

The effects of culture and product type on the use of humor in Greek TV advertising: An application of Speck's Humorous Message Taxonomy

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Abstract

The present study attempts to add to the growing literature regarding humorous advertising in high context environments such as Greece and the other Mediterranean countries. It content analyzes 447 Greek TV commercials in order to identify the relationship between humor and the nature of products. In this attempt, Speck's *humorous message taxonomy* (1991) and Rossiter & Percy's *brand attitude grid*, provide the theoretical framework for the analysis. The various humor types and processes described by Speck's taxonomy are linked to consumer involvement and motivation. The study analyzes the use of humor, and examines the applicability of the humorous message taxonomy in Greek TV advertising based on cross-cultural analysis between Greece and the USA as recorded in Speck's original study in 1991 (the only study that employs the same theoretical framework for the analysis of humorous TV advertising).

Key words: Humorous Message Taxonomy, Brand Attitude Grid, Culture, Humorous TV advertising, Greece

Introduction – Purpose of the Study

Humor is panhuman (Ziv 1988), it is present in both tribal and industrialized societies (Apte 1985). As Berger (1987, p. 6) states: “*Humor is...all pervasive; we don't know of any culture where people don't have a sense of humor, and in contemporary societies, it is found everywhere--in film, on television, in books and newspapers, in our conversations, and in graffiti*”. However, consumers’ preference in humorous content varies among different countries, mainly due to the social conditions and restrictions prevailing in each country (Nevo et al., 2001).

Humor is one of the most commonly used emotional appeals in advertising. An overview of humorous advertising in the USA for example, reports usage rates that range between 11% and 24% of the total TV commercials (Beard 2005). Speck’s (1991) earlier study though, reports significantly higher percentages (51%) of TV ads that incorporate some type of humor. As a communication strategy, humor constitutes the common denominator and the key success factor for a number of global advertising strategies. For instance, in “Advertising Age Best Ads 2000 Competition”, 23 out of 32 award winning TV commercials were humorous (Vagnoni, 2001). A survey of the favorite radio ads in the UK indicated that highly humorous ads attracted the audience’s attention and preference (Anonymous, 2002).

The role of humor in advertising has been widely discussed. There are three main streams of research in the area. The first group of studies focuses on the source and the message factors, namely the relatedness between humor elements and message elements (Flaherty et al. 2004; Speck 1991). The second stream of studies concentrates on situational factors, such as the program context (Furnham et al. 1998; Gunter et al. 2002; Perry et al. 1997). Finally, a number of research papers have examined the role of the advertising audience’s individual factors, for instance, the effect of need for cognition (Cline et al., 2003), need for levity (Cline and Kellaris 1999) and affect intensity (Geuens and De Pelsmacker 1999).

Scant research has focused on the ways in which the humorous content varies across cultures (Alden et al. 1993). The present study further elaborates on the issue of humorousness in a high context environment such as Greece as opposed to a low context environment (USA). First, it examines the extent to which Greek television advertisements incorporate humor, the type of humor, and the type of relatedness

between the humor elements and message elements. It discusses the applicability of Speck's *humorous message taxonomy* (1991) in Greek television advertising. Speck's taxonomy (1991) was developed and validated in the USA and may underlie the humorous communication in this country. To date there is no evidence on the applicability of Speck's taxonomy to other culturally diverse nations. In this manner, the present paper attempts to add to the growing literature for the standardization of creative advertising strategies. The cultural differences between the two countries are examined in light of the high-context/ low-context theory.

Second, it analyzes the relationship between *humorous message taxonomy* and the *brand attitude grid*, namely the relationship between humor and the nature of products. The present study further elaborates on Rossiter and Percy's theory (1997), since it sheds light on the way practitioners use humorous execution in order to reconcile the special characteristics of each product type. Third, it examines the relationship between the advertised brands and the humor used for any possible similarities or differences between Greece and the pattern identified in the USA

Theoretical Background

Cross – Cultural Studies of Humorous Advertising

Cross cultural studies on the use of humor in different countries (Weinberger and Spotts 1989; De Pelsmacker and Geuens 1998; Alden et al. 1993; McCullough and Taylor 1993; Toncar 2001; Koudelova and Whitelock 2001) report both similarities and differences (Table 1) on the humor types and humor processes employed as well as the issue of humor effectiveness. Furthermore, they underline a number of alternative humorous taxonomies, the prevailing ones being: Kelly and Solomon's *technique* typology (1975), Raskin's *Script-based semantic theory* (1985), Stern's taxonomy of comic types (1996) and Speck's *humorous message taxonomy* (1991).

