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# **Humor in Advertising**

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Commerce and Marketing

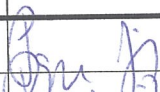
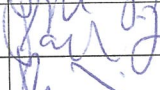

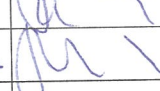
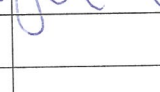
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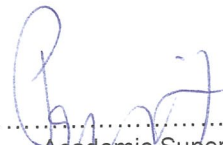
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I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Commerce and Marketing at the Budapest Business School has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. This thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been elaborated by me as the result of my own original research; it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein, has been truly acknowledged. I understand that my thesis may be made available to the public.

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

“People don’t buy from clowns.” (Claude C. Hopkins, American Businessman 1866-1932). This has been the motto of many companies for years until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, currently, simple advertisements aren’t the only solution to attract customers to the business and products. In this case, do people buy from the clowns now? Or precisely speaking, does humor sell or attract at the present time? This question needs to be tackled as there are numerous companies, which use the humor advertisement as their main advertising style while initiating other creative advertising methods as well. However, which method is more efficient? And what is humor, and how does it stimulate customers?

According to Zhang and Zinkhan humor can be a mediator for people’s purchase intentions through the change of attitude. Talking about which, in this case, attitude created by humor is not directly linked to the purchasing behavior of the customer. However, attitude towards an advertisement and the brand are affected by not only this humor factor but many more external factors. These factors are important to be assessed and found, which would consequently support the effectiveness of the advertisements to reach their intended goals. (2006)

A controversial feature of the humorous advertisements and current costly nature of the industry makes the marketers rethink before attempting to use the humor in their ads, fearing the adverse effect. Considering the fact that humor is subjective to the receiver’s perception it is very prone to be misinterpreted. Untangling this problem can contribute to the cost and brand image saving process of the companies. Consequent to the solution of this issue it would be very beneficial to know whether they are worth undertaking the risks and the expenditure.

Moreover, if humor in an advertisement is as effective as expected, in that case, the usage of it, can also be increased. If defined, which industry customers, are more open to this type of advertisement, in this case, it will decrease the hesitation while using them. Furthermore, types of humors will be introduced throughout this research and which types are more acceptable by the customers in which industry will be analyzed.

Since there have been and are many brands that use humor to convey their message, it will be crucial to understand how efficient their efforts have been. Knowing what kind of image, it creates in consumers' minds can help the companies decide, whether they would like to be portrayed or associated in that particular style or would it damage their established image. Since the humor is directly related to society's perceptions, it can change and evolve during the changing education and lifestyles and continuous research is useful, to catch emerging trends, as well as identifying the more stable ones.

Azerbaijan being relatively less competitive, in terms of advertising due to the economics freedom of the businesses, the different types of advertisements arise newly. This results in having less amount of information, and research to be done in them, which humorous types of advertisements are a part of as well. Due to not having enough relevant literature diving into the depth of this topic this research paper will be the one to assess and find the differences, and similarities of the humorous advertisements' effects on the Azerbaijani audience. It will also assess, which types of humor are more relevant in which products, according to the tastes of the audience, can be beneficial to local business owners to adopt to. This process will be done, by benchmarking the impressions of the control group in focus interviews to find the similarities and the differences among them and find the relevance of the international researches carried out about humor in Advertisement.

The researcher's questions that are addressed in this paper:

- 1) Are they persuasive to make the customers buy?
- 2) Do humorous advertisements attract the attention of the target group?
- 3) Does it bring a bad reputation or results to the brand if they use humorous advertisements too much based on the perception of the customers?
- 4) Are the humorous advertisements more preferred by the customers or the other types (family appeal, sex appeal, informative)? If not, which one is more preferred?
- 5) Which type of humor is more preferred by the customers?
- 6) Which products are more suitable for humorous advertisements for customers' points of view.
- 7) Which products are the most unsuitable for humorous advertisements?

## **1.2 Methodology**

This is a research paper with a post positivist knowledge claim and the methods used will be relevant to this. It will have mixed reasoning, as started with the deductive method and after the focus group interviews, the new findings have also been researched through.

The information used in this research is gathered through mixed methods in sequential order, firstly being the qualitative and then the quantitative strategy to triangulate the results with empirical findings. Narrative analysis is used for analysing the qualitative data at the first stage of the research. Descriptive statistics and inferential analysis are used for analysing the quantitative data obtained. Firstly, the focus group interview of 10 Azerbaijani people was gathered to find their emic perspectives on the topic. Secondly, a group of 10 international people was gathered to be a benchmark as a control group. The data on the third stage was collected via a Survey that covered 137 Azerbaijani respondents between the age of 18-35.



## **Chapter 2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Humor and its use in advertising**

Rising life standards and changing trends had shown its huge influence in the field of advertisement as well. Consumers nowadays don't want to simply be told what to buy where to buy but be used some other methods on them. Being said that, the methods where customers being pitched without their knowledge of could have more effect on them rather than otherwise (Victoria, 2017). It isn't deniable that, laughter is one of the main ways, to gain the favor of the people, which is the reason why more and more companies start using laughter, more precisely the humor in advertising.

The definition of Humor has been given by the authors as being the way to introduce otherwise not wanted pleasure, through laughter. "Humor is a rubric most accepted as the stimulus evoking an intended or unintended pleasurable effect resulting in a form of subdued or exuberant laughter" (Weinberger, 2006). According to Tellis Gerard "humor may be defined as painless incongruity" (2004). It is rather an unconscious method of telling the truth that wouldn't have been accepted in its raw form by the audience or wouldn't have been as efficient in grabbing the attention as intended.

According to Speck, however, the meaning of humor its binary character, where strict or rather formal information is introduced in a funny manner (1991). Raskin identifies humor as a realization of a funny act or situation (1985).

Due to its various advantages, humor usage in advertising has been increasing by time. In 2001 the percentage of the humor used in the UK was around 36% of all the advertisements (Toncar, 2001). In North America currently, the humor used in the media is around 69% which is the highest of all the other regions.

(Advertising). While paying attention to the attention-grabbing effect of the humor in advertising, it can be concluded that the attractiveness of humor for it is around 74% worldwide (Brown) .

However, the persuasiveness of it is still questionable. Moreover, the effect of humor in advertising can also have different effects on men and women as well

which needs to be well assessed, in connection with the gender differences being diminished by the society day by day.

There would be several types of humorous advertisements that we categorize under the names of associational juxtaposition, personification, exaggeration, puns, sarcasm, and silliness. “Associational juxtaposition is a technique of print advertising in which a product image is juxtaposed with an image of a person, object, or situation toward which the intended audience can be assumed to have positive feelings” (Maheshe, 2013). An example can be given as orbit’s advertisement, the chicken thigh being painted as the strawberry, as to refer the staleness of the mouth after the lunch being washed away with strawberry orbit gum.

Personification is in general, the way to give the objects the personalities, in literature. In advertising, marketers tend to give faces to the products. Lar Center which is a Brazil based furniture company has been using this type of advertising, as they had given the furniture, such as sofas and wardrobes tired or silly faces, to show that they are worn out, and it is time to get the new ones. Famous M&M brand is also using personification in their ads. The colorful M&M candies are given faces, hands, and legs which is how the characters are in the interaction with the humans, as well as being in humorous situations.

Exaggeration is to exaggerate the idea, problem, benefit, size or physical appearance. The main goal is to exaggerate it as much as possible, otherwise, the small exaggeration would not stand out and be a type of a misleading ad (Lorin, 2019). RCA sounds system is using this method. In their print ad, in the middle, there is an ear, and inside there is a full band situated as if they perform right inside one’s ears. The slogan for this ad is “Sound for Real” (Naldz, 2010). It is an exaggeration, because, in no way, a headphone, or sound systems can bring the sound that close, and indeed if it did so, this would be unhealthy.

The pun is another type of humorous advertisement that is widely used now to grab the attention of the customers. (Abass). Puns are mainly the words of plays, based on the homophones. According to a variety of sources, puns are accepted as the lowest form of humor in general. According to Jonathan Wilcock, who is a senior copywriter for the campaigns, puns are neither smart not complex, however, due to their down to earth character and applicability to everyone, they

are very compelling (Wilcock, 2019). In the database of Coolpun.com variety of pun related advertisement compilations can be found. One of the most outstanding examples of the puns is the Greenling vegetable company's slogan, on its delivery truck that has "Lettuce Deliver", which resonates with "Let Us Deliver" but has the word "Lettuce" the vegetable inside, standing out separately (Speasmaker, 2013).

According to the Cambridge dictionary, sarcasm is "the use of remarks that clearly mean the opposite of what they say, made in order to hurt someone's feelings or to criticize something in a humorous way". Sarcasm is also counted as the second worst or "cheapest" type of humor to be used in advertising (Wilcock, 2019). A good example of the sarcasm is the Daihatsu Hijet MPV minivan ad, from 1996. The minivan has 5 ladies inside, and a middle aged man with glasses in the car. The slogan says: "Picks up five times more women than Lamborghini" (2016). This is a sarcastic ad, as Lamborghini is considered to attract the women towards its owner due to its beauty and the expense, in which case by men "pick up" is also used as to mean this. However, Daihatsu can "pick up" in this case, literally, carry inside, 5 times more women than that of a Lamborghini, even though It isn't compared in its outer view.

While talking about the effectiveness of humorous advertisements, it is often repeated that it helps for brand recognition, but it has little effect in persuasion during the purchase process (Victoria, 2017). Customers would remember the message, or the ads, however, they might not buy the product.

According to the research paper written by Dr. N.Senthilkumar at the Anna university of Chennai, "Humor is more effective in influencing audience attitudes toward both the ad and brand when involvement is relatively low rather than high. The humorous ads always produce better results compared to non-humorous ads" (2015). Humorous ads are helpful in case of especially involvement by the audience in general as they are remembered by the audience much better by grabbing their attention.

In research by Dr. Guldane Zengin, it was concluded that, humor can also create trust for the brand, as well as increasing persuasion. (Zengin, 2018). According to Duncan and Nelson's studies, Humor has increased the attraction towards the

product, and likability of the advertisement. However, when it comes to purchasing decisions, humor doesn't affect the customers in this sense. For that instance, it is more suitable for the companies to use humor to increase awareness towards the brand, product or the campaign itself (James E. Nelson, 1989) (Duncan, 1979). This point has been proved during the group interviews as most of the participants suggested that they tend to remember the new products if they are associated with a humorous advertisement. One of the participants voiced out that, he might purchase this product, if he is shopping, and comes across to this product, and would give it a try out of curiosity, first time, however, he hasn't bought a product due to the humorous ad until now.

## 2.2 Factors affecting people's perception of humor

According to Weinberger, there are several factors that affect people's perception of humor, hence effecting their purchasing decision. They are divided into two categories as illustrated in Figure 1: Psychographic and Demographic factors. (Weinberger, 2006)

Demographic factors that are found to be connected to humor response, are consisted of but not limited to 6 different types according to Weinberger.

