions
as television and radio for humor with the exception of fewer ‘tools to develop humor’. “Unlike TV or radio there is no ability to generate humor with audio or with dynamic interaction of characters. But at the same time, words, colors and pictures provide a considerable opportunity to take advantage of similar preconditions that favor television and radio advertisements” says Miss Zohra Yousaf, a Creative Director who works at a popular advertising agency named Spectrum. While interviewing her, she told me interesting points about why she thinks that humor in print media works more as compared to conveying the same message on television. If a viewer is reading through an ad she said, it means they are spending more time and giving more attention to an ad as compared to a TV commercial which most people don’t really concentrate on while viewing. So firstly, it helps to gain the potential customer’s attention easily. Second thing that Miss. Zohra pointed out was that when a viewer is reading through the printed advertisement, they are giving a little more of their time to the ad, which helps them remember the ad and helps to retain the message in the mind more clearly. Third point that she raised in favor of using humor in print media was that with the advantage to use more written text, the public can be provided with more of the message or details, information, or queries for that specific product thus helping to spread better awareness about a certain product eventually leading to quicker promotion for that specific message. “In my view, using print for advertising humor just makes the message more worthwhile in term as compared to television or radio” says Miss Zohra Yousaf.

As a relatively new advertising medium,
the internet may see increasing use of
humor, as the web has potential to use
the tools available to television and radio
and also add interactivity. Some advertis-
ers have begun to harness the potential
of the web for humor. Another caution
for people who delve into humor is also
the need to make sure not to look silly.
Adeela was of the view that “people who
depend on humor for impact often
lapse into foolishness. These are atten-
tion getters but they are poor salespeo-
ple. The relationship between gaining
attention and actually marketing is one
of stopping somebody on the street and
actually selling them something.”
Chapter 5

Analysis and conclusion
My personal point of view is that the evidence of humor in television ads is good. The overall results show gain in attention with rather neutral results for persuasion on TV. Humor in television ads positively influences recall and understanding but not persuasion. Use of humor in direct mail for an appropriate non serious situation works, while using humor in serious business events don’t work at all.

Overall, humor works, and that’s the bottom line. Whether it is on Television, radio, print or on net, every medium has their advantage and disadvantage over the other. Every ad has a target market. If the advertisements are done correctly, they are geared towards that specific target market that the product is aiming for. This is the general rules that every advertising agency follows. No business advertises itself, simply wanting to offend people and expect their ads to get published. How ever, the chance that you offend someone with a humorous ad is definitely out there, but then again, not every one is going to love you or your sense of humor.

Let’s say you are offering 10% of people with the humor you use in your ad. There would be one person out of the ten, who would talk to 10 different people against your ad. But every one is most likely talking about the advertising and not the product. You could still have the greatest product in the world and there would always be one person out there who would be criticizing your ads. These 10 conversations could be between people who loved your ad or simply forgot about it right after they viewed the ad. Either way, this one person is getting 10 people thinking more about your ad.

If done correctly, your ads will inform your target market about your product.
and get them talking about it. Now if you are successful in generating a little bit of buzz, you will reach even more people outside of your target market and eventually your customers will start doing the advertising for you.

Humorous advertising, although risky, can be very beneficial. Your target market will most likely understand your humor, viewers outside your target market may get offended, but this will actually work for you than it would work against you. As long as you are not trying to offend someone, then the buzz that gets generated by your ads will be very positive to your advertising campaign.

Generally, people who like your ads are not going to tell you that they like them, where as people who are dissatisfied or offended by your ads, would make a big deal about it. So one should take such negative comments as a source of feed back, rather than coming up with excuses that the audience does not understand creative ideas, because what ever that is being created, is eventually for the same audience as they are the ones who are the potential buyers of the product being advertised for. Today’s society is much broader minded, liberal and tolerant and they would definitely accept if offered something new which is on a lighter and wittier side.
Glossary
**Advertising**

It’s a form of communication that typically attempts to persuade potential customers to purchase or to consume more of a particular brand or service.

**Humor**

It is the tendency of particular cognitive experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement. People of all ages respond to humor.

**Commercial**

It is a span of television programming produced and paid for by an organization that conveys a message.

**Advertising campaign**

It is a series of advertisement messages that share a single idea and theme which make up an integrated marketing communication (IMC). Advertising campaigns appear in different media across a specific time frame.

