THE EFFECTS OF HUMOR AND PURPOSE IN MESSAGE DESIGN ON SUBSEQUENT PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

Michael Bromberg
B.A., Miami University, 2005

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

FALL 2010
THE EFFECTS OF HUMOR AND PURPOSE IN MESSAGE DESIGN ON SUBSEQUENT PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

A Thesis

by

Michael Bromberg

Approved by:

____________________________, Committee Chair
Lawrence Chase, Ph.D.

____________________________, Second Reader
Michele Foss-Snowden, Ph.D.

____________________________, Third Reader
Mark Stoner, Ph.D.

____________________________
Date

ii
Student: Michael Bromberg

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

__________________________________________
Michele Foss-Snowden, Ph.D.

Department of Communication Studies
Abstract

of
THE EFFECTS OF HUMOR AND PURPOSE IN MESSAGE DESIGN ON SUBSEQUENT PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

by
Michael Bromberg

Research demonstrates that the composition of an advertisement can have a substantial effect upon its success. This study examines the effect of message design upon message reception and subsequent purchasing behavior. Specifically, two features of the message are varied: the use or absence of humor and the clarity of message purpose, i.e., explicitly persuasive or implicitly persuasive. Past and present television commercials are examined under four conditions: humor present, humor absent, persuasive explicit and persuasive implicit. Participants responded on questionnaires about the advertisements and a Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted. Results indicate that variations in humor usage as well as clarity of purpose are important factors to consider when launching a persuasive campaign. Limitations of this study are discussed and suggestions for future research are offered.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Lawrence Chase, Ph.D.

_________________________
Date
iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .................................................................................................................................. vi

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 1

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ...................................................................................................... 3

3. METHOD .................................................................................................................................. 15

4. DISCUSSION ............................................................................................................................ 24

Appendix A. The Four Conditions (explicit/implicit and funny/neutral) ...................................... 30

Appendix B. Measures Used in Manipulation Checks ................................................................. 31

Appendix C. Measures for the Main Experiment ......................................................................... 32

Appendix D. Qualitative Responses from Participants ................................................................. 37

References...................................................................................................................................... 50
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Order of Message Types Depending on Level of Self-serving</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Order of Message Types Depending on Commercial Liking, Product</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude, and Purchase Intention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Confidence Intervals for the Commercial Liking Condition</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Confidence Intervals for the Product Attitude Condition</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Confidence Intervals for the Purchase Intention Condition</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background of the Problem

It is a common axiom in sales that while people do not like to be sold to, they do like to buy things. Marketers often base their persuasive strategy on the assumption that making the intent to persuade explicit lessens the persuasive impact of the message since the suspicion of ulterior motives to sell may reflect negatively on one’s attitude (Fein, Hilton, & Miller, 1990). Salespeople, therefore, are generally motivated to be subtle in their persuasiveness in an effort to seem credible and non-threatening (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953; McGuire, 1985). Now, what if there was a situation where the advertising agent could create an ad with a direct sales message without hurting its persuasive impact on the audience? Mills and Aronson (1965) found that if the communicator was physically attractive, the communication was more effective if the desire to influence was frankly stated. They reasoned:

If people think that someone whom they like very much wants them to do something, they may be motivated to do it, even if the admired person might never know about it. Thus, a very attractive source might be more effective in changing opinions if he openly and honestly informs the audience that he wants to change their opinions. (p. 173)

If the communicator is unattractive, by making the desire to influence overt, the effectiveness of the communication was speculated to decrease but this hypothesis was not supported by their data. Although the data did not yield any significant differences, the data were in a positive direction for the attractive condition and hence, persuasion was concluded to be an asset if intent is explicit and the speaker is attractive.
Taking this premise a step further, Reinhard, Messner, and Sporer (2006) again argue that explicit intent does not have to be detrimental. They support an attributional perspective which states that the communicator’s characteristics determine the target’s perception of the communicator’s desire to persuade. Hence, if we like the advertisement, we will not be as inclined to perceive it as a sales pitch, but rather a respectable sales attempt.

A review of the literature shows that communication researchers are looking at the characteristics of a sales message that a persuader sends to a target (audience). How the message is modified changes the symbolic meaning between the two and it is in the persuader’s best interest to determine how the target might best receive the message in order to promote purchase of the product.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In examining the role of salespersons’ attractiveness in moderating the impact of persuasive intent, Reinhard et al. (2006) posit that underlying attributions of physical characteristics, not the characteristics themselves, determine the impact of explicit persuasion. In order to determine the extent to which the impact of an advertisement’s explicit intent to persuade was influenced by the ad’s underlying attributes (in this case, self-serving motives), participants viewed salespeople on a television commercial. Using attractiveness as the overlying variable, 272 vocational school students responded on questionnaires to the commercial and an analysis of variance was conducted. Results showed that attractive salespersons elicited more favorable attitudes and stronger intentions to purchase when the desire to influence was explicit but not when the persuasive intent was implicit. It should be noted that not only did participants like the attractive salespersons more than the unattractive salespersons independently of their persuasive intent, but the effect of attractiveness (in both explicit and implicit conditions) on communication impact was independent of liking for the advertisement. Therefore, both attractiveness and likabilness of the commercial are moderators for explicit persuasive intent (not mediators). This suggests that attractiveness exerts influence indirectly through attributions of the salesperson’s motives.

The gap that exists in the literature is between humor and its effects on persuasion. Humor usage has said to be helpful in attracting attention, increasing source liking and in creating a positive mood which may then aid in persuasion (Madden & Weinberger, 1984; Sternthal & Craig, 1973; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). Evidence in marketing and communication literature on the persuasive effects of humor is mixed. In Markiewicz’s (1974) review of humor studies, she found that out of thirteen studies, ten failed to find evidence for any difference in persuasion due
to message humor, two found tentative support for greater effectiveness of humor, and one found a serious message to be more persuasive. Weinberger and Gulas’ (1992) review found that in the advertising literature, five studies indicated a positive effect of humor on persuasion, eight studies indicated a neutral or mixed effect, and one study produced a negative effect. Chattopadhyay and Basu (1989) related a moderated positive persuasive effect for humor. In their study, subjects with a prior positive brand attitude were more persuaded by humorous treatments while subjects with pre-existing negative brand attitudes were not. Scott, Klein, and Bryant (1990) found that the usage of humor in promotions for social events produced greater attendance than those with non-humorous promotions. In contrast, Bryant, Brown, Silverberg, and Elliott (1981) found that extensive use of humor was detrimental to the impact of persuasion (no difference with low levels of humor). Other studies found no significant links between humor and persuasion (Duncan & Nelson, 1985; Lull, 1940; Markiewicz, 1972; Stewart & Furse, 1986). While the literature is unclear about the usage of humor’s effect on persuasion, a more conclusive relationship is seen in the research on the effects of humor on liking.