Place Table 1 about here

Humor Types

Weinberger and Spotts (1989) in their survey of USA and UK ad agency executives indicate that UK managers seemed to be significantly more positive regarding the use of humor in advertising and they believed that humor constitutes an effective communication strategy. They analyzed 450 USA and 247 UK TV ads in terms of the use of humor, based on Kelly and Solomon's technique typology (1975) and the Foot Cone and Belding (FCB) grid (Vaughn, 1980; 1986). Overall, 24.4 per cent of the USA and 35.5 per cent of the UK commercials were coded as being humorous. In terms of the type of humor employed in the USA and UK commercials, it seems that both of them incorporated mainly ludicrous humor (USA 66.4%, UK 59.1%), satire (USA 26.4%, UK 33.3%) and pun (USA 4.5%, UK 14.0%).

Toncar (2001) partially replicated Weinberger and Spott's (1989) study. He analyzed the use of humor in 848 USA and 282 UK TV commercials, and proposed that the overall use of humor has become more similar in the two countries (33% in the UK and 28% in the USA). Regarding humor types, ludicrousness constituted the main humorous device in both cultures (45% in the USA and 37% in the UK). In addition, in both markets, humor was most often used to promote low – involvement, feeling products and least often used to promote high involvement, feeling products.

Biswas et al. (1992) content analyzed 279 USA and 259 French print advertisements. Based on the high-context/ low-context theory, they hypothesized that there will be no difference between the two countries in terms of the use of humor, since humor combines affective elements with problem solving. However, they revealed that humor is most often used in France (22,78%) (high context culture) than in the USA (10,75%) (low context culture). Furthermore, differences between the two countries were identified in terms of the use of humor types in advertising. In particular, it seems that puns were employed more often in the USA (53.33%) and jokes in France (33.9%).

McCullough and Taylor (1993) focused on the differences among American, British, and German business-to-business humorous advertisements. A total of 665 print advertisements were sampled from trade magazines, (270 American, 203 British and 192 German ads). The researchers classified the advertisements into five categories: aggressive, sexual and nonsense humor (Freud, 1905) warm humor (McCullough, 1991) and pun humor (Brooker, 1981). Though they assumed that there will be variation on the three countries in terms of the use of humor, (according to the

high-context/ low-context theory), their results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the average humor ratings among countries. Significant differences though, were identified on the average humor ratings and the humor frequency among the various industries examined. In terms of the type of humor employed in advertising, it seems that pun humor was the most frequently used (34%), whilst aggressive (14%), non-sense (18%), warm humor (18%) and sexual humor (6%) were less popular. However, no significant differences among nationalities in terms of the type of humor used in advertising were detected.

A content analysis on the use of humor in Japanese TV advertising (based on Kelly & Salomon's technique typology (1975), indicated ludicrous humor to be the most significant type of humor employed in Japan (Alden and Martin, 1995).

Koudelova and Whitelock (2001) in their cross cultural analysis of 102 Czech TV advertisements and 210 UK commercials indicated that 25.8 per cent of the UK and 8.9 per cent of the Czech commercials were considered of humorous intention. In particular, the 15.2% of UK commercials and 4.9% of the Czech ads employed some kind of joke and only the 5.3% of UK TV ads and the 1.9% of the Czech ads incorporated puns.

Nevo et al. (2001) conducted a content analysis of jokes supplied by Singaporean and US students based on self – report measures. Their findings revealed that jokes supplied by Singaporean students were more conservative than those written by American students. Furthermore, Singaporean students compared to the American ones, reported a significantly greater number of jokes with aggressive content and relatively fewer jokes with sexual connotations.

Finally, Six (2005) in an overview of Russian publications on humor in television advertising, examined language differences between USA and Russia. It became evident that “gag humor” (i.e. when a TV falls and breaks into pieces), although very popular in USA, is not perceived by Russians as entertaining. On the contrary, it engenders negative feelings to Russians, due to the loss of a valuable appliance.

Overall, it could be argued that although certain similarities are identified among nations, there is not enough evidence that could lead to the standardization of creative advertising strategies. What is appealing and amusing to a particular culture or group may not be so to others (Nevo et al., 2001).