Gender, in general, is a phenomenon that affects various studies and is prone to be stereotyped. Traditionally women are accepted to be non-responsive or less responsive towards the humor and humorous ads that men (Eisend, 2014). According to the research

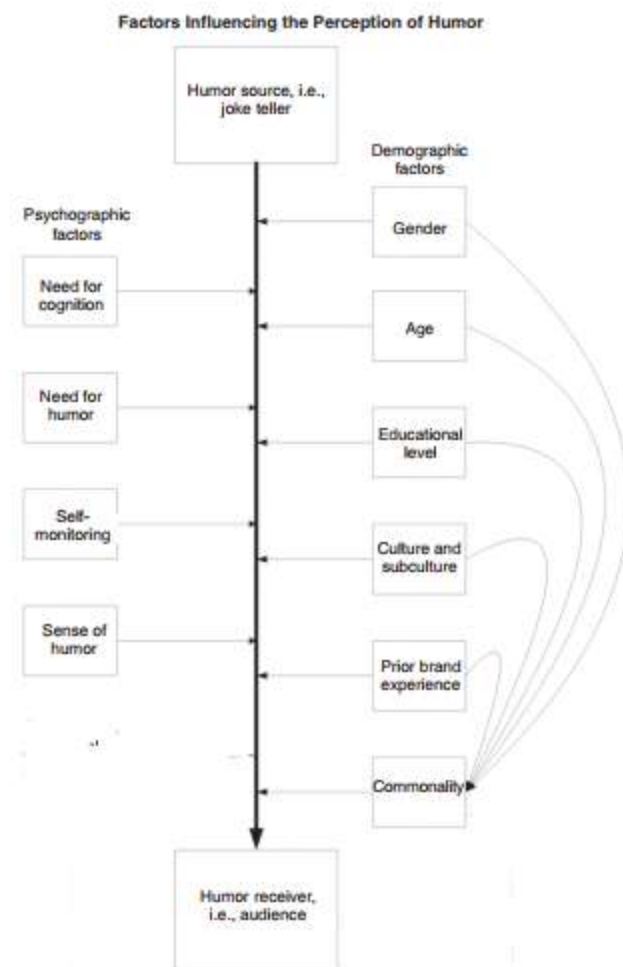


Figure 1 Factors influencing the perception of humor (Weinberger, 2006)

by Provine, women tend to have an external need for humor, being said, they like to laugh, whereas, men tend to have an internal need for humor, that as explained above, be the creator of the humor (Provine, 2000). However, in 1993, Bender's research suggested that there was no correlation between gender and customers' attitude towards print ads (Bender, 1993). According to Weinberger, the gender differences or attitudes towards the humor is changing as the society evolves as too (Weinberger, 2006).

In general reactions towards types of advertising can be deferring based on age, as the perception of different age groups can vastly vary. Humorous ads are also part of them, and humor isn't appreciated by all age groups equivalently. According to Dews, this is answered by the biological factors as in the children's mind interpretation of the sarcasm and irony in the perception develops at the age of five or six (Dews, 1996). Hence, Weinberger interprets it as the social factor as well, since, while the new generation starts adding new slangs, or the trends that are familiar to the younger adults than the older while traditions appear to be remembered by older portion of society, the humor based on those societal values will be appreciated by those who have some familiarity with them (Weinberger, 2006).

Humor in advertising can be perceived differently by people of different educational backgrounds. Jokes and humor are also associated with the cognitive functionality of the brain, which is why humor has been used to measure or identify mental functionality during the child development and assess the intelligence of the apes (Gamble, 2001).

According to Weinberger's book, called "A comprehensive analysis of Humor in Advertising", it might be challenging for an educated individual to create a humorous ad for a less educated one, as the references used could be less understandable to the latter. He then notes that when it comes to a more complex satirical humor used, in the ad, a generally higher educated audience would be more suitable. However, the lighter jokes or references could be appreciated by uneducated audience better (Marc Weinberger, 2006). In any case, there can be references, from the education of the content creator's background, that might indeed be unfamiliar, not only to the uneducated but also whoever is not familiar with the field. For example, humor related and intended for dentists can be created

by the marketers, who have some relevant background or information about it, likewise, if the targeted humorous advertisement is shown to the group of educated engineers, the humor inside might lose its meaning to them. In fact, it might not only be the levels of education but also the field of education and its relevance to the humor if there are any references used.

Cultural differences are significant factors that can either stop the standardization of a humorous advertisement or if it is tackled successfully, can save the multinational companies billions of dollars. This is the reason why cultural differences across nations and countries should be taken into consideration as well. In the research done by Yi Wang and his colleagues, different attitudes have been recorded by different country nationals. The example was a lemon urinating into the glass of Pepsi as shown in Exhibit 1. The ad appeared to be successful in western cultures however, it created some level of discomfort in the Chinese audience (Yi Wang, 2019). This discomfort is explained by the different attitudes of the cultures to the humor and consequently humor used in advertising as well (Leonidas Hatz thomas, 2010).



*Exhibit 1 Pepsi ad with Lemon featuring (Walker, 2010)*

This is also associated with the humor tolerance of each culture. This is the level of tolerance, towards the forbidden, or rather proscribed topics by society (Herzog T. R., 2008). High humor tolerant societies are accepted to be understanding the meaning beneath the plot, whereas low humor tolerant societies would accept it as the plot, and disregard if it isn't accepted by their social norms (Yi Wang, 2019).

Furthermore, there are the word formations or the usage of the jokes in the advertising, that cannot be translated not only among the different nations, but also different cultures inside the same country as well due to their values and attitude differences.

The last demographic factor is the commonality, which connects all of the psychological and demographical factors in itself. This is the common grounds found among different backgrounds. Being said that, if a joke about a certain minority is told by their member, that will be accepted as funny, whereas, if it will

be conveyed by another group, it will be accepted as discriminative (Weinberger, 2006).

The need for cognition is one of the Psychographic factors that affect people's perception towards humor, hence, consequently, humorous advertising. The need for cognition is the individual person's ability or will to solve more complex messages, which require thinking. According to his research, when people had a high need for cognition, they would more likely start analyzing the humor, which will lose its effect in persuasiveness towards purchasing the product. However, when they had a lower need for cognition, meaning that, they tend to not over analyze, if not needed, they tended to be persuaded more. (Cacioppo J. T, 1982). In research by Zhang (Zhang, 1996) it was also confirmed that, since people with a high need for cognition need more prior research and evaluation before purchasing than the ones with a low need for cognition, humor appeals affect them (high need for cognition group) the least.

Another factor of psychographic division is that their level of self monitoring. According to [psychologycampus.com](http://psychologycampus.com), high self-monitored people are the types that would more easily blend in to the society and they would like to act according to the socially accepted norms. People with low self-monitoring would behave as they deem to be correct and act upon their own judgment. In this sense, people with high self-monitoring focus tend to purchase based on other people's suggestions (Wang, 2012) . According to Dr. Irfan Hameed, people with higher self-monitoring would have a more positive approach towards the humorous ads, rather than the low self-monitoring focus (2016).

The last one in the psychographic division to be explained is the need for the humor of the customers and their attitude towards the humorous advertisement.

Karen and Kellaris define the Need for humor (Hence NFH) as the individual's will to be exposed to the humor (Karen A. Machleit, 1998). This trait is actually based on the different reactions of the individuals towards the humor in general, as not everyone understands or perceives it the same way. Currently, there are various methods of assessment when it comes to the reaction to humor, which consists of, but not limited to, Sense of Humor self-ranked Questionnaire by Svebak, Coping humor Scale (CHS), The Situational Humor Response

Questionnaire (Picard, 2013) and others. In the research by Cline in 2003, NFH was categorized into internal and external Needs for Humor. The internal NFH is when the individual has the urge to create the humor, and external NFH is when the individual wants to be the receiver of the humor (Thomas W. Cline, 2003).

According to Cline and Kellaris's research in 2007, people with higher Need for humor points, had a more positive attitude towards the humorous advertisement, than those with lower (Cline, 2007). This could be explained that, if the people are in favor of humor in general, they are more likely to be positive about the humor in the advertising as well, than the ones who are aren't.



## Chapter 3. Market Analysis

### 3.1 Humor usage in the market

As, SWOT analysis below of Humor in advertising in Figure 4, suggests, the strength being the attention-grabbing style of the Humor as nowadays jingles, silly ideas and the humor whatever that stands out of the crowd succeeds. It isn't a coincidence, that, "Squatty Potty" had been able to have six-fold of its profits, just with its "the best poop of your life" ad campaign, that was the mixture of humor and information together (Blasdel, 2018). Not only it was attractive, but the song was also catchy as per the comments its YouTube broadcast got, from its viewers. Furthermore, they could put the information into the song, which helped the viewers to understand its function with a jingle. However, otherwise, an infomercial is rather dull for viewers, to watch unless they really need it.

<b>Swot analysis of Humor Advertising</b>	
<p><b>Strength:</b></p> <p>It can be very attractive and catchy</p> <p>Association is very easy</p> <p>Can help you target the specific group of people if your positioning is clear</p> <p>Can be applied to the products that hold a boring image</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <p>Can be very subjective for people</p> <p>Can be accepted differently in every market so the same ad cannot be used everywhere</p>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <p>More and more people nowadays like the ads be more than just be the ads but give them value, or at least a good laughter</p> <p>Brand differentiation (Olenski, 2018)</p>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <p>Augmented reality can make the other types of advertisements less fashionable as, almost touching a product, could be better than using it.</p> <p>Regulations if introduced would limit the humor advertisements a lot.</p> <p>Bad timing and Brand misalignment (Olenski, 2018)</p>

Figure 2 SWOT analysis of Humor in advertising

Humorous advertisements can also be added to the products which are perceived as boring by people and bring strong differentiation to the customers. The Allstate insurance company's humorous "Mayhem" advertisement campaign is the perfect

case of how an insurance company could reposition itself. Mayhem was a fictional character played by Dean Winters that represented the haphazard that the people could come across daily. This character would always damage the possessions, as it could happen in real life, and raise a question in the minds of the public, whether they are covered by insurance for these or not. Mayhem had always been in the humorous situations, such as, a deer that runs into a road, and freezes when it sees the car, and causes an accident or a broken GPS device, that makes the driver lose its way, and go into the wrong road, yet again be in another accident. The ads are created related to holidays and popular topics by catching the latest trends. However, the associations and the wrongdoings are always given in a humorous and funny representation of a human that, it directly is accepted by the audience, and triggers their questioning. At the end of each advertisement, they raise the question “Are you in good hands?” as this slogan has been the slogan of Allstate’s slogan all along. According to Dean Winters who was the lead actor of Mayhem the anecdotal character has gotten one of the most perceived brand characters in the USA (Burns, 2014). The project started in April 2010, and by the end of 2010, Allstate brand recognition across the United States reached 97% (Nicolle, 2015). A quarter after the Mayhem ad started to air, the company had 5% which was about 7.9 billion increase in its sales (Petrolino, 2016). While checking the annual stock price from the Micro Trends database, it can be noticed that the annual stock price has increased 6.13% in 2010, whereas it has been in negative annual change for the previous 3 years (Allstate). Mayhem ad had successfully transformed people’s perception towards the boring concept of the insurance advertisements, by being connected to the customers’ pain, and being trendy.

In the example of the Charmin toilet paper brand, the example of humor on social media has been shown perfectly, how a brand such as a toilet paper could use humor. The key point was to make the advertisement to be memorable and sharable (Beht, 2016). Their ads have been featuring a bear family, in different humorous occasions and conversations. In one of the advertisements, the baby bears talk about the greatness about the Charmin and mention that “it cleans so well, that you can use the same underwear twice” while the mother bear hears as well as criticizes, and the younger bear replies “I said you could, not that you would”. The slogan of the Charmin is that “We all go, why not to enjoy the go”.