Several studies have shown that perceived humor enhances liking for the advertisement. For example, Belch and Belch (1984) showed college students humorous and serious Federal Express television commercials embedded in a half-hour program and found that with the humorous advertisements, subjects had more positive perceptions of advertiser credibility, more favorable attitudes toward the commercial, and more favorable cognitive responses than did the serious messages. They note that since attitudes toward using the service and intention to use the service were not affected differently by the serious and humorous messages, this is yet another example of a failure to find empirical evidence to support the difference in humorous and serious messages with respect to persuasion. They added that Federal Express may not be an extremely relevant service in the lives of college students and therefore might confound results pertaining to
the service or intentions of use. Weinberger and Gulas’ (1992) review note other studies showing humor enhancing the liking of ads (Gelb & Pickett, 1983; Duncan & Nelson, 1985; Speck, 1987). Several studies have also shown how humor usage enhances positive brand attitude as well (Zhang & Zinkhan, 1991; Gelb & Picket, 1983; Duncan & Nelson, 1985). Out of twelve advertising studies reviewed, only two report neutral or mixed findings. Gas and Seiter (2003) argue that humor indirectly facilitates persuasion by increasing liking for the persuader and that “importantly, no studies suggest humor inhibits liking” (pg. 292).

**Humor Usage Effectiveness in Advertising and Rationale of Study**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of message design upon message reception and subsequent purchasing behavior. Theory and methods from past studies suggest discussing message design in terms of the attributional process model proposed by Reinhard et al. (2006) by examining humor as a variable of advertisement likability. This study intends to combine methodologies of two experiments that discuss the effects of humor on persuasion to a) improve on procedural flaws (via the persuasion knowledge model), b) fill in conceptual gaps (via attribution and impression formation theories), c) extend theory, and d) propose a pragmatic case for the usage of humor in advertising.

Beyond persuasion and liking, the literature examines other communication goals (source credibility, attention, and comprehension), as well as message type and placement, background factors such as the nature of the ad (familiarity, involvement, and emotionality), target factors (demographics), agent factors, and cognitive factors (persuasion knowledge). Although this study will touch upon many of these aspects, it is beyond the scope of this project to address all of these issues. What is addressed is this widely known view in the literature that humor “does not offer significant advantage over non-humor when persuasion is the goal” (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). The literature fails to make broad generalizations about the effectiveness of humor in advertising.
and so this question remains to be unanswered (Cline & Kellaris, 1999). We recall from Reinhard et al. (2006) that its central claim states that attractiveness exerts influence indirectly through attributions of the salesperson’s motives. They note that not just attractiveness but “any salient source characteristic which induces a negative or positive first impression … might influence the kind of attribution that is made when a persuasive intent is made explicit” (p. 258). Given that the attribution of self-serving motives are thought to be mediators between the impact of an ad’s explicit persuasion intent and the effectiveness of the ad, humor then could be examined as a salient cue that moderates these attributes. Humor would function to offset the effects of the self-serving motive. Thus, funny ads that are explicit in persuasion intent would be seen as less self-serving (more favorable) than neutral ads with explicit persuasive intent, and neutral ads with implicit persuasive intent would be seen as more favorable than neutral ads with explicit persuasive intent.

Cline and Kellaris (1999) maintain that one way to address this issue of mixed evidence in the literature of humor effects on persuasive messages is to not ask if humor affects persuasion but rather to ask when humor affects persuasion. In their study, they examine the interplay of humor and argument strength and how this affects attitudes towards the advertisement and the brand for a low-risk convenience good. An analysis of variance design was used in which a print advertisement was manipulated by humor (present/absent) and argument strength (low/high). One hundred twenty-two college students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Results showed that humorous ads and brand attitudes were received more positively with weaker arguments. Stronger arguments were received more positively when the ad was not humorous. Findings suggest that humor and argument strength affect the formation of advertisement attitudes. Cline and Kellaris note that while they have observed a significant effect for the
interaction of humor and argument strength on brand and ad attitudes, “evidence for the underlying process is indirect” (p. 84).

Because Cline and Kellaris (1999) use the heuristic-systematic model to explain the moderating effects of humor on argument strength, they suggest one way to examine underlying effects of their data would be to measure counterarguments of the ads, in which case the distraction hypothesis (Festinger & Maccoby, 1964) could further conceptualize the phenomena. In this theory, humor is said to distract the receiver from a strong argument claim, thereby reducing counterargument and increasing persuasive effect. However, if the item is a low-risk convenience good, which likely means that a strong argument is incongruent with the ad, then this may counter the distracting effects of humor in order for the receiver to focus on the potentially disputable ad claim—hence, the hypothesis that humor will aid in weak arguments for low-risk goods. A better theoretical perspective, however, looks at the bigger picture: the advertisement’s causal attributions.

**Attribution Theory**

While it may be a valid argument to say that humor distracts or affects our cognitive resources to ultimately change our feelings of influence, it fails to address two fundamental questions: (1) *Why is the advertisement presented this way* and (2) *what are the motives of the advertiser?* Attribution theory is essentially the process of how person A attempts to determine the causes of observed behavior in person (or object) B and the answers of interest are drawn from whatever knowledge is available (Kelley, 1973). This theory is important not only in analyzing the underlying effects of a phenomenon, but it also is a very useful perspective in formulating practical solutions to issues in consumer research. Moreover, attribution theory is the main premise of a study by Reinhard et al. (2006) which serves to add insight into how salient
communicator characteristics moderate attributions that affect the persuasiveness of an advertisement.

Heider (1958) refers to attribution theory as “naïve factor analysis of action” which “permits man to give meaning to action, to influence the actions of others as well as of himself, and to predict future actions” (p. 123). Attribution theory can best be thought of as a perception between factors of the individual and factors of the environment. Interpersonal communication research, for example, has examined how the quality of relationships (satisfied/unsatisfied couples) affects the type of attributions made about communicative behavior (Vangelisti, 1992). While a satisfied couple attributes issues to external causes, the opposite was found to be true for unsatisfied couples.

In a broader view, Heider argues that perceivers tend to give greater weight to the person than to the situation when they make attributions. For example, if a speaker gives an argument on abortion, even if we learn that he was required to take the position that was presented (not by free choice) we still attribute to the person the attitude of the issue (Gilbert & Jones, 1986). This correspondence bias (also known as the fundamental attribution error) has been used to explain how we fail to make adequate allowances for the biasing effects of social roles (Ross, 1977). A questioner will be perceived as being more knowledgeable than the person being quizzed simply because of his role as the questioner. Jones and McGillis (1976) and Kelley (1967) relate the normative account of attribution process which states that the higher the expectation of a behavior, the less there is corresponding inference in the behavior, due to minimal ambiguity in motive (Miller, Schmidt, Meyer, & Colella, 1984). Results contrary to this view were obtained by Fein et al. (1990). They found that more expected behavior in a target drew more correspondence inference by the subjects. Their study focused on the perceiver’s suspicions of ulterior motives, in that, if a self-interest motive was detected, there would be less of an impact of persuasion if the
behavior was explicit (little ambiguity). When we see an actor endorse a product, is it because s/he believes in the product or is it only because s/he is getting paid? Fein et al. argue that there will be a reduction in correspondence bias when ulterior motives could underlie the actor’s behavior. While perceivers may be less inclined to make inferences if we sense ulterior motives, in agreement with past studies, perceivers continue to attend to the target’s behavior and actively process attributionally relevant information. Thus, Reinhard et al. (2006) would argue that unattractive salespeople who do not make their desire to persuade explicit would exhibit less correspondence bias (less reason to think we are being sold to) than those in the explicit condition. Conversely, attractive salespeople who do not make their desire to persuade explicit will exhibit more correspondence bias than those in the explicit condition. Two points derive from the studies cited above: (1) The neutral advertisement will be attributed to self-serving motives to a greater extent in the explicit condition than in the implicit condition. (2) The humorous advertisement will be attributed to self-serving motives to a lesser extent in the explicit condition than in the implicit condition (see Table 1).