Humor Processes

Research on the humor processes employed in TV advertising indicates a widespread use of incongruent humorous messages (Alden et al., 1993; Alden and Martin, 1995). For instance, Alden et al. (1993), based on Raskin's script semantic theory of humor conducted a comparative content analysis of USA, German, South Korean, and Thai television humorous advertising. In all four countries, the percentage of humorous advertisements that contained incongruent humorous contrasts ranged from 57% to 92%. Thus, the researchers concluded that humorous contrasts could constitute the common theme of a global advertising campaign, since the majority of people around the world perceive contrasts as comic, funny, or even ludicrous.

Alden and Martin (1995) examined the use of humor in global advertising, in a Japanese cultural context. They content analyzed 472 TV commercials. The majority of Japanese humorous ads exhibit incongruity from expectations, employ the three contrast theorized by Raskin (1985) and use ludicrousness as predominant humorous device. Moreover, the frequency of humor use in Japanese TV advertising (12%) was lower than the use of humor in TV advertising from Western Countries (24.7%).

Humor Effectiveness

Although the levels of humor use seem to vary among cultures (Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Toncar 2001; Biswas et al. 1992) one can detect some significant similarities. Previous studies highlighted the significance of ludicrous humor on advertising effectiveness (Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Toncar 2001; Alden and Martin 1995). Regarding the use of humor processes, it seems that most of humorous global advertising, indicate incongruity from expectations (Speck 1991; Alden et al. 1993; Alden and Martin, 1995; Spotts et al. 1997). Furthermore, humor seems to be more effective in the advertising of low involvement feeling products (Weinberger et Spotts 1989; Spotts et al. 1997; Toncar 2001).

De Pelsmacker and Geuens (1998) in a comparative study of 100 Polish and 115 Belgian students, examined the communication effectiveness of four types of print ads: emotional (warm, erotic, humorous) and non-emotional. According to their findings, emotional advertising (warm, erotic, humorous) induced a significantly more positive attitude towards the ad and the associated brand in Belgium. In Poland humour and eroticism triggered more favourable responses.

Studies on humor use and effectiveness so far, have focused mainly on Kelly and Solomon's technique typology (1975) (Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Toncar 2001; Biswas et al. 1992; Alden and Martin 1995; Koudelova and Whitelock 2001) and Raskin's script semantic theory of humor (1985) (Alden et al. 1993; Alden and Martin 1995). Speck's humorous message taxonomy (Speck 1991) has not been used as a framework for deducting and testing cross-cultural differences, though it is considered a more comprehensive framework than the technique typology and the script semantic theory (Spotts et al. 1997). To date, only three research papers have employed Speck's humorous message taxonomy and these are confined in the USA (Speck 1991; Spotts et al. 1997) and the UK (Shabbir and Thwaites 2007).

Speck's Humorous Message Taxonomy

Speck's humorous message taxonomy (1991) is not just a descriptive theory but it separates humor in categories based on its internal creation processes. According to Speck's humorous message taxonomy (1991), three underlying processes: incongruity - resolution, arousal - safety, and humorous disparagement engender humor.

In the *incongruity - resolution process*, there are events, pictures or texts presented, which comprise some type of schema incongruity. Thus, the person does not conceive at once the connection of different events, pictures, or texts, since the entire stimulus event does not comport with his expectations. This fact grabs attention. Then some advertising cues provide the linkage (punchline) of different events, pictures, or texts resolving the incongruity and leading to humor appreciation. In the *arousal - safety process* "laughter occurs when a person has experienced heightened arousal but at the same time (or soon after the arousal) evaluates the stimulus (usually another person) as safe or inconsequential". Kaplan and Sadock (1981) define arousal as "a psycho-physiological concept pertaining to the activation of the nervous system". Finally, the *humorous disparagement process* always implies a triadic relationship: joke - teller, joke - hearer and victim. The joke - teller attacks the victim. The victim can be present or not. The joke -hearer is asked to forgive the attack, and he has the clue of accomplice, while humor serves as reward.

The combination of the three aforementioned humor processes generates five types of humor, namely: *comic wit*, *sentimental humor*, *satire*, *sentimental comedy*, and *full comedy* (Table 2).