This advertisement series' humorous nature makes them be memorable while being informative through the connections to real-life situations. In their social media presence, they are referencing their TV commercials, as well as the original humorous print ads, that are featured with the same mascots. In one of the print ads that are in their social media account, the bear is dreaming about a golden toilet and the caption has “#IfIWonPowerball, a throne of gold would no longer be a dream and I would #TweetFromTheSeat like a King!” (Twitter, 2019). Their whole twitter account has posters with the characters dominating in the humorous matter. Senior brand manager Brian Stupp counts the ad series as well as the humorous print advertisements, to be successful from the consumer point of view (Mehegan, 2003) which still is relevant, as the usage of the bear family sustained both on social media and on TV. Currently, the Chairmin brand stands in third place in the with its 1billion USD sales revenue in 2017 according to the data retrieved from the Statista website (2017).

In the example of Dollar Shave Club's humorous advertisement with its CEO shows how humor can help you reach your target group. When Dollar Shave Club first set off, it started to compete with Gillette with the price and quality, with its humorous and differentiated ad, that helped it reach its target customers. (Roberts, 2018).

“Sheets” an energy stripes brand of the United states is a good example of how humor is used in advertising to raise awareness (Rey, 2011). The brands “take a sheet” campaign had gained huge popularity across the country and it shows different celebrities who claim to take a sheet (Djurik, 2011) during various events. One example of this is Pitbull who is a famous rapper, who claims to be consuming it in the stage in a



*Exhibit 2 Sheets ad with Pitbull (Djurik, 2011)*

controversial manner illustrated in Exhibit 2. According to the creator of the ad Jessie Itzler, “you have college kids saying, I take a Sheet in class. Or I take four Sheets a day”. At an interview with the adaga.com website Jessie said that, despite the fact that they and the users of the product wanted to be in the Superbowl ads, which is the biggest football game of the United States of America, many network channels had been refusing to view their ad. This also comes back to the

controversial part of the humor in advertising, and how it can either be backfiring or limiting in some cases such as this one.

Humor is quite subjective and isn't accepted the same way by everyone. There may be situations where an advertisement could be funny to one group but not funny for another or depending on their situation. Companies should be able to find this fine line while choosing to use humor. (Victoria, 2017)

According to Gulas and Weinberger's book called humor differs based on the cultures, educational background, upbringing, age, gender, race, and other social and psychological factors. As per his research, humor is also accepted to be changing, and evolving by the changes that the society faces. If the reference points in the humor aren't understood or to say "decoded" by the target, this would cause a discrepancy among two parties. (Weinberger, 2006). In another research done by Flaherty, Weinberger and Gulas suggested that the correlational fact of the different perception of the humor by different social groups is important since, if a humorous ad's intended humor isn't perceived, this can influence negatively to the consumers, and their purchase intentions might be disrupted. (Karen Flaherty Ph.D., 2004). This is the reason that, especially the humorous ads would be more effective, if they are created locally, for each social party targeted, rather than translating an ad that is created for a global audience.

Furthermore, in Weinberger's research in 2006 we can come across the statement that if the humor is executed wrongly, the advertiser may bear some costs related to it (Weinberger, 2006). This has proven itself a case that was carried out by RyanAir an Ireland based low cost airline company. During the "Guy Fawkes" festival in the United Kingdom RyanAir launched a slogan saying "Fawking Great Offers". The festival has started after Guy Fawkes had attempted to set the Parliament's house on fire in the 17th century. After these people started celebrating the 5th of November. However, Ryanair had the slogan as above written, on the fireworks, as the resemblance to the fire to be set. The audience has accepted it as provocative, and offensive as the word "Fawking" resembles the curse word (Francois Maon, 2018). The campaign had 47 complaints as the ad being offensive which resulted in it to be shut down (BBC, 2004) and ASA Advertising Standards Authority or the UK ordered them not to run any similar ads in the future (Francois Maon, 2018).

According to Steve Olenski's article in Forbes journal, humorous advertisements can have an effect on brand differentiation. In his article Oreo's example is given as, "by offering a quirky, tongue-in-cheek voice across its social media platforms" (Olenski, 2018).

While discussing the opportunities, the humorous would have, two major points should be emphasized. One is the changing trends, in the customers' perceptions. In the time of Netflix and YouTube, which, one is ad free, and the other one can be used with adblockers, and the way to persuade the customers unconsciously on the advertisements they don't want to watch is getting harder day by day. Moreover, millennials, aren't responding to the ads in general as costumers used to before. In the survey by Clutch 53% of the respondents had answered that they prefer the ads that are humorous, and they are more likely to remember these ads over a period of time as well. Furthermore, 58% of the participants reported as TV being their preference in comparison with online being 13%, and Print media being 11%. 65% of the participants responded that they remember TV advertisements as they are more entertaining over any other type (Herhold, 2018). Subsequently, weaknesses in the advertisements are important to be considered as well. In the research of Clutch again, when it came to the advertisements they dislike, uninformative (51%) and unrealistic (48%) advertisements had resulted being the least favorite of the consumers (Herhold, 2018). In this case, humorous advertisements would always hold meaning and realistic, to be able to favor by the viewers, together with remembered and the threshold on this can sometimes be hard to determine.

### **3.2 Types of relations between the message from humor and product information**

According to Speck's research, the message transferred through the ad must relate to the product, in order to be accepted (1991). As per the Cline claims, in his research, participants could remember the ad's intention better, if the humor was associated to the product(Cline, 2007). For that, he essence of a humorous ad is dependent on the relation of the humor itself and the product that is advertised.

There are several types of relations for Speck which aren't mutually exclusive:  
 1) Intentional, 2) Semantic/Thematic, 3) Structural,

Intentional Relatedness is the relations between the humor and the type of message is used to show the humor. The main question here is the intention behind the ad. Is it created to give information or to be entertaining to the

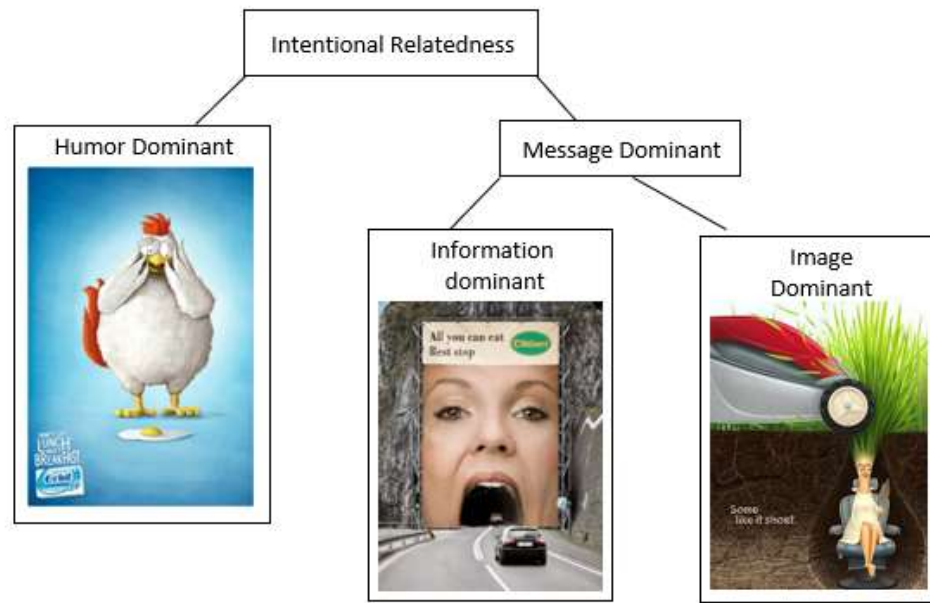


Figure 3 Picture sources: Orbit from (Luce, 2019), Oldtimer from (Matthews, 2012). Honga from (Global, 2015).

audience? Intentional relatedness in itself is also found differently in several types of humorous advertisements.

In case of the humor dominant ads, if the humor is taken out of the context the message to be given would still be relevant. (Speck 1991). As shown in Figure 3 Orbit's ad is a humor Dominant ad. There is a phrase "Don't let the breakfast meet lunch" written in the poster, meaning the chicken to be the lunch and the egg to be the breakfast, and the chicken to look in fear to see her "child". The intention behind this advertisement is a referral to the freshness of the breath after each meal. If the humor is taken out of this context however, as the subtext is embedded into the humorous feature, the meaning would be lost.

As per Speck's research, the other type of ad type that intentional relatedness can be observed is message dominant advertisements. This itself is also divided into two subcategories as information dominant and image dominant humorous advertisements. If it is inside the information dominant it takes the audience's

mind from the information for a short period only. (Speck 1991). As it can be observed in the picture above, in the information dominant advertisement, there is the information given which can be useful without the humorous context too, as in this example “All you can eat: Rest Stop”- suggests that it is a restaurant with a fixed price and full selection of the meals. It gives the brand, shows what it is and what type of service the brand offers. However, the placement of it is on the highway to show the women eating the cars, as a referral to eating all she can. This can have some controversy for the audience during the processing of the humor dependent on the attention, and the “mood” of the viewer, however, even without it, the posted would have served its mission.

In the image dominant advertisements “there is less likelihood of a processing contrast” (Speck 1991). The image is less informational in this case, however, the audience doesn’t need to find any special underlying meaning behind it, just the association. The third picture above is the mowing machine, that shows the grasses being mown, however, the lady under the ground, is as if a lady sitting in a beauty salon, waiting for a haircut. The image looks funny, and simple to understand yet, there is no particular information apart from the product’s picture.

Semantic relatedness is the referral to the theme of the product, (Speck 1991) be it price, quality, size or packaging. Because of this, while creating a semantic relationship, between the humor and the humor, the questions the main points to be taken into account are, whether it is connected to the product, taste, brand, usage, users, or service.

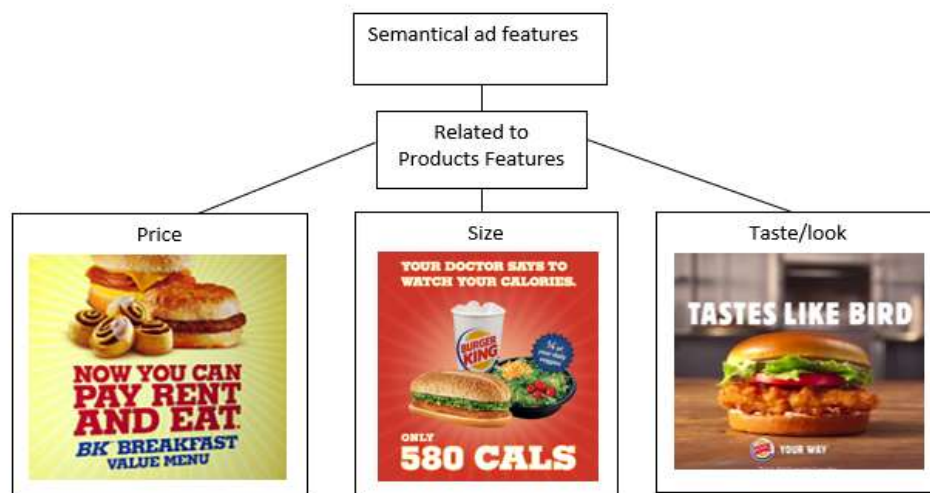


Figure 4 images retrieved from Burgerking.com

The ads that have semantic relations are connected to the message that the advertiser wants the audience to perceive in general. In Figure 4 there are 3 different Burger king ads, all intended to be humorous with either pun, satire or a simple comedy. The price association underlines, how cheap the price of the breakfast menu is. However, it says that “you can eat and pay the rent” as to touch a common problem in a humorous manner. The second one in relation to the size is rather satirical as Burger King being a fast food restaurant is never advised by the doctors, however, due to the calorie size of the menu being small, Burger King decided to play the doctor card. The ad’s slogan is that “Your doctor says to watch your calories” and below written “Only 580 cal’s” meaning that it is low enough to even pass doctor’s limit. However, an unhealthy feature of fast food is a worldwide known phenomenon. The third one is related to the taste of the burger, as presumably it is a chicken burger and the slogan says “Tastes like bird” which is a word play indeed or pun indeed, which is linked to the taste of the burger directly.