Table 1
Order of Message Types Depending on Level of Self-serving Motive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement type</th>
<th>Explicit intent</th>
<th>Implicit intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humorous ad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral ad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (1=high; 4-low)
Persuasion Knowledge

While attribution theory helps to explain how consumers interpret persuasion attempts, it does little to explain how consumers make valid attitude judgments about the ad, the agent (advertiser), or on overall persuasive effectiveness. Taking a broader perspective, Friestad and Wright (1994) propose a model of persuasion knowledge (PKM) which examines knowledge of the topic, the individual, and of the persuasion tactics/coping strategies used by both the agent (sender of message) and the target (receiver). One of the major differences in method between Reinhard et al. (2006) and Cline and Kellaris (1999) is in choice of stimulus materials. Reinhard et al. used commercials that presented an Apple eMac personal computer. Cline and Kellaris used print ads for a fictional brand of bubble gum. The PKM relates two cognitive reasons why attention to the type of stimuli is important to the effect of persuasion.

First, Friestad and Wright (1994) argue that “there are specific situational factors that will affect a target’s motivation to seek valid agent attitudes” (p. 9). For example, if the target is unfamiliar with the marketer, then the target will be more likely to seek valid agent attitudes by using any other knowledge that is accessible. Using a personal computer as a stimulus may carry expert effects, which potentially confounded one of the experiments in Reinhard et al. (2006) since unattractive salespeople, in the implicit condition, elicited more positive attitudes than attractive salespeople. Also, Apple computers may carry pre-conceived attitudes since many of the subjects are likely to be PC users. Reinhard et al. should have taken this into account since it was specifically addressed in previous research (Mills & Aronson, 1965). Conversely, Cline and Kellaris (1999) used a fake company selling bubble gum, noted as “a low-risk convenience good” which controls for both issues: First, it is unlikely there are pre-conceived attitudes about an item of this nature and second, there is no reason to believe there are expert effects. With a low-risk
convenience good of an unknown company, targets must use other knowledge to make valid agent attitudes. Because attributional theory says we look to the object more than the situation, then we must focus on other aspects of the unfamiliar object to construct an attitude. Hence, “consumers may use a salesperson’s characteristics and actions as signals about the company’s motives, skills and traits…” (p. 9). We may be unfamiliar with the brand of bubble gum, but we likely will be familiar with that style of packaging, with that particular flavor, or with the persuasion tactic used in the advertisement.

The second reason given by the PKM which emphasizes careful consideration of the stimuli is that persuasion knowledge is thought of as a cognitive resource that develops over time. As people gain experience using multiple knowledge structures (knowledge of persuasion, topic, and individual), their coping tactics and ability to process persuasive messages will change. Thus, “persuasion coping novices and people with considerable coping expertise may be influenced differently by the same persuasion attempt” (p. 12). If the product that is being marketed is a low-involvement convenience good, then humor may be more pertinent to strengthen persuasion than if it was a product of more serious investment. As we can see, PKM does not tell us if humor is effective in strengthening persuasion, but rather when humor usage can be effective. While the PKM is useful in explaining how we deal with persuasive messages in a cognitive context, the connection between communicator characteristics and their impact on attributes begs further clarification. This next section will do just that with a discussion of impression formation.

Impression Formation—“What is Beautiful is Good”

Fiske and Neuberg (1990) present a continuum model of impression formation which will not only serve to provide conceptual support for the procedure (presenting an advertisement as a first impression) but provide rationale for using attractiveness as a variable for likeability. An assumption of this model is that perceivers form impressions both in category-oriented ways and
in attribute-oriented ways. The model occurs along a continuum, starting with a rapid initial categorization that occurs regardless of the perceiver’s intent. This initial stage is based on obvious communicator characteristics and it is “unaffected by additional attribute information” (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990, p. 66; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987). The categorization is followed by a relevance judgment that determines if additional processing occurs. If there is relevance, attention is placed on attribute information which mediates more categorizations, and if these are unsuccessful, the process evolves into a “piecemeal integration” which analyzes the target by specific attributes. According to the model, category-based processes have priority over attribute-based process, due to limitations of cognitive resources. Motivational conditions not only influence processes at each stage, they help determine if category-based or attribute-based processes will be used. This idea of an “initial categorization” is particularly important for stereotyping. In the seminal study on the attractive stereotype, Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) presented participants with photos of college students who were of low, medium, and high attractiveness. As what would be expected, in the absence of any other information about the target, attractive people were rated as having overall happier lives, were attributed more favorable personality traits, and were rated as having more marital success. Not only does this study support the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype, but it suggests that the “physical attractiveness variable may have a number of implications for a variety of aspects of social interaction and influence” (p. 289).

To further support this idea of identifying salient characteristics on a first impression, Locher, Unger, and Sociedade (1993) found that subjects were able to differentiate between photos of people varying in levels of attractiveness on the basis of information lasting for only 100ms. This showed that perceptual systems are capable of detecting perceived differences in levels of attractiveness as an automatic process, much like it has been reported in previous studies.
for age, expression, and identity. Kamins (1990) examined the “match-up hypothesis” in celebrity advertising which suggests that the attractiveness aspect of a celebrity endorser may only enhance ad evaluations if the characteristics of the product match-up with the image conveyed by the celebrity. He found that attractive celebrities led to more positive evaluations of the ad, relative to unattractive celebrities, for the attractiveness related product condition. In the attractiveness-unrelated product condition, differences between attractive and unattractive celebrities were insignificant. Although the literature seems to show strong relationships between physical attractiveness and socially desirable qualities, meta-analyses show only moderate support for this effect but do show the largest differences in social competence, dominance, social skill, and mental health (Eagley et al. 1991; Feingold, 1992). Reinhard et al. (2006) then argue, based on the physical attractiveness literature, that since “high attractiveness is assumed to stimulate attributions of desirable personality characteristics” and that these characteristics can potentially moderate the effectiveness of communicating a desire to influence, then, “characteristics associated with being attractive are likely to affect the kind of attribution that is made when a persuasion attempt is explicit” (p. 250; Mills & Aronson, 1965).

Given that humor, like physical attractiveness, is a salient communicator characteristic that induces a positive or negative first impression, this should influence attributions of self-serving motives which have been found to be mediators between the impact of a source’s explicit persuasion intent and the effectiveness of the advertisement, as exhibited in Reinhard et al. Thus, humorous ads that are explicit (or implicit) in persuasion intent will be perceived as less self-serving (more favorable) than neutral ads with explicit persuasive intent, and neutral ads with implicit persuasive intent will be perceived as more favorable than neutral ads with explicit persuasive intent. To account for the possibility that, regardless of how the commercial is
constructed, some may dislike the product or may not be interested in purchase, conditions of product attitude and purchase intention will be included, in addition to commercial liking.