Place Table 2 about here

Apart from the three underlying humor processes and the five types of humor, Speck (1991) developed a broader typology concerning the humor relatedness in an ad, namely the relationship between the humor elements and the message elements: *Intentional relatedness* deals with the distinction between humor-dominant advertisements and message-dominant advertisements (information and image dominant ads). *Structural relatedness* refers to the syntactical function of humor in message-dominant advertisements and of product information in humor-dominant advertisements. The connection between humor and product refers to the use of product information as structural elements of humor in humor-dominant ads, or the use of humor in order to facilitate the message effectiveness in message-dominant ads. In the later case, research coders should define the position of subordinate humor elements (initial humor, embedded humor, and closing humor). The relationship of humor to product-related themes is a type of *semantic relatedness*. Thus, humor can be thematically related or unrelated to the product themes.

Rossiter and Percy's Brand Attitude Grid

Rossiter and Percy's brand attitude grid categorizes the products based on the level of consumer involvement (low or high) and the type of motivation (negative or positive) that leads consumers to purchase a product (Rossiter and Percy 1997). The interaction of the two dimensions gives four strategic quadrants that reflect a different product category (Table 3):

- *Quadrant 1* – Low involvement products that fulfil negative motives. This category refers to low risk, non-durable products, routine decisions that generally concern solving or avoiding everyday problems. Examples of these include detergents, toothbrushes, personal care products, coffee, and aspirins.
- *Quadrant 2* – Low involvement goods that satisfy positive motives. Products such as chips, beers, candies, and refreshments are impulsive everyday decisions that accomplish our need for sensory gratification and constitute our everyday reward.
- *Quadrant 3* – High involvement products with negative motivation. These are high risk purchase decisions driven by negative motives. They are durable and

often expensive products that lead consumers to a search for relevant information. Refrigerators, washer/dryers, washing machines, microwaves and life insurance policies are typical examples.

- *Quadrant 4* – High involvement decisions with a positive motivation. This group includes products, which involve high fiscal and psychological risks and satisfy the positive motivations of sensory gratification and social approval. Examples are vacation, fashion clothing, cars, and corporate image.

According to Rossiter and Percy (1997), advertisers should involve transformational brand attitude strategies when motives are positive and informational brand attitude strategies when motives are negative. In the case of transformational strategies advertisements should suggest emotional authenticity, transforming the target audience's mood. On the other hand as far as informational strategies are concerned ads should provide information to help consumers address a perceived problem.

Place Table 3 about here

Research Hypotheses

Greek vs USA Television Commercials

The purpose of this study is to investigate the applicability of Speck's humorous message taxonomy (1991) in commercials screened in Greek television based on a content analysis approach. It is assumed that some characteristics of humorous advertising will hold globally while others will depend on culture.

According to the high-context/ low-context theory, USA is a low-context culture, whereas Greece is a high-context one (Gudykunst et al. 1988). In low-context cultures the meaning of a message can be understood as an independent entity. On the contrary, in high-context cultures the meaning of messages is highly dependent on the words surrounding them. In high – context cultures nonverbal communication is more important, while in low-context cultures, explicit verbal expression is crucial to communicate. Prior studies have revealed that consumers from high – context cultures may prefer soft sell methods, whilst those from low-context cultures may be more

impressed by hard sell (Mueller 1987; Kassarian 1977). Humor is considered as a soft sell technique and it is expected that it will be used more in Greek than in USA advertising. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Humor is more likely to be used in Greek than in USA advertising.

The incongruity and/ or incongruity resolution processes seem to be the common denominator of humorous advertisements around the world and could constitute the core of a global standardized communication strategy (Alden et al., 1993; Alden and Martin, 1995). Speck (1991) also indicated that USA advertisers use mainly the incongruity – resolution process in TV commercials. Spotts et al. (1997) also indicated that the majority (82%) of USA print advertisements employ the incongruity–resolution process. On the contrary, the use of arousal–safety and humorous–disparagement processes is considerably low (9% and 8%, respectively). Most of humorous global advertising indicate incongruity from expectations regardless of the context type (McCullough and Taylor, 1993; Koudelova and Whitelock, 2001; Nevo et al., 2001). Accordingly, it is expected that there will be no difference between Greek and USA advertisements, regarding the use of the three humor processes. It is further expected that Greek advertisers will employ mainly the incongruity - resolution process.

H2: Humorous television advertising in Greece will employ mainly the incongruity - resolution process and to a lesser extent the arousal – safety process and the humorous disparagement processes following the USA pattern.