Structural relatedness is “the syntactical function of humor within a message-dominant ad or of product information within a humor-dominant” (Speck, 1991).

It also is subdivided into two categories, for Message dominant and Humor dominant advertisements. In message dominant ads, humor plays a role as a distraction inside the information, to be remembered, or associated. In this type of ad, one question should be answered, is the positioning of the humor in the clear?

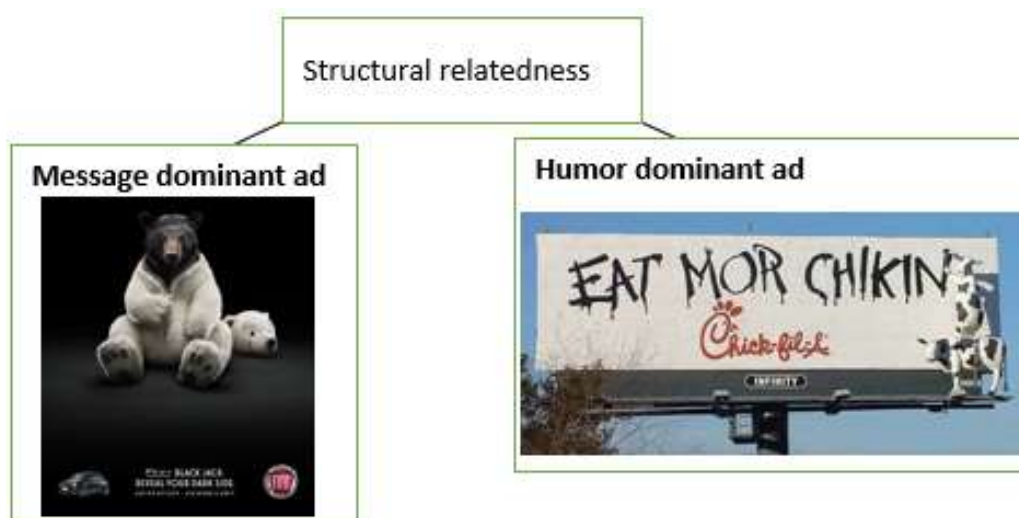


Figure 5 Fiat ad from (Burnett, 2010), Chick-fill a from (Hendrix, 2015)



Is it at the beginning, inside, or at the end of the image? If it can clearly be identified, then it can be accepted as a humor dominant structural relationship.

In the first illustration in Figure 5 above, a brown bear is inside a polar bear costume, and it is intended to be humorous and the slogan says “Reveal your dark side”. However, the message is the new limited Black Jack limited edition model’s showcase which is in dark tones of colors. The image of a bear is quite unrelated, however, there is a slight indication of the color, and it helps the audience associate it with Fiat. The humorous part of the image is at the top part of the picture, in the billboard, it is on the eye-level view, of the audience. Meaning that it is at the beginning of the advertisement.

In the humor dominant ads, product Information is put to the context so that it can be accepted by the viewers. In the figure above, the second image is a billboard of a fast food restaurant called “Chick-fil-A”. The image illustrates 2 cows, writing the sentence: “Eat more chickin”, with an underlying meaning, don’t eat beef. The image itself only suggests the audience to just eat more chicken, but the cows writing it makes it more humorous in this case. The message is clear, and it is directly related to the message itself in this example. To identify it, one should ask the question to what kind of feelings does this humor, or ad, in general, is associated with, in the audiences’ eyes. In this case, it is rather an appetite.

### **3.3 Product Color Matrix**

Another theory is by Gulas and Weinberger and is called “Product color Matrix”(PCM after now). Based on this Matrix, products are divided into four color categories. Unsought Products which rather treat such as chips, candies, alcohol are in the Yellow category. Their price is normally cheap, and they don’t require high involvement from the purchaser. They call it “Small Toys”. They aren’t functional; however, consumers are motivated to purchase them. They don’t contain any risk to the purchaser. This is the category that is the most relevant for humorous advertising. Consumers tend to respond to the humorous advertisements in this category the most positively, which is why the most amount of humorous advertisements are came across here. As Victoria states: “They don’t require a lot of facts and there is room for humor” (2017). The second category is

the Specialty products category which is called “Big Toys”. Those are the products that require high research, focus, and indeed brand recognition as well. Consumers are very motivated to purchase these items, and they are in the high-risk category. This category contains luxury cars, expensive fashion clothes, make up, phones, jewelry, and others. Most of the time they require high involvement from the purchaser, and the prior information gathered, can be helpful. These products are seldomly purchased and buyers are putting a lot of effort during the selection process (Fripp, 2017). This category is a “no joke” category and isn’t associated with humorous advertisements. The third category is Blue Products, which are “Small Tools”. Those are Convenience products rather routine, daily products that are needed to purchase, and they cost less. Consumers aren’t motivated to purchase them, and there is very low risk associated with them. While buying these types of products consumers might either look for some small information or rely on prior experience. This category is the second most preferred category for humorous advertising. The audience is less open than the unsought products, however, due to the low level of involvement, they are accepted and advertised by humor too. The last category is the white category. They are called “Big Tools” and are shopping products. This category contains washing machines, tires, electronics, household items and likewise. They require a high level of involvement by the customer. These types of products come with higher risks, as well as higher costs. This product category is also the least suitable for humorous advertising (2006).

Wrapping up the Product color matrix and the usage of humor in advertising specifically to industries, according to the Weinberg’s research on corporate advertising humor has been selected by 65% of the participant as non-suitable and Soft drinks has been mentioned by 47% of the participants for being the most suitable products (1984).

### **3.4 Controversial humor usage and its negative results for the brands.**

As it has been noted that, the reason that humor in advertising is researched, is due to its critical and controversial effect in general. There are numerous occasions when a humorous ad is perceived negatively by the public and the advertisers had received severe punishments.

The humor that is perceived as funny is exactly, humorous, however, if the humor is intended but not perceived to be funny by the audience, it is accepted as “attempted humor”, which is one of the routes of the complaints against humorous advertisements (Weinberger, 2006). Attempted humor can have various reasons, for failure, one of which is the bad timing. There are various examples of it, one of which is in 2019 after the boat accident in Budapest, Hungary (News, 2019). After the death of dozens of passengers, people became sensitive towards this situation. After 1 month of the mentioned incidents, the Budapest Boat Party company announced its usual type of “Shipwreck Party” that has been running over the years. In the regular context, this might have accepted to be sarcastic and in that case humorous, however, due to the bad timing, and being right after the tragic accident, it created a backlash from the audience.

Another reason for the complaints is how close the humor is to the actual reality. If the advertisement doesn't contain reality inside it can be accepted as misleading and can cause bans. According to the Consumer Protection Act 2007, if the advertisement is convincing the customers for an action, with the usage of false information, or using only parts of the information, as well as manipulation of it, which otherwise wouldn't convince the customers to act so, is accepted as to be misleading (2007).

Exaggeration in humor had been discussed above and is used one of the main types of humor in advertising that is prone to have a negative reaction as there is a very small line between misleading and a clear exaggeration, and this closeness can and has caused some companies to spend a small fortune as a penalty. One of these companies is Red Bull. The company's slogan is “Red Bull gives you wings”, and they refer to this, as the energy drink can increase the athletic and intellectual ability of the consumer. The part with the giving wings is a clear example of the exaggeration, as they mean it, that you are being so energized as if you have wings. However, in 2014, Benjamin Careathers, who was a long-term consumer of the energy drink filed a lawsuit against Red Bull, claiming that, after drinking Red Bull, he didn't have any wings grown, nor did he have any intellectual and athletic enhancement. The company had to pay 13million USD in total, out of which, 6.5 million had to be shared among the 1.4 million customers, by 10\$ each, from 2002. Despite the fact that the slight energy boost by the

caffeine had been proved by European Food Safety Authority, their case hadn't been successful since this wasn't enough to give the wings to the consumers (Duggan, 2019). This is a typical example of how an exaggeration or a slight misuse of humor can bring a costly "headache" to the company.

Racial and ethnical differences are some of the used topics in the humor for years. Due to its sensitive nature, this topic is the one that needs to be paid attention to. In 2017 Dove started using a poster featuring a transition of a woman of color to the white one, meaning that Dove soaps clean. First, the lady with dark skin wearing a brown shirt was, had the motion of four images, which in the fourth she was a completely white woman with a white t-shirt., After receiving multiple complaints the company had to stop the ads (Astor, 2017). These types of racist ads had been used by soap manufacturers for a few centuries now, and even in the current decade, it isn't at the stop. The similar racism mixed with humor had been used by a Chinese based washing powder advertisement as well. In the advertisement, a man of color comes home and is put into the washing machine by his partner. After the washing cycle with the so called washing product, the man comes out of the washing machine as to be white (Tsoi, 2016). However, in this case, there has been no harsh consequences towards the product except the possible backlash of the audience in the social media, as well as the news channels.

In several European countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, and France there is a regulation against the advertisements using gender stereotypes. Azerbaijan is far behind these regulations right now, and there is nothing controversial in these ads, as they are used in the advertising sphere until now. In 2012 Huggies started a campaign called "Huggies father test" that heavily relied on the gender stereotypes. The campaigns were intended to be humorous as well as informative to the durability of the huggies. The series started with five mothers going on vacation, paid by Huggies when the fathers were supposed to take care of their toddlers. At the beginning of the ad, the presenter voices out that "To prove Huggies diapers and wipes can handle anything, we put them to the toughest test imaginable: dads, alone with their babies, in one house, for five days, while we gave moms some well deserved time off. How did Huggies products hold up to daddyhood?". During the ads, the fathers were shown in numerous

funny failing occasions (Belkin, 2012). The ad itself is sarcastic, and humor intended. However the majority of the fathers across the world got offended from this campaign and Chris Routly a dad of two kids began a request in Change.org an online appeal site, with a headline saying “We are fathers, not dummies”. After 1323 support received by the public, it confirmed its victory by Huggies stopping the ad campaign. As per his pledge, not only the women but also men are equally skilled and are taking care of their children as it is the current situation for every 21st century’s father (Routly, 2012). After serious complaints like this, Huggies had to stop the campaign and change it to a completely new model. After a while, Huggies came back with the skillfull father figures, who are taking care of their babies (D'Arcy, 2012). This is a typical example of how a gender stereotyping can cause harm and offend a group of people with a bad execution of humor and its consequences.