H1: Commercial liking will be most favorable when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. (see Table 2)

H2: Product attitude will be most favorable when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. (see Table 2)

H3: Purchase intention will be rated highest when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. (see Table 2)

Table 2
Order of Message Types Depending on Commercial Liking, Product Attitude, and Purchase Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement type</th>
<th>Explicit intent</th>
<th>Implicit intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humorous ad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral ad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (1=high; 4=low)
Chapter 3

METHOD

To examine the link between humor and persuasion in terms of the explicit or implicit attempt to persuade, television advertisements were examined under four conditions: humor (present/absent) and persuasive intent (explicit/implicit). A sample of college students responded on questionnaires about the advertisement and a Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted. It was hypothesized that humor usage would elicit stronger intentions to purchase when the desire to influence is explicit but not when the intent is implicit. To show that humor moderates the level of persuasion achieved, along with level of intent (implicit/explicit), two more dependent variables of commercial liking and product attitude were utilized. Manipulation checks asked participants if they agree that the advertisement is explicit in their intent to sell the product. Another manipulation check asked participants if they agree that the advertisements were intended to be humorous. The experiment also asked the participants if the advertisement made them more likely to buy the product and whether or not they like the advertisement.

Manipulation Checks

Participants. In a pilot study, 84 college students viewed eight commercials on Youtube.com. These subjects were drawn from three upper division college classes. No demographic data was collected for this manipulation check.

Measures. To check to make sure the humorous/neutral and the explicit/implicit ads were perceived as intended, a three item humor measure and a three item explicit measure were used. The measures consisted of 5-point Likert scales; three items referring to humor intent in the commercial and three items referring to the explicitness of the sales attempt in the commercial.

The eight commercials were composed of two of each condition: explicit/implicit and humorous/neutral. One commercial was eliminated from each condition based on level of
explicitness and level of humor reported. The commercials with the highest scores on both
variables were kept for the main experiment.

Procedure. Participants viewed the commercials on Youtube.com and then answered the
six items referring to that commercial immediately following the viewing of each commercial.

MAIN EXPERIMENT

Participants

Ninety-four students enrolled in an undergraduate communications course in a large
Western university participated in the study. Subjects completed the experiment independently in
a single session held in a classroom. The age ranged from 19-36 (average was 23). Ethnicity
included white (56.4%), African American (13.8%), Hispanic (11.7%), Asian (8.5%) and other
(8.5%). With the exception of one sophomore, all subjects were juniors or seniors with 61.7%
female and 38.3% male.

Measures

Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) were used to measure the
outcomes of this study, which included purchase intentions, commercial liking, and product
attitude.

The purchase intentions section consisted of five items referring to the likelihood of
purchasing the products. The items included “When I buy _____ in the future, I would buy
_____,” “I would recommend to my friends to buy _____,” “When I buy _____ in the future, I
intend to buy _____,” “When I buy _(general category of product)_ in the future, I plan to buy
_____,” and “When I buy _(general category of product)_ in the future, it is probable that I
would buy _____.”

The commercial liking section consisted of five items referring to how much the
participant liked the advertisement. The items included “How much do you like the ad,” “How
much do you enjoy the ad,” “Given the scale below, with 1 being not good at all and 7 being very good, how good is the ad,” “How much do you find the ad appealing,” and “How much do you care for the ad?”

The product attitude section consisted of five items referring to how much the participant liked the product. The items included “How much do you like the product,” “How much do you enjoy the product,” “Given the scale below, with 1 being not good at all and 7 being very good, how good is the product,” “How much do you find the product appealing,” and “How much do you care for the product?”

The five items of each section were checked for reliability and then a composite of the five items was created to obtain confidence intervals for each section.

Procedure

Students viewed four commercials on Youtube.com and then answered five items referring to that commercial in terms of attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the product, and purchase intentions immediately following the viewing of each commercial. Students were then asked a few qualitative questions at the end in regards to salient features of the messages found within the advertisements. A traditional way of analyzing the effectiveness of an advertisement is to begin by determining the degree to which members of the target audience recalled specific message characteristics. This is often done by looking at the relationship between aided and unaided recall (Allan, 2007). Aided recall is a technique used when the items prompt the respondents to look at certain characteristics of the message. Unaided recall is the technique used the items do not provide respondents with any additional information about the message. Unaided recall questions include: What aspects of the message stand out? In what ways is the advertisement persuasive? How do these commercials make you feel about the product? Aided recall questions include: Which do you find more persuasive, when a message contains an
explicit or direct attempt to sell a product or when a message contains an implicit or subtle attempt to sell a product? Are you more inclined to buy a product if the message is funny? Other aspects of the message that were not hypothesized may have emerged from these discussions as well.

Stimulus Materials

One of the advertisements featured Trident bubble gum. This product was chosen because it is a representative member of a low-risk convenience category in which the use of humor is both frequent and believed to be effective. Weinberger and Campbell (1991) found the incidence of humor in radio to be highest in the low-involvement/feeling cell of the Foote, Cone, Belding (FCB) matrix, a cell made up of personal pleasures including gum. In addition, Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell, and Parsons (1995) found that the category comprising gum had the highest incidence of humor for magazine ads and uniformly positive humor effects on three Starch scores: Noted (initial attention). Seen-Associated (aided-brand recall), and Read Most (held attention). Spotts, Weinberger, and Parsons (1997) reaffirm both the persuasiveness and success of humor for low-risk, convenience goods, of which gum is an exemplar. The Trident ad was rated high in the humor/explicit category during manipulation checks with Cronbach’s Alpha at .88 (explicit/implicit) and .87 (funny/neutral). Cronbach’s Alpha values were high in liking scores (.94), product attitude (.92), and purchase intention (.95).

The second commercial featured the employment aiding website Career Builder which should be salient to college students not only in their own personal experience with investigations of the job market but also the fact that this particular commercial was originally viewed during a very popular time slot (Super Bowl). The ad was rated very high in the humor/implicit category during manipulation checks with Cronbach’s Alpha at .87 (explicit/implicit) and .93
Cronbach’s Alpha values were high in liking scores (.94), product attitude (.90), and purchase intention (.95).

The third commercial was Coca Cola, a very common low-risk convenience good that was rated high in the neutral/implicit category with Cronbach’s Alpha at .92 (explicit/implicit) and .92 (funny/neutral). Cronbach’s Alpha values were high in liking scores (.95), product attitude (.93), and purchase intention (.96).

The fourth commercial was Anacin (an aspirin free drug) that was rated high in the neutral/explicit category with Cronbach’s Alpha at .74 (explicit/implicit) and .93 (funny/neutral). Cronbach’s Alpha values were high in liking scores (.98), product attitude (.95), and purchase intention (.96).

These commercials were found by searching through numerous commercials on Youtube.com. Common low-risk convenience goods were generally the products being examined and the goal was to find those with the most salient message features (humor/no humor; explicit/implicit) to then use for the pretests.