Speck (1991) revealed that comic wit is the most frequently used type of humor (31%) in USA television, followed by sentimental comedy (26%), whilst the other types of humor are considerably less frequently employed (full comedy 16%, satire 14%, sentimental humor 12%). Spotts et al. (1997) found that the vast majority (82%) of USA print advertisements employ comic wit, while only 2% use sentimental humor, satire (8%), sentimental comedy (7%) and full comedy (1%). Accordingly, it is expected that the percentages of humor types used in Greek advertising will be similar to those described in Speck’s study. It is, therefore, assumed that:

H3: The use of humor types will be similar in the two environments (USA and Greece).

In line with the high-context/ low-context theory, it is assumed that Greek advertisers will use humor – dominant advertisements (soft sell method), compared with their American counterparts that will employ mainly information – dominant humorous commercials (hard sell method). In low-context communication (i.e. in the USA), the advertising audience knows very little and seeks for relevant information. On the other hand, in high-context communication (i.e. Greece) the audience is “contextualized” and thus there is no need for background information (Hall and Hall 1990, 184). Thus the following hypotheses are formulated:

H4a: Humor – dominant advertisements are more likely to be used in Greek than in USA advertising.

H4b: Information – dominant advertisements are more likely to be used in USA than in Greek advertising.

H4c: Image – dominant advertisements are more likely to be used in Greek than in USA advertising.

With respect to humor placement Speck claims that USA TV ads employ mainly embedded (40%) and closing humor (38%) and less often initial humor (23%). As there is no a priori reason to assume that Greek advertisers’ decisions will differ from that of Americans, the sixth hypothesis states:

H5: Humorous television advertising in Greece will employ mainly embedded humor and to a lesser extent closing and initial humor following the USA example.

According to Speck (1991) a great proportion of the advertisements in the USA are structurally and thematically related (100% were structurally and 94% were thematically related). Research has shown that related humor is considered more successful than unrelated humor (Cline and Kellaris, 2007; Alden et al., 1993). Thus, it is assumed that Greek advertisers will also prefer relevant humor, in order to create more memorable creative executions.

H6a: It is expected that the majority of Greek commercials will be thematically – related, similarly to the USA TV advertisements.

H6b: It is expected that the majority of Greek commercials will be structurally – related, similarly to the USA TV advertisements.

Use of Humor and the Nature of Products

Spotts et al. (1997), alleged that humor in print advertising is not effective when the advertised product is red (has high risk and satisfies self-expression goals) or blue (has low risk and fulfils functional needs). On the other hand, humor is employed mainly in the print advertisements of yellow products (low involvement products in which motivation is positive) where the likelihood of success is the greatest (Spotts et al., 1997). Similarly, Weinberger and Spotts (1995) indicated that yellow goods have the highest incidence of humor employment in TV, magazines and radio. Further research (Weinberger and Spotts 1989; Toncar 2001) evaluated the use of humor using the FCB planning matrix, and indicated that a larger proportion of low involvement – feeling products employ humorous appeals.

It is expected that the advertising of low involvement products fulfilling positive motives will have the highest percentage use of humorous execution compared to the advertising of high involvement products. The preceding arguments are summarized in the following research hypothesis:

H7: As in the United States, humor in Greece is more likely to be used in the advertisements of low involvement products that fulfill positive motives than in those of other products.

According to Spotts et al. (1997) US advertising executives use to a lesser extent the incongruity resolution process for the advertising of blue products (low – involvement products that fulfill negative motives), and most often in other product categories. On the other hand, advertisements for blue and white products (high involvement products satisfying negative motives) employed the arousal–safety process more than the other product groups. Based on the above, similar variations in the use of humor processes across product groups are expected in Greece.

Prior research in the field of humor in advertising doesn't provide any theoretical background for the allocation of humor types to specific product categories. Spotts et al. (1997) for example, did not consider the relationship between humor types and the nature of products. Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H8a: The allocation of humor processes to specific product categories will be similar in Greece and the USA.

H8b: There will be no variation in the allocation of humor types based on the nature of products.

According to Rossiter and Percy (1997) when motives are negative advertisers should employ informational brand attitude strategies, providing information to help consumers address a perceived (or potential) problem. Therefore, it is expected that products dealing with negative motivation will use more information – dominant ads than the products fulfilling positive motives. This is consistent with the notion that information – dominant ads are likely to rely on the central – route processing (Speck 1987) facilitating the information process.