Talking about the backlashes the advertisements that are related to the sensitive topics by making fun of them hasn’t proved to be succesfull continiously, especially when making fun of one’s body type is considered to be bullying. In 2009 PETA the non-governmental organisation, which fights against animal cruelty came with a rather humorous attempt by placing an ad with a slogan of “Save the whales” where the picture that is illustrated isn’t a whale but an overweight woman. This caused a huge noise and anger as it is considered to be fatshaming by calling the owerweight person a whale. Soon after this, PETA had to take their banners and replaced them with another banner with a slogan: “Gone. Like all the pounds lost by people by going vegetarian” (PETA, 2009).

Commercial or non-commercial every advertisement can suffer from negative consequences from the unsuccessfull usage of the advertising. Which is the reason why these cases should be remembered and considered by the advertisers each time while using humor in their advertisements. All in all, laughing with someone is different from laughing at someone.

### 3.5 Analysis of 100 Print advertisements in Azerbaijan

Out of 100 samples of Print advertisements analyzed in Azerbaijan, 22% had humor appeal in them which made this category to be the second most preferred. In comparison, this percentage has been over 30% in the USA in 2008 (Yih Hwai, 2008) and 15% in UK

magazines (Yi Wang, 2019), whereas in Sweden 20% of the ads found to be humorous (Lind, 2015). As can be seen in Chart 1 the most preferred ad appeal in Azerbaijan is informative advertisements with 37%

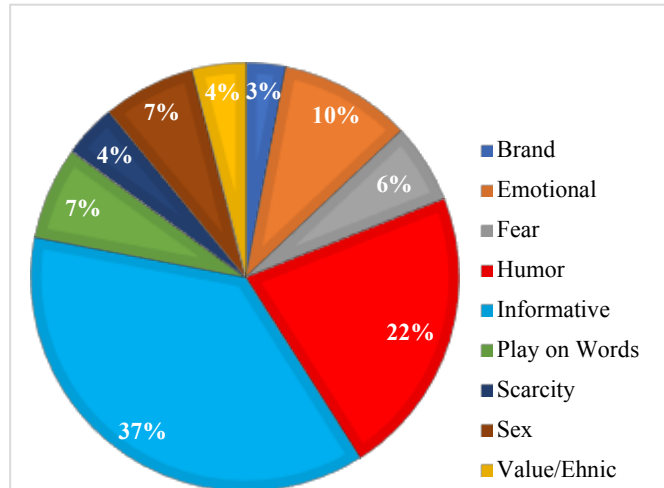


Chart 1 Types of ad appeals and their preference percentage (Own establishment)

according to the findings from the sample. Emotional,

Sex and Wordplay were represented by 9%, 8%, and 7% respectively. When it came to industry breakdown interesting tendencies were observed as seen in the second chart. All of the home appliances from the sample had humor appeal in

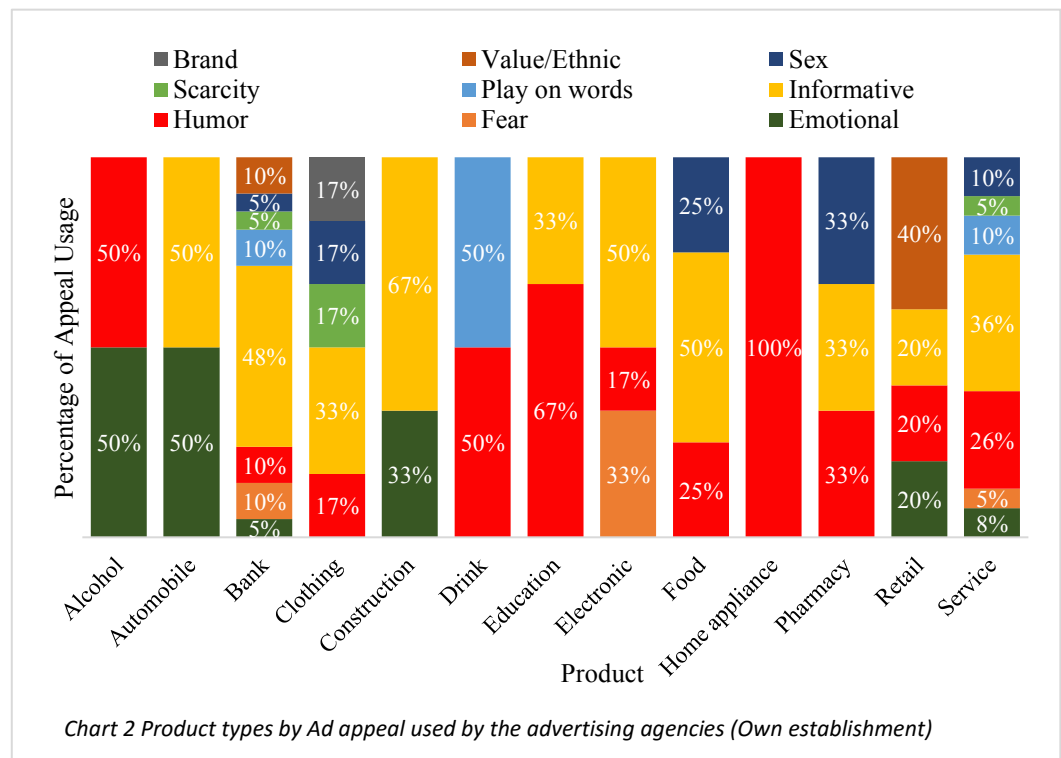


Chart 2 Product types by Ad appeal used by the advertising agencies (Own establishment)

them. 67% of the education related advertisements, 50% of the Alcohol and 50% of the non-alcoholic drinks had humor appeal in them. The only 2 categories that

didn't have any humorous advertisements were Automotive and construction related advertisements. Banks had the lowest share of the humorous advertisements, by 10% of them which was as expected due to the serious nature of finance related industries.

Looking deeper into the product categorization and the share of the advertisements it is visible that, the trends in the product categorization are followed. Out of the analyzed advertisement, the highest percentage of humorous advertisements belong to the Yellow category by being 36%. The second highest is the Blue category with 28%. Interestingly, despite the fact that, worldwide, Red and White categories aren't considered to be suitable for humorous advertisings, in Azerbaijan, 21% of them are humorous in the White category and 18% in the Red category. As anticipated, Informative ads are the most favorite in Azerbaijan, by customers in the primary research, as well as the advertisers. However, only in the Yellow category, humorous advertisements are higher than the informative ads as well.

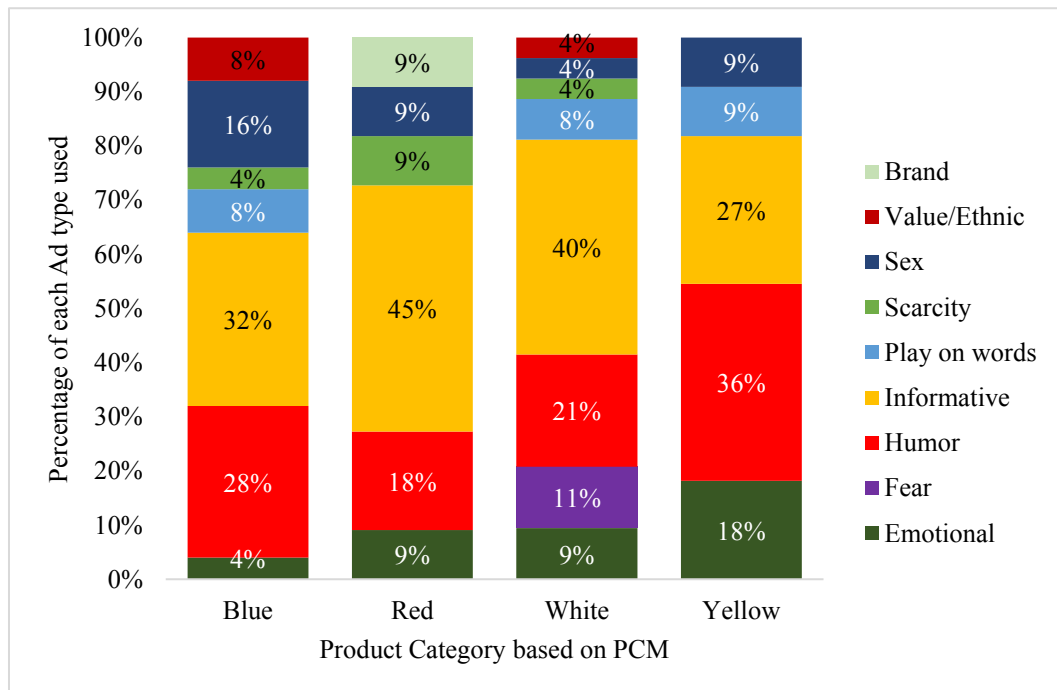


Chart 3 Ad types used by Advertising agencies in Azerbaijan categorized in PCM (Own Establishment)

## **Chapter 4. Primary Research**

### **4.1 Qualitative section**

The first stage of the interview was handled as a focus group interview. 10 Azerbaijani participants 3 being female and 7 being male were gathered. The age group of the participants was between 22 to 28. All of them were the students either doing their Bachelors or Masters in Hungary. 8 of them were also working part time. The participants had been living in Hungary between 1-3 years.

The second group was a group of internationals, in the same age range, who lived in Budapest for 1-3 years.

During the focus group discussion, 3 out of 10 participants have told to be fond of the advertisements in general. However, the rest, reported being using adblocking applications, on their computers and trying to avoid the advertisements as much as they can. However, they would like the advertisements, if they watch it consciously, such as if their friends would suggest, or if they came across as being an interesting advertisement. When the participants were asked about the advertisements, they were affected the most, the findings were mainly about the family appeal and the emotionally touching videos. One of the participants told a line that “I started drinking Cola, because of an ad, in my childhood. They were showing the coke in every family gathering, which gave me an association that, the food wouldn’t go without Cola, and I would even start my day drinking it”. While talking about humorous advertisements, they pointed out the new emerging influencer’s humorous advertisements. His advertisements were mainly sarcastic with the deep associations behind, given in funny manners with today’s society and its behaviors.

In the group of Azerbaijanis, it was pointed out that, we don’t have many emotional ads which they don’t consider as being good, that would be as much appealing as the Turkish ones. In the international team, however, the interesting finding was that they were more into humorous advertisements.

While discussing the best commercials advertisements the participants remember, it became clear that many would remember the concept of the advertisement, how it affected them but not the brand itself that is advertised. Which lead to the reasoning that, the participants would not believe humorous advertisements would



encourage the customers to buy the products. Their point of view was towards, the funny advertisements were good only to increase brand awareness, to the companies which enter the market newly. This is an interesting point because according to Weinberger, the companies which have already established brand image are safer to use humorous advertisements, as otherwise if a new brand is entering the market with humor, they could be perceived by the customers by being not so serious about their business (Weinberger, 2006). According to the focus group, however humorous advertisements in the newly emerging brand could grab the attention of the customers easier this way as people remember the concepts. Some of the participants also told that they, of course, watch the funny ads, however, it doesn't affect their choice while buying. On the other hand, if they like the ad, they are likely to share this with their friends, and this helps the brand to keep its popularity. However, the brands shouldn't overuse the humor as it could lead to the damage of the brand's image and the people could get bored with this. For the international focus group, this was not a popular concept, and for their points of view, humor was considered to be a good tool as marketing in general as well.