RESULTS

Because participants viewed four advertisements with questions repeating over four different conditions (humor/non-humor, explicit/implicit) a Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted. In addition to this quantitative analysis, qualitative data were collected using the following free response questions: What aspects of the message stand out? In what ways is the ad persuasive? How do these commercials make you feel about the product? A list of participant responses can be found in Appendix D.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that commercial liking would be most favorable when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. For these data, significant differences were found
across the four advertisements, F (1, 86) = XX, p < .001. Because the repeated measures test simply examines differences across the four messages, in order to understand where these differences lie confidence intervals were calculated on this outcome for each of the messages (see table 3). These data indicated differences such that the humorous implicit was liked most followed by the humorous explicit and non-humorous explicit which did not differ from one another followed by the non-humorous explicit message.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that product attitude would be most favorable when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. These data indicated differences such that the humorous implicit was liked more than humorous explicit but non-humorous implicit did not differ from non-humorous explicit or humorous implicit. All three were rated higher than the non-humorous explicit message.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that purchase intention would be rated highest when the advertisement is using humor and the sales message is explicit, followed by humorous/implicit, neutral/implicit, and lastly neutral/explicit. These data indicated differences such that the humorous implicit was liked more than humorous explicit but non-humorous implicit did not differ from non-humorous explicit or humorous implicit. All three were rated higher than the non-humorous explicit message.

Results provide partial support for all three hypotheses. In the “commercial liking” condition, tests of between-subject effects found F(1, 86) = 2236, p < .001. Confidence intervals indicate CB > Trident = Coke > Anacin (see Table 3).
Table 3
Confidence Intervals for the Commercial Liking Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trident</td>
<td>3.41*</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Builder</td>
<td>6.20*</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coke</td>
<td>3.23*</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anacin</td>
<td>1.80*</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.001

In the “product attitude” condition, tests of between-subject effects found $F(1, 77) = 2424$, $p < .001$. Confidence intervals indicate CB > Trident; CB = Coke; Trident = Coke; CB, Trident, Coke > Anacin (see Table 4).

Table 4
Confidence Intervals for the Product Attitude Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trident</td>
<td>4.33*</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Builder</td>
<td>4.99*</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coke</td>
<td>4.62*</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anacin</td>
<td>2.35*</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.001

In the “purchase intention” condition, tests of between-subject effects found $F(1, 77) = 1000$, $p < .001$. Confidence intervals indicate CB > Trident; CB = Coke; Trident = Coke; CB, Trident, Coke > Anacin (see Table 5).
Table 5
Confidence Intervals for the Purchase Intention Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trident</td>
<td>3.43*</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Builder</td>
<td>4.57*</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coke</td>
<td>3.79*</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anacin</td>
<td>1.75*</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.001

In response to the qualitative questions, some participants felt that commercials did not persuade them, regardless of message design, and preferred word of mouth or product reviews in terms of what may actually affect their opinion. One participant noted that production values or how expensive or cheap the advertisement looks affects her purchase intentions. Some participants felt that they would use the product just because they “liked the commercial” or that humor aided persuasion since it “lessens the need for explicit information.” Several participants noted that an ad stood out if they could relate to it. Eleven responses indicated that the repetition in the Career Builder ad strengthened its persuasive appeal by standing out, by emphasizing its message, or by helping the viewer remember the company. Only one subject found the repetition to be a negative feature.

Several participants believed that humor would increase purchase intentions, “A message that is funny makes it more likely that I would buy that product in the future.” Humor was usually perceived as a positive aspect of the message. The only times when it did not were when participants felt that the humor was annoying or unrelated to the product. In response to the quantitative question concerning the relation between humor and purchase intention, 79.8 percent indicated that they were more inclined to buy a product if the messages were funny.
While the qualitative data neither support nor contradict the quantitative data, they enable us to contextualize and better interpret the findings of the study. The quantitative data indicated significant differences between the four message types which help advertisers understand the effect a certain sales message may have on consumers (obvious/subtle sales attempt with/without humor). Quantitative results provide partial support for all three hypotheses. H1, H2, and H3 all predict the humor/explicit type would be most favorable and no humor/explicit would be least favorable. While the latter agreed with the data, the former did not.

The qualitative data noted particular features of the ad that may increase sales (repetition and reliability were important) or decrease sales (how dated the ad looks or how boring or straightforward the message is produced). The data further substantiated a need to look at specific categories such as product attitude, advertisement liking, or purchase intention. Participants frequently noted the importance of one or two categories in their response as they explained what was meaningful about the message to them. One participant noted, “I already didn’t like some of the products so it didn’t matter to me what the commercial is like” (product attitude). Another participant believed that, “the funniest, CB, was the most persuasive. [It] was the only one that made me actually think about using/buying it” (commercial liking and purchase intention).

The qualitative data show these categories are natural responses of consumers as they view advertisements. The quantitative data take these categories and investigate how one compares to another. These data clearly will have little importance if the dependent variables are artificial. The quantitative data can help advertisers make decisions on what may be the most effective ways to present their message, given the free-response data gathered in previous qualitative studies.
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

A Repeated Measures ANOVA showed that the presence of humor and the explicitness of the message are contributing factors to the effectiveness of persuasion. The Anacin (non-humorous/explicit) advertisement rated lowest in all conditions supporting hypothesis 1 and partially supporting hypothesis 3. Although the Trident advertisement (humorous/explicit) was not rated highest as predicted, it was also not as liked as the CB ad (humorous/implicit). This may be in part because the CB ad is funnier than the Trident ad (as rated in the pretest). The extra humor may have countered the effect that the lack of explicitness had on the message.

While significant differences between Trident, CB, and Coke are still unclear, the low rating of Anacin suggests that companies may benefit more from ads that utilize humor or if not humorous, contain a subtle sales message.

Limitations and Interpretations

The purpose of this study is to extend Reinhard et al. (2006) by altering the methodology and modifying the independent variables, based on related studies, in the hopes that we may gain further understanding on the effect of message design upon message reception and subsequent purchasing behavior. There are many limitations of this study that need to be addressed.

First, studies have shown humorous ads to be more successful for existing products than for new products (Stewart & Furse, 1986). This factor raises an important methodological issue. While the use of fictional products in experimental studies eliminates pre-existing product attitudes that may confound the results of experiments, a fictional product is a "new product" that may diminish the effectiveness of the humor treatment. This may mean that weak effects of advertising humor found in some lab studies may arise from tests using unfamiliar products. The products in this study may have promoted pre-existing attitudes since they are generally familiar.
to the subjects. Some subjects noted that regardless of the advertisement, they would not purchase Coke, (perhaps because they do not drink soda or they are Pepsi drinkers).

Second, this study seeks to improve on stimuli from past research. While the use of low-risk convenience goods utilizing humor was more persuasive than no humor for low involvement-feeling products, it was found to be less persuasive on high involvement-thinking products, and thus only focusing on one type of product limits generalizability (Weinberger & Campbell, 1991). Using salespeople and high-involvement products in past research yielded too many confounding variables (variation in salesperson perception, vocal tones, facial features, etc.) For example, there was the possibility that there were emotional aspects tied to personal computers (some people may have feelings pertaining to the Apple company, independent of the salesperson) and so commercials with low-risk convenience goods are used in the current study’s design. While Reinhard et al. included stimuli that likely have many confounding variables, their stimuli worked better conceptually in two important ways: 1) Self-serving motives make more sense when you are talking about a person, rather than an object (like an advertisement). 2) Since we generally do not care about low-involvement products such as bubble gum, the strength of any attitudinal responses will be moderate at best.