When advertisers are dealing with positive motives they should transform the target audience's mood. Emotional portrayal of the benefit constitutes the core of the creative execution for transformational brand attitude strategies (Percy and Elliot 2005). Thus, image – dominant ads (rely on peripheral processing) and humor dominant ads (humor is a peripheral cue) are expected to be preferred, since they facilitate the representation of emotional authenticity. However, for some high involvement transformational brand attitude strategies, apart from primary motivation (emotional appeals) a secondary motivation could be involved (convincing information) (Percy and Elliot 2005). Therefore, it is expected that when motives are positive, high risk products will mostly use information – dominant ads compared to low involvement products, due to the possible dual motivation. On the basis of the above, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H9a: Information-dominant ads are more likely to be used for the advertising of products dealing with negative motives.

H9b: Humor-dominant and image-dominant ads are more likely to be used for the advertising of the products dealing with positive motives.

H9c: When motives are positive, ads of high involvement products provide more information than those of low involvement products.

In terms of the effectiveness of humor placement in an ad it could be argued that TV commercials employing humor at the beginning can quickly grab the target audience's attention. This allows advertisers to provide the required information to convince the audience for the brand's benefits. Thus, it is assumed that initial humor is more suitable for the advertising of high involvement products where (according to Rossiter and Percy) a consumer should be persuaded before his final purchase decision.

H10: Humor is more likely to be placed at the beginning of the ad, when involvement is high.

A great proportion of US TV advertisements are structurally and thematically related (Speck, 1991) and it is assumed that this will also be the case for Greek advertisements. Thus, we assume that there will be no statistically significant differences among the four categories of products, regarding semantic (thematically – related or unrelated) and structural relatedness (structurally – related or unrelated).

H11a: Humorous advertisements are more likely to be thematically related, regardless of the advertised product's type.

H11b: Humorous advertisements are more likely to be structurally related regardless of the advertised product's type.

According to Woltman et al. (2004) the later the peak of MTM (Moment to Moment) surprise (i.e. incongruity - resolution) in the ad, the higher the peak of MTM humor. Thus it could be assumed that humor-dominant advertisements will be more appealing to Greek consumers, since in most of the humour-dominant advertisements the resolution of the incongruity occurs at the end of the humorous execution.

Methodology

Content analysis is used as it is the best at providing “a scientific, quantitative, and generalizable description of communications content” (Kassarjian 1977, p.10). Ten coders were trained on the details of the task and the dimensions of the constructs being measured, the methodology of the humorous message taxonomy (Speck 1991), and the methodology of the brand attitude grid (Rossiter and Percy 1997). The operational definitions of the constructs are displayed in the appendix. In this training phase, the ten coders watched a significant number (95) of related examples.

The sample frame used was supplied by AdBank, an independent official organization that records television, print, and radio advertisements in Greece. Access to this databank (for the TV ad messages) was granted and an overall sample of 447 television advertisements was selected (the total number of commercials, screened for the first time in Greek television in March 2005).

Initially, the whole research team in groups of two watched each advertisement at least 3 times in order to determine if the ads contained a certain type of humor. Humor was defined based on Speck's (1991) classification for the five types of humor. Each advertisement with a content that reflected one of the five humor types was considered humorous. In addition, the two-member teams classified all 447 advertisements by product types according to the brand attitude grid.

Researchers were then divided in three 3-member teams. The tenth coder was excluded from this stage of the study. Each of the 3-member teams watched the humorous advertisements 3-5 further times, in order to (a) validate that advertisements were indeed humorous and to (b) determine the: humor process, humor type, semantic relatedness, intentional relatedness, and structural relatedness. An ad was judged to have humorous intent and to employ a humor process, a type of humor, and a type of relatedness, if two out of the three coders agreed. Discrepancies in the coding process were resolved by the authors.

All coders worked independently and further classified the advertisements by product class. Cohen's (1960) reliability index was calculated for the group of coders. The operational range of values for this index is between 0.0 (no reliability) and 1.0 (perfectly reliable). The estimated reliability of this study for the category decisions across all ads included in the sample was 0.93 for humorousness, 0.64 for the humor

processes, 0.67 for the types of intentional relatedness, 0.61 for humor placement, 0.98 for thematical relatedness and 0.81 for structural relatedness. Finally, the researchers were asked to indicate the level of humor (low, moderate, high) in order to measure the perceived and not just the intended humor.