When asked, that, whether they have personally purchased a product because of an advertisement, the majority agreed that they had done so. The reason for that, is because when they had seen the ad, and then forget, but once they enter the shop and see the product, they could see the association, and it would trigger them favor that product. Or even, if it is an informative advertisement, of a discount, then they would remember, that advertisement, and if the situation is right they would buy it because of it. For example, one of the participants pointed out that, he had entered a KFC because, he had seen the advertisement for a basket of wings, and its price, and when he wanted to have something, he entered there and asked that basket that he had seen in the ad.

Interestingly, while showing the pictures of some advertisements, participants agreed that, if it is a food advertisement, then the appearance of it plays some role. If it is appetitive, then they would likely try it out, at least one time, if it isn't good they could just not repeat their trips there. But humor rather didn't play a big role in this part.

An interesting reaction among male and female participants was that both liked the family advertisements, but they accepted as not so efficient, but rather a usual type of an advertisement. Furthermore, according to the participants, the ad with a sex appeal would attract them to go to a place, for example, restaurant, and try it out, since they are single, while they are with their friends. However, if they would be married, or if they would go out with their family in general, they would rather choose the place which uses family appeal. On this occasion, humorous advertisements were ranked to be one of the averages for them, which was associated with a sarcastic reference from a movie. At this point, it got clear that humorous advertisements, especially in sarcasm, appeal differently to different groups of people. In this group, some of the participants did not understand the humor behind it, as they either haven't seen the movie, or they didn't think it was funny, whereas, for the others, the advertisements had a good association, and could be considered successful. According to the research by Weinberger, even the social groups within a country could have different perceptions towards the different types of humor, as well as humorous advertisements as it is discussed above (Weinberger, 2006). In this case, the group of Azerbaijanis, being from a diverse background in Azerbaijan, considering the fact that, the country has a lot of small different nationalities, this can be associated with the nationality and upbringing factor.

While asking Azerbaijani participants to rank the humorous advertisements which were from different categories of humor, puns were selected to be the best ones. In this case, the puns from Turkey were accepted, and understood by Azerbaijanis, due to the cultural similarities and languages being very similar as well. On the other hand, even though the puns were translated into English, with the international participants those were one of the worst types of ads in general. They understood the pun and the concept, however, they didn't accept it as humorous, as the Azerbaijani participants did. This could be accepted as humor being difficult or getting lost while translating which is the factor why the usage of one single type of humorous ad, on the global scale might prove itself not as successful, compared to a localized version of it.

An interesting statement from one of the participants was that: "In our society there are some things that cannot be voiced out due to the culture. However, while

showing those with humor, they become more watchable and attractive to the people”. Durex’s humorous advertisements were the examples that were brought up by the group relevant to this statement. The example that was brought was the humorous ad that thanks to the parents of the Greek football players in Euro 2004 for not using their product. This was the football championship of Europe, where the Greek team has won the Euro Cup. The ad implies to one of their usual messages, that if you don’t use protection you end up having children. In this case, they thanked the parents as, if they used Durex products, the team members wouldn’t have been born.

During the study, it was voiced out that, if service industries such as airlines use humor in their advertisement it brings more fame to the companies and is more effective. However, if it is used with the products, it is only watched and perhaps not discussed so much.

One of the participants added that there might be some humor that is specific to some group of people. For example, people who work or interested in IT could have more field specific humor. If it used well it could be effective to reach them.

Furthermore, the products which contact the human body, such as lotions, creams, perfumes, etc, are more suitable for humorous advertisements. In this case, the international group considered perfumes being very unsuitable, as they always have a woman in the ads, and are always remembered like that, and not in a funny way. Azerbaijani group also considers the food and clothing industries to be suitable for humor.

Some participants said that banks or insurance companies are considered as negative places by people. For their points of view, them using humorous advertisement wouldn’t be well accepted, as they have nothing associated with humor or fun. These types of industries should rather use informational or social responsibility ads, to give some messages to society. They should rather try to build trust. However, recently, there is an emerging influencer in Azerbaijan, who is able to mix vines, humor, and infomercials together, and is widely accepted and liked by society. He also has some advertisements related to banks and insurances, which contain humor. This was considered as an example or a new trend by the participants during the study. In contrast among the international group, humor was considered to be quite suitable for banks and insurances. They would

remember the ads related to these products; however, it wouldn't affect their buying decision in the end, but it would just inform them about the existence of the brand.

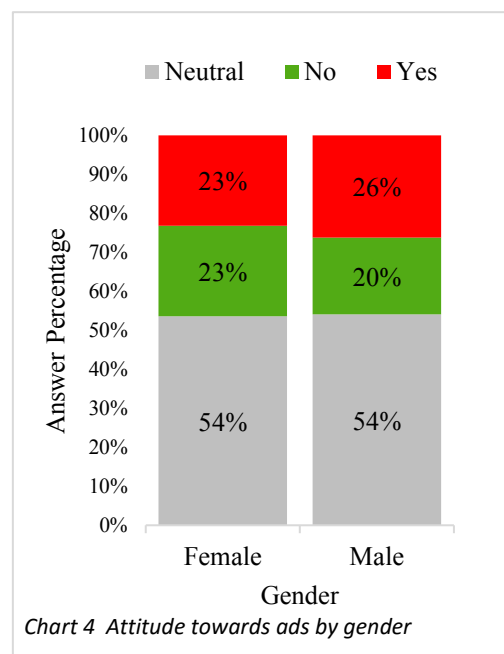
Some of the participants also considered alcohol and tobacco products to be very unsuitable to the advertisement, in general, let alone the humorous ads. This part was quite controversial, however, as while the people who didn't smoke were against, while the people who either smoked or just didn't have a negative opinion about the tobacco products said that, they consider these products to be suitable for humor. Controversially, alcohol, especially, beer was voiced out to be suitable for humorous advertisement in the group of internationals.

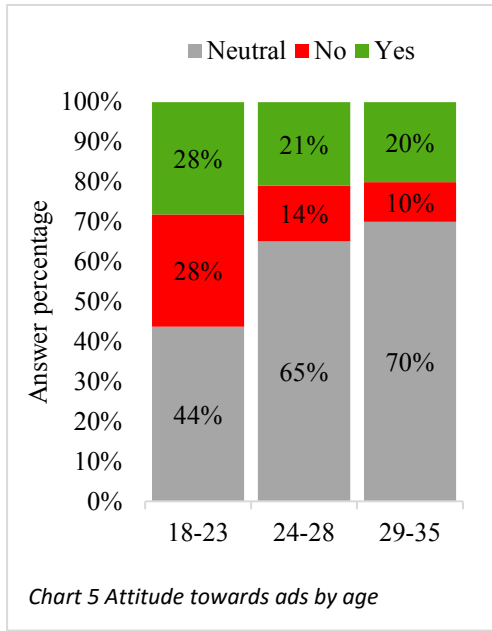
## 4.2 Quantitative Section

117 responses were kept being quantified and analysed out of 138.

In the questioner, 52.5% of the respondents are identified as male and 47.5% are identified as female. 55% of them were at the age of 18-23 whereas 37% were between 24-28 and 8.5% are between 29-35 years old. 58% of them are the students, 27% are workers and around 6% are unemployed. 86% are single and 14% are married. The highest number of respondents being 35% are pursuing their master's degree and 27% are during their bachelor's education. 56% of the respondents live in Azerbaijan, and 44% of them live abroad.

Out of 117 participants, 25% claimed that they like the ads, 21% disagreed and the rest 53% were neutral to the advertisements. When we check it by their gender, we can see that the difference in the preference of theirs by gender is not significant as 23% of the women and 26% of the men answered as they like the advertisements. The correlation coefficient in gender and their preference is 2% only.

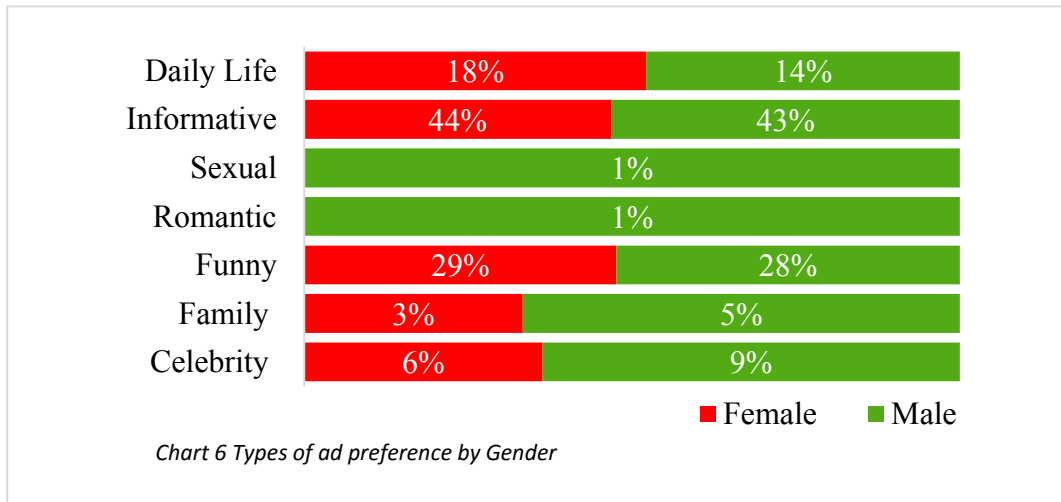




Interesting enough, the older the respondents' ages went the more neutral towards the advertisements they seem to grow. The youngest group of participants around 28% said that they like the ads, whereas only 20% of the older age group said they like advertisements. The tendency, however, was the same when they disliked the advertisements as well. 28% of the 18-23 years old, 14% of the 24-28 years old and 10% of the 29-35 years disliked the advertisements.

40% of the participants said that they are exposed to the ads, every hour.

According to the survey, 43% of the participants liked informative ads, whereas the second most preferred were humorous advertisements by 28%. The least



preferred ads were Sexual and Romantic ads each being less than 1%, together with being 1.4 % of all. While checking the preferences by the gender in Chart 6, we can see that both male and female participants would show the same tendency towards the types of ads except, the ones related to the family and celebrity.

Family appealing advertisements were said to be preferred by male more (5% among of the men), whereas celebrity ads were said to be by men 3% more than the women, as only 6% of the women preferred it, while 9% of the men selected this to be preferred type of ad.

When it came to their work situation, the most amount of the students tend to like informative ads, and their second choice was humorous advertisements. The same

tendency could be observed with the employed people as well. Whereas, with the unemployed respondents, with a small fraction, humorous advertisements were the most preferred as per their claim.

While answering whether they have ever bought a product because of an advertisement 68% of them disagreed while 32% of them agreed that they have bought. Checking their occupational situation, we can see that, students are the most sceptical ones towards the ads, as the least percentage being, 26% accepted that they had bought a product because they liked its ad.

Unemployed and Self-Employed respondents showed the highest persuasion rate, 57%, and 67% respectively as they had bought a

product. Furthermore, out of the group, when we check the educational background College (AKA Vocational school in Azerbaijan) graduates showed more tendency to buy the products because of advertisements by 66% agreeing than the others.

When asking the respondents who agreed that they had bought a product, to which product or advertisement it was, the majority showed, fun or humorous Coca-Cola advertisements, influencing their choice. Numerous answers had also indicated that they had bought a telephone or telephone related accessories after seeing the advertisement. A few other answers also included snacks such as M&M, KitKat, and Lays advertisements, and two of them had humorous advertisements related to them.