Although there was a higher percentage (51.1%) of subjects that indicated that they were more persuaded by implicit messages than explicit messages (33.0%), this divergence from the hypothesis can be explained by two confounds: 1) The funniest message was in the implicit category and hence, humor may lesson the need for explicit information and 2) people do not like to be sold to (they like to buy things), which insinuates that when asked directly, they would tend to indicate a preference for subtlety of a sales message.

Another limitation to this and past studies is that there has been no variance of humor type. Humor directly related to the product is more successful at attracting attention and inducing
attitude change than the usage of humor unrelated to the product (Duncan, 1979; Madden & Weinberger, 1984). Various level of relevance and appropriateness of humor could be manipulated. It is important to this study to view the ad just once in the procedure, due to impression formation and stereotype theories. Because during an ad campaign, consumers are likely to view repeated exposures over time, it then reasons that longitudinal studies would then be more useful to the field. In this study, subjects reported on the ad immediately after viewing it. The persuasion knowledge model (PKM) suggests that delayed measures of effects should be taken into account in order to obtain actual persuasion knowledge (PK) effects of consumers, otherwise PK could go undetected (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The PKM also addresses age as an important variable since college students (18-23 year olds) are “relatively inexperienced at persuasion games” and studies that consist of this sample could suffer issues of validity and generalizability.

Cultural differences play a factor as well in PK since those from individualistic societies are motivated to use PK differently than those in collective societies. Consumers may differ in how they perceive humor depending on socioeconomic status, geography, and so on. A cultural-centered study may also examine content more specifically, including what about the message is funny, and why. What does funny mean?

Clearly, Youtube.com commercials are in a different context than regular television commercials embedded within some larger program where viewers are in a particular atmosphere in the comfort of their home (or similar type of location). The change in context is not expected to affect the results since the message features will stay the same, regardless of location and atmosphere of the audience. There would be too many other confounding variables if the study was conducted in a more naturalistic setting such as distractions from other people, cellular or landline phones, pets, and so forth. By watching a Youtube.com representation of the original
advertisement in the classroom setting, this study aims to promote a stronger focus on the message features being examined.

Future Research

Reinhard et al. (2006) acknowledge that the application of explicit versus implicit persuasive intent “is of practical importance for marketing communications” (p. 257). For example, if you are producing a Super Bowl commercial for, say, a can of Turtle Wax, you decide to do two different commercials, one with an unknown, funny comedian and one with an unknown, average-looking actor (let’s call him ‘Harry’). How would you achieve the greatest impact of persuasion in each piece? Situation one: Comedian is perceived as funny and intent to persuade is made explicit—because we like the comic (due to the use of humor), we are less likely to think he is selling Turtle Wax for self-serving motives. Situation two: Harry (an actor) is perceived as average and intent to persuade is implicit—since Harry is neutral, if he made the intent to persuade explicit, it would seem like we are being sold to, which would result in a lesser persuasive impact. Now, suppose the comedian refuses to say he seeks to sell the product. Since both comedian and Harry are not making their desire to influence explicit, which would be the better commercial? Noting that this is a low-risk convenience good (Turtle Wax is not a major investment), we would expect the comic would achieve more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intentions from the audience, and thus, better message design and a more effective commercial. Furthermore, different types of marketing (social campaigns versus mainstream commercials) will benefit from research concerning persuasive intent, in that, explicit persuasion may yield greater persuasive impact in one genre and implicit persuasion may yield the greater impact in another.

Future research should also investigate the effect that internet reviews or blogs have on new products. While traditional advertisers may deliberate over who is more effective for selling
their product—no-name actors or celebrities—what if advertisers could use your friend? With social networking becoming a mainstream advertising tool, new possibilities are becoming apparent.

The capitalistic society in which we live speaks for the practicality of this study. How a message is designed significantly affects its success at persuasion. If consumer researchers can gain insight into why people like certain advertisements (attributes), and when to effectively use communicator characteristics (explicit/implicit desire to influence), we can then make the argument for why certain styles of advertisements (or why a particular spokesperson) will make for a more effective ad, which will ultimately yield better sales for the company.
APPENDIX A

The Four Conditions (explicit/implicit and funny/neutral)

Stimulus 1 (explicit/funny condition)

Trident Splash

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpx3WpsHiac

Stimulus 2 (implicit/funny condition)

Career Builder

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ8lw0dTMM0

Stimulus 3 (implicit/neutral condition)

Coke

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVIMlwA4V4g

Stimulus 4 (explicit/neutral condition)

Anacin

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf9jPmJ9cY
APPENDIX B
Measures Used in Manipulation Checks

*Obvious (explicit) and Subtle (implicit) measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtle intent to sell</th>
<th>Obvious intent to sell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtle intent to promote the product</th>
<th>Obvious intent to promote product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtle intent for you to buy the product</th>
<th>Obvious intent for you to buy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Humor and Neutral measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humor Intended</th>
<th>No Humor Intended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ad was meant in a joking way</th>
<th>The ad was not meant in a joking way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ad was meant to be funny</th>
<th>The ad was not meant to be funny</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Measures for the Main Experiment

*Attitude toward the ad:*

How much do you like the ____ ad?

Do not like at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Like very much

How much do you enjoy the ____ ad?

Do not enjoy at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Enjoy very much

Given the scale below, with 1 being not good at all and 7 being very good, how good is the ____ ad?

Ad is not good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ad is very good

How much do you find the ____ ad appealing?

Do not find appealing1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Find very appealing

How much do you care for the ____ ad?

Do not care for it at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Cared for it very much

*Attitude toward the product:*

How much do you like the ____ product?

Do not like at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Like very much
How much do you anticipate that you would enjoy the ___ product?

Do not enjoy at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Enjoy very much

Given the scale below, with 1 being not good at all and 7 being very good, how good is the ___ product?

Product is not good at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Product is very good

How much do you find the ____ product appealing?

Do not find appealing 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Find very appealing

How much do you care for the ____ product?

Do not care for it at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Cared for it very much

Purchase intentions:

When I buy bubble gum in the future, I would buy Trident

Low  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  High

I would recommend to my friends to buy Trident

Low  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  High

When I buy bubble gum in the future, I intend to buy Trident

Low  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  High

When I buy bubble gum in the future, I plan to buy Trident

Low  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  High
When I buy bubble gum in the future, it is probable that I would buy Trident

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I am looking for jobs in the future, I would use Career Builder (CB)

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

I would recommend to my friends to use CB

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I am looking for jobs in the future, I intend to use CB

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I am looking for jobs in the future, I plan to use CB

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I am looking for jobs in the future, it is probable that I would use CB

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a beverage in the future, I would buy a Coke

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

I would recommend to my friends to buy Coke

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a beverage in the future, I intend to buy a Coke

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a beverage in the future, I plan to buy a Coke

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a beverage in the future, it is probable that I would buy a Coke

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a pain-relief drug in the future, I would buy Anacin

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High
I would recommend to my friends to buy Anacin

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a pain-relief drug in the future, I intend to buy Anacin

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a pain-relief drug in the future, I plan to buy Anacin

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

When I buy a pain-relief drug in the future, it is probable that I would buy Anacin

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 High

What aspects of the message stand out?