Results - Discussion

Greek vs USA Television Commercials

Overall, 169 (37.8%) advertisements were described as humorous (Table 3), while Speck (1991) mentioned that 51% of the advertising messages analyzed in his study, employed humor. Thus a statistically significant difference exists in the overall use of humor between US ads and Greek ads ($\chi^2=13,654$, $p<.001$). As a result the first hypothesis (H1) is rejected. This could be attributed to the fact that though advertisers of western countries, such as UK and USA place a central role in humor (Toncar 2001), the analysis of the Greek advertisements indicates that advertising executives in Greece seem to be more sceptical about the effectiveness of humor and hence employ fewer humorous message executions.

Place Table 4 about here

According to Alden and Hoyer (1993), nearly 70% of US humorous advertising employs incongruent contrasts (the foundation of the incongruity - resolution process). Spotts et al. (1997), also indicate that incongruity-based humor is the dominant mechanism used in magazine advertising of all product types (white, blue, red, yellow). The present study further supports such findings since 85.2% of humorous advertisements employ the incongruity – resolution process (Table 4). Thus, the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted. Interestingly, a significantly higher proportion (55.6%) of the arousal – safety process was recorded in Greek commercials compared to the USA ads (41.6%) ($\chi^2=5,651$, $p<.05$).

Chi-square test analysis indicated no significant differences between the two countries by type of humor, as shown in Table 4, leading to the acceptance of the third hypothesis (H3). In both countries, comic wit seems to be the most popular type, (31.2

% of USA and 33.1% of Greek humorous ads) recorded. In Greece, full comedy, sentimental comedy, sentimental humor, and satire were recorded in 23.1%, 17.8%, 14.2%, and 11.2% of the ads, respectively.

Compared to Speck's study, there seems to be significantly more information – dominant types (36.6% in Greece versus 13.6% in the USA), less image – dominant types (11.3% versus 21.6%) and less humor – dominant types (52.1% versus 64.8%) in the present study (Table 4). Greek advertisers appear more conservative and wary, concerning the use of humor in advertising, since they try to combine hard sell methods with humor, through information – dominant ads. Therefore, hypotheses (H4a), (H4b) and (H4c) are rejected.

Although the percentages of embedded humor (43.2%) are similar to the ones reported by Speck (39.9%), Greek advertisers seem to place emphasis on initial humor (46.9% in Greece versus 22.5% in the USA) as opposed to closing humor (9.9% versus 37.6% in the USA) (Table 4). Thus hypothesis (H5) is also rejected.

In terms of semantic relatedness and structural relatedness, almost all advertisements seem to be thematically (99.4%) and structurally related (100%) (Table 4). Speck (1991) reported similar findings in terms of the percentages of thematically (94%) and structurally related advertisements (100%). Thus, hypotheses (H6a) and (H6b) are accepted.

Humorous message taxonomy describes 80 different types of messages that derive from the combination of humor types and message types. These consist of 30 information – dominant types, 30 image – dominant types and 20 humor – dominant types (Speck 1991). Only the 31.25% (25/80) of the humorous message taxonomy's cells are full. Similarly, Speck (1991) concluded that two thirds of the humorous message taxonomy's cells are empty (27/80). These results confine researchers' attention to 25 humorous message taxonomy types, underlying in particular the importance of humor – dominant, thematically, and structurally related ads.

Place Table 5 about here

Use of Humor and the Nature of Products

No statistically significant variation was recorded in terms of the level of humor use in the various product categories examined (Table 6) leading to the rejection of hypothesis (H7). These findings oppose the notion that low involvement products such as consumer non-durables are best suited for humorous ad executions (Madden and Weinberger 1984). However, Flaherty et al. (2004) in their experimental design study that used perceived and not manipulated humor proved that there is no significant variation on the various product types in terms of the use of humor.

Place Table 6 about here

Interestingly, the level of use for the incongruity–resolution process is statistically higher for high involvement products and especially for those that fulfill negative motives (Table 6). However, there are not statistically significant differences across product groups regarding the use of arousal – safety and humorous –disparagement processes. Therefore, hypothesis (H8a) is rejected.

In high-low transformational brand attitude strategies, sentimental humor (28.2%) ($X^2=8,435$, d.f. 3, $p<.05$) is the most common choice (Table 6). However, comic wit, satire, sentimental comedy, and full comedy are equally employed in the advertisements of high and low involvement products. So, hypothesis (H8b) is partially supported.

As far as hypothesis (H9a) is concerned, it appears that the products which satisfy negative motives use more often information-dominant ads (43.4%) than those fulfilling positive motivation (23.2%). So hypothesis (H9a) is accepted.