The funny advertisement via pun, in Turkey, which was also preferred by many people during the focus group interviews, happened not to be liked by many. Only 30% said that they would enter the shop that this advertisement is being shown. However, while checking the relationship between the countries they live and their attitude towards this advertisement, a weak significance can be observed with 90% confidence ( $P=0.1$  and  $Dof=1$ ). Respondents who live abroad are more

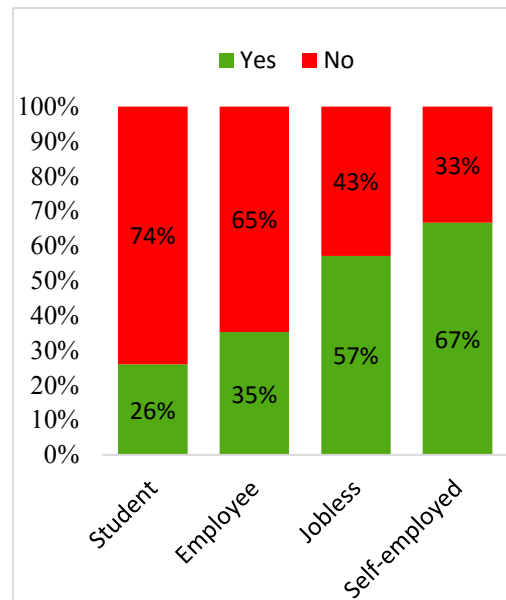


Chart 7 Question answered if the respondents bought a product because of an ad, by their occupational status.

tolerant of open and humoristic advertisements than the ones in the country. This can also be associated with the culture within the country.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Funny advertisements make people be interested in the product				
Funny advertisements persuade people buy the product				
Funny advertisements help people remember the product				
Funny advertisements just make people laugh at that moment, but doesn't change anyone's mind				
I would buy a product because of a funny advertisement				

\*The redness of the color indicates the density of the given answer.

Table 1 Agreement level with the given statements

While given the statements to agree and disagree, we could see interesting tendencies in Table 1, as mostly, 69% being the majority would agree with the statement that, humorous advertisements make people interested in the product. Interesting enough, the majority of the people who agreed with this, had selected their preferences to be towards informative and funny advertisements respectively (Table 2). From this point, the key take-away would be that people who like

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Informative	•	•	•	•
Funny	•	•	•	•
Sexual	•	•	•	•
Romantic	•	•	•	•
Family	•	•	•	•
Celebrity	•	•	•	•
Daily	•	•	•	•

\*The size of the circle indicates the density of the given answer.

Table 2: Cross analysis of the type of the most preferred advertisement with the agreement level to the statement: Funny advertisements make people be interested in the product

informative and humorous advertisements, tend to agree that the ads can make people be interested in the product.

While going back to the previous answers, where respondents answered whether they have bought a product because of an advertisement or not, it can be observed that the people who did, had a tendency to agree that, humorous advertisements are attracting people's interest with a high association level:  $P=0.0$ ,  $\text{Chi}^2=8.9$   $\text{dof}=2$ .

Coming to the argument whether, the humorous advertisements encourage people to buy the product it can be seen that, 58% of the participants disregarded the argument., however, 42% is accepting it and the difference is not very significant. While taking a closer look at their gender division, it can be observed that 52% of them were female participants, whereas 48% were male participants. A weakly significant correlation can be observed with the gender and their preference in this example.  $p\text{-value}= 0.1$  ; Fisher= 3.0. Inter variance= 0.9. Intra variance= 0.3 being analysed. When people are asked about the third party, they tended to be less sceptical in this question than when they are asked directly about themselves. At the later argument when the participants are asked that, whether they personally would buy a product because of a funny advertisement 87% disregarded this statement and only 13% agreed.

The majority being 93% of the respondents tend to agree that, the humorous advertisements make the customers remember the product. They also disagreed that, despite the fact that the humorous advertisements make people laugh at the moment, it doesn't change their attitude towards the product. Only a 39% minority agreed that it is true. For this matter, as can be seen, the respondents believe that humorous advertisements can be remembered by the customers as well as change their minds about the product itself. This statement also had an association with the gender itself, as men tend to agree with this more than the women.  $p\text{-value}= 0.1$  ; Fisher= 2.2; Inter variance= 0.8. Intra variance= 0.4.

The next question was about an advertisement which was juxtaposition/pun where the participants were asked to rate it by the stars. The picture had been chosen as the most effective advertising, in the focus group interview, previously.

According to the result of the survey however, the advertisement received an average 2.5 score out of 5 by the respondents. This could be associated with the gender and the association level is strong in this sense. Men tend to like this



advertisement more than women. According to the analysis  $p\text{-value} = < 0,01$  ; Fisher= 6.8. Inter variance= 13.3. Intra variance= 1.9 can be concluded.

At the latter question, the respondents were asked to rate the pictures from 1 to 6 place, 1st being the best and 6th being the worst. Each of the pictures represented

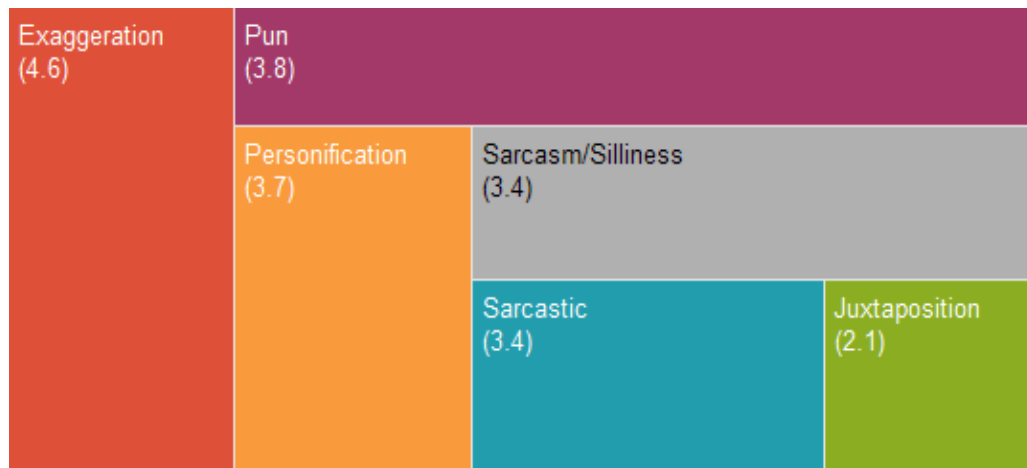


Table 3 Type of ad preference of the respondents based on the given images

a type of humorous advertisement. Exaggeration had received the highest score where juxtaposition was the least favoured among them.

As can be seen in Table 3 above, puns and the personification were in a similar ranking whereas, two different types of sarcasm examples received the same results as well.

When the respondents are asked about the products that are the most suitable, in Chart 8 it could be observed that, fast food is the most suitable industry for the humorous advertisements according to their perception as 56% of them selected this item. The second one is the technological products by 39% and non-alcoholic beverages are the third preference for them with 36%. From the chart, it could also be seen that Medicine and Tobacco products are the least favoured by the participants, but we can see the difference in the third and fourth places at the next question when it's asked which products are the least suitable to the participants.

While checking the association with the gender, a weak significance can be observed with their preferences  $p\text{-value} = 0.1$  ;  $\chi^2 = 23.8$  ;  $\text{dof} = 15$ .

The most interesting tendencies and differences could be seen in three top products. Among the participants would selected perfume/make up to be suitable for the humorous advertisement, 71% of them were men only 29% were women.

Similarly, with alcoholic beverages, 68% were men and 32% were women. However, the least ranked product which was the tobacco, only the women chose it as a suitable product to the humorous advertisement. Out of the people who selected home appliances to be suitable 74% were women, and 26% were men.

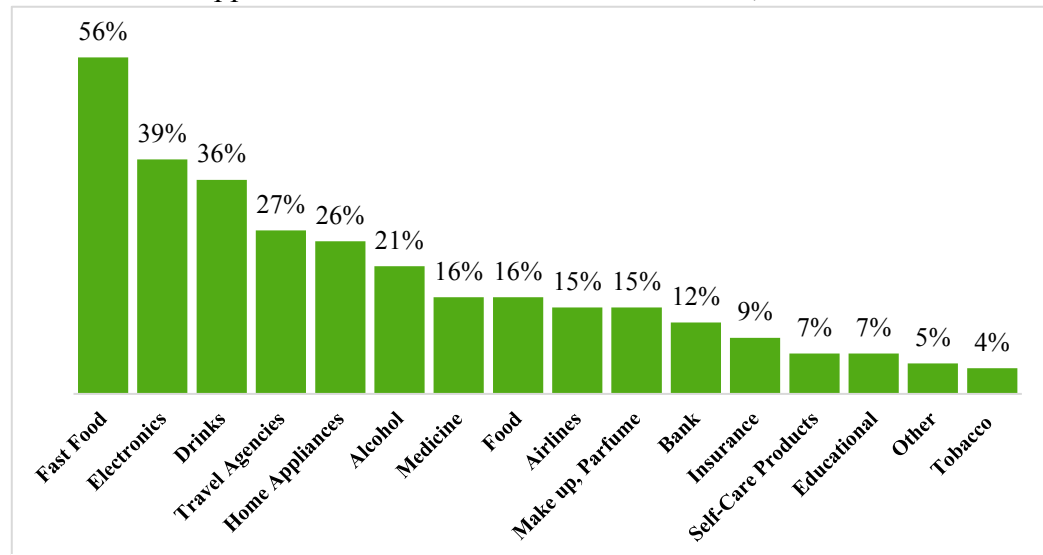


Chart 8 Most suitable products to the humorous advertising based on the preference of the respondents

The latter question was about the products the participants see unfit to the humorous advertisements. 55% of the respondents said that medical products are unsuitable, the second majority voted for the tobacco products whereas the alcoholic products were the 3<sup>rd</sup> unsuitable ones. While checking them by gender, Non-alcoholic beverages, fast food, and home appliances were selected only by men, and the travel agencies were selected by only the women to be unsuitable for the humor.

Respondents were asked to select the image of the printed ad examples based on the different categories. The first category was the memorability of the ad. Sex appeal was the most selected one with 33%, where the humorous ad was second with 27%. In this question a very high relationship could be seen between the men and the woman by  $p\text{-value} < 0,01$  ;  $\text{Chi}^2 = 15.5$  ;  $\text{dof} = 4$ . 36% of the women tended to choose the humorous appeal to be the most memorable, whereas, men selected the sex appeal to be the most memorable for them which were 44%. Humor was selected by 18% of the men to be memorable.

The second ranking was based on the persuasiveness, and informative advertisements were selected the most persuasive by 38% of the participants, and the family appeal was following it by 35%. around 16% of the participants selected humor to be persuasive.

The next category was based on which ad could get the person to buy the product the most, and 24% voted on the fear appeal to be effective. A weak significance could be observed in this ranking as  $p\text{-value} = 0.1$  ;  $\text{Chi}^2 = 7.9$  ;  $\text{dof} = 4$ . The majority of the women being 30% selected the fear appeal, whereas 27% of the men participants, actually selected the sex appeal. Humor was selected by only 5% of the women and 15% of the men in this category.

With the ranking which was „interesting” 64% of the participants selected humor to appeal to be interesting. Out of which, the division by the gender was 70% of the women and 60% of the men selected this item.