In what ways is the advertisement persuasive?

How do these commercials make you feel about the product?

Which do you find more persuasive, when a message contains:
A) an explicit or direct attempt to sell a product or
B) when a message contains an implicit or subtle attempt to sell a product

Are you more inclined to buy a product if the message is funny?

A) Yes  b) No
Demographic Questions:

What is your age? ______

What is your sex? (circle one)   1) M    2) F

What year in school are you? (circle one)
1) Freshman    2) Soph   3) Junior   4) Senior   5) Other

What is your ethnicity? (circle one)
1) Caucasian/White   3) Hispanic
2) African American  4) Asian American  5) Other
APPENDIX D
Qualitative Responses from Participants

What aspects of the message stand out?
- When they use sound effects
- I don’t use painkillers because I believe the government puts cancer in them for population control.
- I like that each commercial had a humorous aspect to them. I think that’s what made me remember the commercial and think about the product.
- The brand, the humor (if any)
- Whether or not they are appealing to the viewer. The length of the commercial or ad also becomes appealing to viewer.
- Humor/graphics
- The funny parts
- The Trident commercial was fun and adventurous which made your mouth water for the gum
- The humor is subtle is better … they need to be intriguing/technology
- Humor made the commercials more enjoyable. I did not feel that any commercial would persuade me to buy their product.
- Humor, action, effects, information
- Humor
- Humor
- Humor
- The name of the product
-Humor

-Comedy is good

-I loved the CB because it was very amusing

-The brand, if its familiar or not

-Career builder, made a good connection to job-frustrated audience

-The usual features, like sound effects, animations, etc.

-I remember the humor of the career builder ad. The Coke as was interesting to watch, but did not make me want to go buy a Coke (although I already prefer Coke).

-Music/characters

-[Career Builder] commercial appeals to me because I currently look for a job and have been in some situations described.

-Appeal of ad

-The humor and the use of color and/or logos of the product

-The repetition of Career Builder.com. It makes you remember the company.

Bright colors, 2nd ad [Career Builder] contained the most humor and was the most entertaining … the repetition made it stand out.

-Humor

-The funnier messages make the product more appealing but the naked guy and the wave was too over the top and made it unappealing

-Career building one the fact that “you hate your job” stands out to me because I relate to it

-These commercials were not effectively, poorly put together

-If the product really works

-The career builder commercial was repetitive and funny so it stuck in my mind

-Action, music
- Appeal to humor in CB ad. Intensity in Trident ad.
- The humor of the message, it made the product stand out more.
- The humor makes me want to try the product
- Humor in career builder, but unrealistic
- Shock value in the CB commercial. Funny.
- The funnier ones stick in my head longer.
- Ad for Career Builder showed the anger of your job now and if you want a change. The ad showed the strongest message of the four.
- Creativity, quality
- The career builder ad stood out because it was funny and people can relate to it
- The more humorous ones were much more appealing
- Effects, relativity
- The situations in the one for career builder were things you can relate to and have felt, which made it more relatable. The beginning of the Coke ad was too long. I didn’t understand why the guy in the Trident ad had to be half naked. (I guess because he gets wet).
- The comedy in the Career Builder
- Music, humor, action
- Music on the Coke ad was annoying to me. I ignored the last 90% of the ad.
- When they are funny I remember them more
- The parts that didn’t make sense. I was looking for the point of the ad. Branding is not enough.
- Some of the commercials were louder than others. That gets my attention, but it’s a bit annoying.
- The product stands out for all of the commercials except for the Coke ad.
- The best ad was the CB ad, it was very comical and that’s what stood out.
- The energy in people stand out. The last one [Anacin] was boring.
-When a message is sent in a subtle way it stand out more in the end; more appealing.
- The Anacin commercial was straight to the point and it was appealing because it didn’t take 10 minutes to watch
- Humor
- Music catches my attention
- The funny parts
- CB—The whole message because people can relate to not liking their jobs/day dreaming etc.
- The repeat on the career builder commercial really emphasized how much can go wrong in a job
- When it appeals to my age group. When it is funny and shows a direct relation to what is being said
- When humor is involved, makes watching commercial better
- I do think humor grabs the viewers’ attention
- Repetition, funny, catchy
- Humor
- The humor and repetitive nature of the humor in the career builder stood out.
- The humor in #2 (Career Builder) stood out. Coca-cola stood out because of the brand name.
That’s about it.
- The career builder commercial stood out the most because it caught my attention
- The part that’s funny
- Career builder—it addresses common concerns that most people face, and put an extremely humorous twist
- A message that is funny makes it much more likely that I would buy that product in the future
- The guy in the Speedo [Trident ad], and the guy in the career builder ad.
-The importance of the products, and how they could be beneficial to my life. Humor is strong in persuading. Most ads were enjoyable.

-The level of humor. It makes the commercial more enjoyable

-I am most likely to buy a product that is memorable. A memorable ad is likely to persuade me to buy the product.

In what ways is the ad persuasive?

-When they use appealing lines in the commercial, with sound effects, and music.

-The funnier the ad is the more likely I’ll laugh. If I’m laughing, then that probably means I’ll impulsively buy something.

-It makes you remember the product. And when you remember it, you’re more likely to buy it when you see it in the stores, or recommend it to other people.

-Funny, good music.

-The number of views it has or whether or not it is a new or old commercial

-The colors and making it funny

-I’m not usually persuaded by commercials, but by the product. Funnier ads grab my attention though.

-All persuasive except Anacin. The product placement and excitement that went into the ads were great. Repetition reinforces product.

-Humorous/exciting = better … modern technology used = better

-The humor was the best part

-In presenting product as exciting or a necessity

-When it’s more relatable

-If catches my attention
-Getting my attention and holding it

-Humor

-Change our opinion or view on something

-It seemed to exaggerate the most horrible aspects of a crummy job

-Humor

-The message – using emotion, humor to connect to audience

-By making it funny and using characters whether its people, cartoons, etc.

-The Career Builder ad was relatable, accessible, and friendly. Because I could relate to most humorous situations presented, I would be more likely to investigate the product.

-Entertaining commercials are persuasive

-Humor is good in a way it relates lightly of the bad things in life. Makes me wonder [Career Builder] what am I doing there still?

-Comedy and Action

-When trying to state that it’s the “best” product over others

-Commercials make me feel indifferent. If a like a product regardless if they make a bad product I’ll still buy the product.

-Humor

-The career builder ad was the most persuasive because that’s how a lot of people feel about their jobs and can relate.

-The career building one makes me realize I’m not the only one who really hates my job, so I would think about maybe using it in the future

-The career builder was persuasive because it caught the audience’s attention with laughter but too repetitive

-Humor
The career builder ad was more persuasive and was appealing so it caught my eye.

Builds interest

Everyone needs a job. I need pain relief for my migraines.

The career building was persuasive because everyone feels that way at some point so it was easy to agree with.

Statistics didn’t matter, it would be which ever is the funniest.