**Target audience**

In marketing and advertising, a target market or a target group is the primary group of people that an advertising campaign is aimed at appealing to. The target audience can be people of a certain age group, gender, marital status etc.

**Advertising agency**

It is a service business dedicated to creating, planning and handling advertising and promotions for its clients in effort of selling the client’s products or services. An advertising agency can also handle overall marketing and branding strategies and sales promotions for its clients.

**Product**

It is an item that ideally satisfies a market’s want or need.
**Brand name**

It is a collection of experiences and associations connected with a service, person or any other entity. It is more correctly used to constitute a type of trade mark for the product.

**Brand identity**

A product identity or a brand image are typically the attributes one associates with a brand, how the brand owner wants the consumer to perceive the brand.

**Taxonomy**

There is Henri Bergson’s theory of laughter, also called Taxonomy, which divided humor into four parts, that is, either physical or verbal humor and either romantic or satiric.
Appendices
My first interview was with Raiha Ahmed, who works in the marketing department of an International company named Herbion Private Limited.

**Q.** Would you enjoy ads with humor as the theme more than the serious ones?

**Raiha:** Yes definitely I would enjoy ads with humor more than serious ads just because for me, they add an element of surprise and helps to keep my attention from the beginning till the end.

**Q.** Does using humor for promotion of a product persuade you to buy the product?

**Raiha:** It might persuade me enough for me to go and actually buy the product but then it also depends on the quality or level of the humor being used.

**Q.** What does the quality of humor being used do to change your perceptions about a certain product?

**Raiha:** Looking at the quality of humor and execution style that there is in the commercial, helps me to judge the quality of a product itself. So to what degree I might be willing to buy that product varies from the quality of the product’s advertisement.

**Q.** What do you think about the success of humor as an advertising tactic?

**Raiha:** The success of humor as an advertising tactic is based on three factors. One, people like to watch it, two, people laugh and smile, and most importantly three, they remember the message.

**Q.** What does it take for humor to be successful if used in advertising for a product?

**Raiha:** To be successful, the humor that is being used in an ad should connect directly to the product’s benefits. It should tie together the product features, advantages to the customers, and their personal values.
Q. In your view what factors influence the change of behavior in customers as far as the market place is concerned?

Raiha: The nature of the product, the medium, target audience factors, the communication goal, the type of message to be conveyed, and the placement of the message, all influence the cognitive, affective and behavioral responses of customers in the market place. In a broader sense, how well a person may be able to understand the humor being used in an ad, depends on people’s individual sense of humor, which may include some factors like their individual sense of playfulness, their ability to use humor to achieve social goals, their personal recognition of humor, their appreciation for humor and how they use or perceive it. For instance, the industry while advertising their products make sure that funny material does not divert attention from the message that they want to convey to the customers, thus they use subtle humor rather than making it a hype. They also make it a point to relate humor with the product and they work on integrating it with the message to be conveyed, making sure at the same point not to make fun of customers, and being alert of the humor from dying out soon.

The second interview I conducted was with Adeela Badshah, a creative designer, currently working in Manhattan Pakistan Private Limited.

Q. What do you think of the use of humor in advertising through different mediums?

Adeela: Unfortunately here in Pakistan people do not really bother to research enough to compare the actual use and effectiveness of humor in advertising between different media. By research, I don’t necessarily mean formal research, but just going out and talking to people about what they would like to see.
Q. In your view, humor in advertising works best in which medium?

Adeela: There is a range of media available for the advertisement of products, such as Television, radio, magazines, newspaper, direct mail, internet and outdoor advertisements. Out of these, Television and radio serve the ideal conditions for audience to process the message, as they provide active creative tools to develop and execute humor.

Q. In an advertising agency, which medium gets the best support?

Adeela: The executives feel that television and radio are best suited to the use of humor, while they give other advertising media much less support. Both provide useful starting points but neither provides actual evidence of humor’s use and performance in different media.

Q. Why do you think Television and radio get more importance as compared when it comes to advertising?

Adeela: Television and radio advertising are both highly attention getting because of production values and combination of their interfering nature and the fact that they are action media.

Q. Do you feel there is any difference when it comes to television and radio humor?

Adeela: There is definitely a difference between radio and television comedy. Visual humor can be developed much quicker than dialog-driven humor. You can see funny faster than you can hear it. While television is effective for obtaining both “recognition awareness” and “recall awareness”. The absence of visuals on radio is a handicap with recognition awareness but recall awareness is an objective where radio does help.
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