The most memorable item, however, was selected to be the one, which was the sex appeal by 76% of the participants. 80% of the women and 74% of the men selected this option. The humorous advertisement received only 4% of the participants' selection.

The last question was to ask the participants, whether a company could lose its image if they used the humor too much. 61% of the participants disagreed with this, 29% agreed, whereas 10% decided to elaborate it with their answers. The most significant answers were dependent on the quality of the humor, and whether the company kept using the same type of humor or they added variety. One answer was also related to the fact that, if the ad is not informative meanwhile then it could lead to the decreasing image. One of the participants replied that: „If a company uses humor too much it will lead to the decreasing seriousness of the business”. The next participant also related it with the seriousness of the company, and if a „serious” business related company uses humor too much it would lose its place.

Another participant replied: „It will depend on the type of the humor, and if they use the same one repetitively. If they keep repeating it there is a high probability that it will lose its image. However, if they can bring creativity each time to the humor they use, it can create unbelievably positive results. Indeed, the company could get favor and fame despite the quality of the product, but the humorous side of its advertisements”.

## **Chapter 5. Summary**

### **5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, if used correctly in accordance with ecological validity, humor is one of the most effective tools in the advertisement industry. It can be applied to a wide variety of industries, and it can be a good tool to grab the attention of the target costumers and increase brand awareness. However, in Azerbaijan, the frequency of the same usage, in the type of the humor should be taken into the consideration, as people tend to dislike the brands that would use the same style (saying that, either pun or exaggeration but the same type) repeatedly and they voice their opinion that it could even result in them avoiding the brand as well. Furthermore, if humor isn't used correctly, this can bring financial or brand appeal damages to the company as well. While looking at the types of ads used in the country, it can be observed that advertising agencies are able to identify the tendencies in the customers' preferences and have the relevant ads according to their tastes. Despite this, the fraction of the humorous advertising in comparison to others, and in other countries is less in some fraction. Recommendations are that, despite the expected opinion by the socially constructed ideas, that Azerbaijanis are not ready for the openly and extremely humorous ideas, it can be disregarded, and the humor as long as not visually presented in puns and wordings could be used as much as possible and it would be preferred by people. Since the main limitation of the research was the financial, labour and time limit, this research focused on the print media mainly.

As the research analysis suggests as well, respondents don't find humorous advertisements persuasive, however, it is more attractive for them, and they are more likely to remember humorous advertisements. As far the products concerned, people in Azerbaijan, value seriousness of the business a lot, and if it is a business, such as banks, insurance companies or such kind, people tend to see them as serious business, and perceive that if they use humor, it is degrading for them. For that while using humor the industry and the type of the business should be, taken into account, if it is a service. If it is a product, in this case, the medical sphere is not liked by people to be used with humor context. Due to the culture and the religion background of the country, it can be noted that tobacco and

alcoholic drinks are also among the least liked products to be associated with the humor. In this case, if it is a company selling these types of products, different types of advertisements could be considered, however, the target group also needs to be taken in to the account in this case, as there could be seen some correlations with the gender as well.

Fast food companies, technological as well as non-alcoholic beverages are very much liked by the people, and since these products don't have any type of explicit negative association among people's perception, they can easily use humor in their advertising strategy.

However, it should be noted that, due to the answers, since people think that, humorous advertisements help them remember the products and attract them, it can be suggested to be used especially at the early stages of the business, to increase the brand awareness. Over usage of the same type of humor should be avoided, and the type of humor to be used, based on the culture should always be carefully selected. Since majority of the participants agreed that, over usage of the humor doesn't bring the bad reputation but over usage of the same style or type does, as long as this line doesn't get crossed and the companies bring variety to their humorous advertisements it could still be able to maintain the attraction of the customers, as well as keeping the balance of its image.

The most preferred humor types according to the survey was exaggeration and puns, and it can be seen that visual or more explicit humor is liked more by the people, in this case. However, the types such as sarcasm hadn't been favoured, since, the country is very diverted with the language and culturewise, making associations and reaching the majority of the target group with those associations could be challenging. The same type of sarcasm can work for example native Russian speaking community but not native Azerbaijani speaking community or otherwise, there would be 3 types of people based on the channels they watch, either Russian, Azerbaijani or Turkish and relatively, start showing similar traits, and laughing at the same type of jokes, of the programs associated. Taking this into account, in case if sarcasm is used, it could be perceived differently among each of these groups of people, or they may even not be able to associate at all, which was why there were 2 different types of sarcasm was put into the survey in this analysis.

Additionally, informative advertisements or the informational traits of the

advertisements are more preferred, it could be a good idea, to always keep in mind to put some informational attribute into the humorous advertisements such it is done in squatty potty case, in the USA, so that, people can also see the usefulness of it. As it could be seen, the informational advertisements, were the most preferred types right before the humorous ones.

## **5.2 Possible limitations**

The research had financial and time limitations. The main focus of the research paper was the print media, with some additions of TV as well but limited. The time frame for this research had been short and not enough to conduct personal interviews as well. Additionally, since the time span was short, the changing perceptions and trends towards humorous advertisements, as well as humor could not be analyzed through observational research. Furthermore, the target group was the Azerbaijani audience, however, there is a limited amount of information on the humor in advertising in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the reasonings behind the answers and correlations can be not explained in depth due to not having one on one interviews. Additionally, there could be other reasons behind the preference of the people and the relationship of their answers which need more thorough research.

Suggestions for future researches would be if the time and the financial resources allow focussing on the TV advertisements in Azerbaijan, and research them further, as this one will be focusing on the print media mainly. If time would allow, to have in dept interviews would also be beneficial.

## Appendices:

### The effect of humor in advertisements (survey)

Hi. I'm Eltaj Hasanova, currently the third year bachelors student, in Budapest business school, in the field of Commerce and Marketing. Currently, at one of my university classes, I'm doing a research on the effects of Advertisements. This research is not for commercial use and is upon voluntary responses. The answers will be researched and analyzed in clusters. The survey will take 7-8 minutes. In case of any questions, you can email me: [eltajhasanova@gmail.com](mailto:eltajhasanova@gmail.com) Thank you for answering in advance

1) Do you like the ads?



2) How often do you see ads?

- Every hour
- Once a day
- Once a week
- 3-4 times a week
- Once in a month
- Either once in a year or less

3) What types of ads do you like?

Informative

Funny

Sexually open

Romantic

Related to family

The ones with famous people

Natural-close to daily life

4) Have you ever bought a product just because its ad was appealing to you?

Yes

No

## Based on the pictures

In this page, you will see different ads, and questions related to them. I will need you to rate them based on your feelings or give your opinions.

5) Picture 1 (Translation; We dropped everything and are waiting for you)



Would you enter the shop because of the ad showed above?

Yes

No

6) Please rate, how strongly you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

	Absolutely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Funny advertisements make people be interested in the product	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Funny advertisements make people buy the product	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Funny advertisements make people remember the product	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Funny advertisements just make people laugh at that moment, but doesn't change anyone's mind	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
I would buy a product because of a funny advertisement	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



- 7) Picture 2 (This is an ad of a meat restaurant for Valentine's day.  
The translation: The day when the meat touches the meat)



With how many stars would you rate the picture 2 above



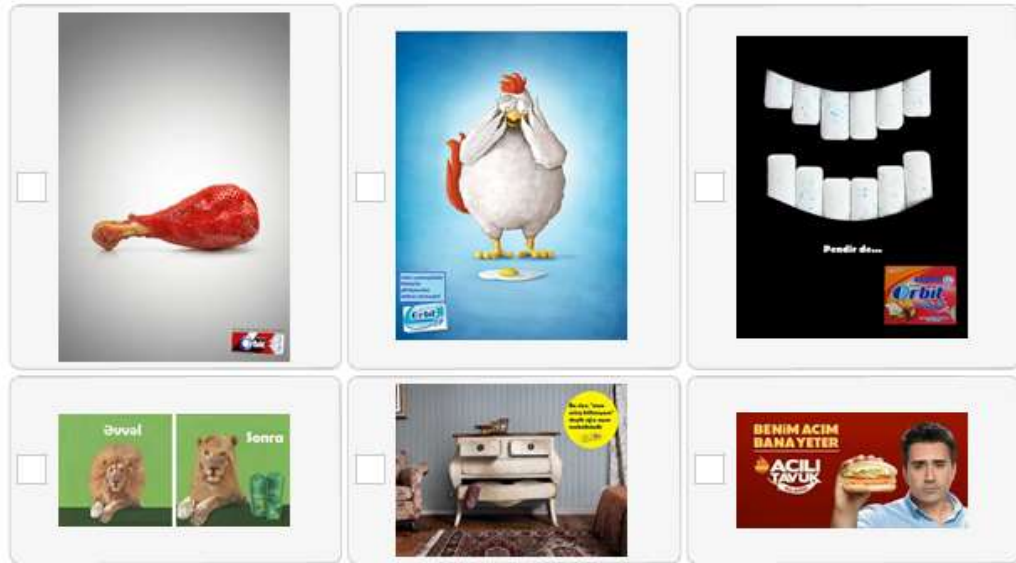
- 8) Choose the pictures below based on the categories



Most remembered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Believable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Could make the customer buy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attention grabber	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If it is hard to read: "Coca Cola", Second picture " Bounty,, 2x times more absorbent, you can use it less", Mc Donald's;"Happy family, happy me", furniture: "This is your furniture saying I'm worn out", last one" Less wrinkles in a minute.

9) Please, rate the pictures from your most favorite to the least? (Most favorite will have number 1 and least favorite will have 6



If it is not readable; 1st picture nothing written, Second picture with Orbit: "don't let your breakfast meet your lunch"/ 3rd orbit teeth "Say cheese", lion ad: "before-after"/ Furniture ad: "This is your furniture saying I'm worn out", Last one, "My pains are enough to me"-it is a sarcastic funny ad from our country based on a movie

## Questions to think about

This is almost the last page. After this page you will only have a page asking your age and gender type of questions. Almost there almost done 😊 Keep it up!

10) Which products are least suitable for humorous ads? Please choose 3

- Drinks    Alcoholic Drinks    Fast Food (Mc Donald's, KFC)    Bank
- Insurance    Airlines    Travel Agencies    Perfume, Make up
- Creams, lotions, self-care products    Medicine    Education Related
- Food    Home appliances    Technological (Tables, laptops, phones)
- Tobacco products    Other

Drag and drop your answers here, and order them

11) Which products are the most suitable for humorous ads? Please choose 3

- Drinks    Alcoholic Drinks    Fast Food (Mc Donald's, KFC)    Bank  
Insurance    Airlines    Travel Agencies    Perfume, Make up  
Creams, lotions, self-care products    Medicine    Education Related  
Food    Home appliances    Technological (Tables, laptops, phones)  
Tobacco products    Other

Drag and drop your answers here, and order them

## Personal Information

And at the end you could help me with some information about yourself.

12) Age:

- 18-23    24-28    29-35    35-50    51+

13) Gender:

- Female    Male    Other

14) What do you do?

- Work  
Jobless  
Retired  
Student  
Your choice:

15) Family situation:

- Married    Single

16) Education:

High school

Vocational school

BA (Student)

BA (Graduated already)

MA (Student)

MA (Graduated already)

PHD (Student)

PHD (Graduated already)

Other (Please specify)

17) Do you live in Azerbaijan?

Yes

No

18) Please specify the country you live (note for the professor: this is the conditional question)

19) Which city in Azerbaijan are you from?

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