Coke is relaxing. Watermelon splash [Trident] is cool.

Funny or shocking content is always more persuasive in advertising.

By asking us to buy/use their product.

The [Career Builder] ad was persuasive in the aspect that we all have felt anger at a job before.

It made me laugh

It was funny

I thought ad #2 [Career Builder] was very creative and that hooked me a little but I don’t think I would use CB

Voices used, comedic approach, history of product

Career builder is relatable, funny. Anacin is straightforward and authoritative which I like also.

because it shows creativity and intelligence

In any way that it grabs my attention

The funniest, CB, was the most persuasive. Was the only one that made me actually think about using/buying it.

If you like the advertisement you will prob. like the product.

If it makes logical sense to buy. Comedy is entertaining. However, I have to believe in the product. Comedy does not provide credibility.
-The Career Builder commercial was extremely persuasive because it kept repeating the same stuff over and over … but it was funny!
-The product is persuasive by getting you interested in what will happen next. This makes me want to see the message till the end.
-It is persuasive because it holds our attention and keeps repeating “its time” to reiterate their point
-I think that humor helps sell the product
-uses humor to tie in the product
-Because it hit the main points and let you make your own decision
-Career Builder was most persuasive by showing us what a bad job was like
-It’s persuasive if its humorous
-None of them were, I only liked the Coke product because its what I like to drink
-I have seen better Coke commercials and that one didn’t make me want to buy one; Made me want to use career builder
-When they give information about the product and the commercial is relevant to the product
-Trying to promote a refreshing feeling
-Repetition
-The language they use
-Anacin was not persuasive at all while career builder/trident had personality in their commercial to persuade the audience
-It was persuasive because it was appealing
-When the product or commercial sticks out from others
-It’s not so much persuasive, it just makes me laugh
- The Trident ad wasn’t so persuasive. The career builder one was a little persuasive because it made me laugh and feel good.

- They were appealing and humorous

- If it is a light hearted ad, it makes me more open to trying the product

- It uses humor and every day situations to appeal to the audience

*How do these commercials make you feel about the product?*

- Some made me want to purchase the product and other I did not care for too much

- I was inspired to find a new career and go see an opera while doing cocaine.

- That they make you feel good or they can cause you to feel good. The ads make me feel like I need to buy the product.

- Thirsty

- Some of them I would feel comfortable buying or working with, but I would not trust the medicine commercial because it was old.

- It doesn’t really matter to me

- Typically indifferent

- Thirsty, happy and want a piece of gum now. Lol.

- Persuaded to try them out … except Anacin = boring, old, straightforward

- Not any different than how I’ve originally thought about them.

- Indifferent, ads have not persuaded me to buy product or use it. No ad listed benefits of using product

- Funny ones = good

- CB was only one that made me like product more. Others actually made me dislike products more
- The accent in the trident commercial threw me off – didn’t like it. CB was funny, liked it. Didn’t understand the relationship between re-minting a quarter and relaxing with coke. The graphics were good. Is Anacin still in business?

- They did not change my feelings about the products

- It makes the consumer feel like they understand the struggles of the employees

- No change in opinion

- That the product is good, and credible to use

- It made me want to buy some products and some made me completely not interested

- Confused about Trident, just weird. Actually laughed out loud with Career Builder, entertaining. Humor is more likely to make me interested in a product that I previously had no knowledge about (Career Builder).

- I like the products and would buy them.

- I feel that any product can be sold if advertised right. Even if its just an aspirin pill.

- If the commercials are funny, I am more inclined to buy the product. It shows they put more energy into producing the video which makes me feel they put more energy into producing the product.

- They remind or inform but don’t persuade

- The funnier they are the more I like it and relate but if it’s too extreme or over the top and doesn’t make sense then it becomes unappealing.

- Some of the commercials were a bit corny

- I hate Trident, especially that gum. I love Coke, even though that was a lame commercial I’ll still drink it.

- I already didn’t like some of the products so it didn’t matter to me what the commercial is like.

- Some of the products were not as appealing as others
The Trident commercial was very weird and has noting to do with the product so it wouldn’t make me want to buy the product.

-Brings attention to the product

-Make me feel like I want to try them out. Makes me feel thirsty.

-The aspirin made me think it was cheap. The other ones made me want to use the product.

-The commercials all made me feel the product was good but humor made me like it more

-Anacin looks old and plain. Trident will lighten everything up.

-Some I liked, some I didn’t.

-Anacin makes us hate their product.

-None of these ads really stood out for me. I was not crazy about any of the four ads shown. None of them made me want to buy any of the products.

-Indifferent

-If its entertaining it makes the possibility of me looking at it/ trying it better

-Eh, no effect because I’m already familiar with them.

-All were good, made me feel good about buying the product except Anacin ad.

-Trident seems annoying (gone too far). Coke seems like a savior to a hard day.

-Aspirin—terrible … Career builder—captivating

-I like Career Builder a lot more

-Indifferent, mostly

-Anacin? What are the benefits of aspirin free?

-No change.

-Honestly, commercial don’t necessarily make me feel any different about products. I usually go by word of mouth and product reviews.
-The last commercial that looked very cheaply made did not encourage me to buy the product.

The Career Builder commercial made you feel like it was an up to date company. Something that might be helpful in the future.

-I would probably use Career Builder just because I liked the commercial

-They did not change what I thought about them

-Some of them that I might buy a product in the future and some of them not so much.

-Some of the commercials made me want to go buy the product; the aspirin one did not because it was boring

-Did not change my opinion I’ve already had my opinions made up

-The career builder ad made me happy

-The Coke one was cool, but annoying because you can’t actually buy a Coke with a quarter.

Anacin told me nothing about the benefits of Aspirin-free meds. I guess this indicates humor lessens the need for explicit information. (Coke and Anacin weren’t funny, so I wanted them to be accurate!)

-The product that makes you laugh and relates to you by doing so has more appeal than the product that strictly appeals to the logical.

-The last one [Anacin] was lame, and the Coke one was outdated, the ones they show now are a lot funnier.

-Some made me like the product more (the CB one) and others just annoyed me (Trident and Coke) and the acid [Anacin] one didn’t effect me.

-They made me familiar with the name brand when I am in the supermarket

-The Trident commercial was funny and it makes me want to buy the product. The career builder commercial was boring at first but after 2 seconds, I was hooked … I’m interested in trying the product. The pain relief commercial was horrible. I would never purchase that product.
- They don’t make me want to try it

- It makes me want to go find out more about career builder

- Ad #1 (Trident), #3 (Coke) – I recognized the names but ads were nothing special; Ad #2 (career builder) – a little bit intrigued because it was funny; Ad #4 (Anacin) – nothing.

- I felt the products were okay. Some were better than others.

- The funnier they are the more intrigued I became. The aspirin commercial had no attention grabbers or retention for me.

- The career builder ad was my favorite. It make me feel like I really could have a job I enjoy.

- The commercials I enjoyed, I feel positive towards the product.

- Some were outdated so it wasn’t as appealing to me.

- Humor makes me more inclined to try it

- The ones that just give facts are not likely to be remembered. The Coke one made me feel intense, and the career builder was the best because it was funny.
REFERENCES