Moreover, humor-dominant and image dominant ads are used more for the advertising of products that satisfy positive motives (57.1% and 19.6% respectively) than for the advertising of products fulfilling negative motives (49.6% and 7.1% respectively). However, the difference is not statistically significant for humor-dominant advertisements. Thus, hypothesis (H9a) is partially accepted.

Place Table 7 about here

When motives are positive, more information-dominant ads are used for the advertising of high involvement products (35.3%), than for the advertising of low involvement products (17.9%) ($\chi^2=8,329$, d.f. 3, $p<.05$) (Table 6). This could be attributed to dual motivation (Percy and Elliot 2005). However, the difference recorded is not statistically significant. Thus, hypothesis (H9c) is not accepted. Spotts et al. (1997) conclude that advertisements of yellow products (low involvement products that satisfy positive motives) are more effective when they use image-focused advertising, less effective when they incorporate humor-dominant advertising and the least effective when they incorporate information-dominant advertising.

In high involvement products, Greek advertisers place emphasis on initial humor (75%) as opposed to embedded (19.4%) and closing humor (5.6%). On the contrary, in low-involvement products the embedded humor is preferred (62.2%) ($\chi^2=20.591$, $p<.0001$). Thus, hypothesis (H10) is accepted.

Place Table 8 about here

With respect to semantic and structural relatedness there seem to be no statistically significant differences between product types (Table 5). Therefore, hypotheses (H11a) and (H11b) are accepted.

Finally, ads that incorporate humorous disparagement (satire and full comedy) are perceived more humorous (Table 8) ($\chi^2=11,306$, $p<.005$ and $\chi^2=6,038$, $p<.05$ respectively). Humor-dominant advertisements seem to incorporate higher levels of humor ($\chi^2=22,589$, $p<.001$). Thus, hypothesis (H12) is accepted.

Place Table 9 about here

Conclusions – Implications

The analysis indicates that Greek advertisers focus especially on humor-dominant, structurally and thematically related advertisements. These findings are consistent with Speck's study (1991) of the USA market.

Greek ad agencies seem to employ humor less often than US agencies do, and prefer information-dominant to image-dominant commercials for their creative representations. Though according to Beard (2005) humor has gained in popularity in recent years, especially in low context countries such as USA and UK, Greek agencies seem to be more skeptical about the use of humor in advertising. They employ mainly hard sell techniques and sometimes combine hard sell methods with humor, through the creation of information-dominant ads. One possible explanation for this unexpected outcome may be that Greek advertisers are still influenced by earlier warnings about the distracting nature of humor.

Greek advertisers should take into account that the Greek culture is a high-context culture, where humorous ads and especially humor-dominant and image-dominant ads may be more effective than information-dominant communication (humorous or not). Indeed in the case of high-context cultures, soft sell methods, such as humor, are considered more appealing than hard-sell techniques (Mueller 1987; Kassarian 1977).

Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the perception that incongruity resolution is the most popular humor process (Alden et al 1993) and comic wit the most popular humor type around the world. The use of incongruity resolution process in humorous advertising is extremely high both in the USA and Greece indicating that an advertising message that involves the incongruity resolution process could be appealing to both low-context and high-context audiences. This could be attributed to the fact that a great number of advertising campaigns are centrally designed and run in order to maintain a consistent product and brand image. Furthermore it could be argued that although living in a high-context country, Greek consumers are influenced by the Western European (i.e. UK) and USA culture through their exposure in music, films and advertising messages, originating from these cultural environments.

Low-context persons seem to be much more direct in delivering messages and are quick to get to the point (Hall 1989, p14). The incongruity resolution process, being

simple and creative, is best used in order to clarify someone's positions and render a message explicit (Meyer, 2000; Shelley, 2003). Thus, the incongruity resolution process can be used to encapsulate the advertised brand message into phrases or catchy slogans, resulting in the clarification of the brand promise and the brand positioning (Meyer, 2000).

On the other hand, high-context persons are rather slow to getting to the point. Furthermore, they communicate through subtle messages with deep meaning, since they are deeply involved with others, retaining a great amount of shared knowledge (Hall 1976, p.39). So when a message is incongruent with this shared knowledge (context), elicits the audience's surprise, focuses the audience's attention on the message and enhances the processing of key information (Meyer et al. 1997).

In terms of the message's relatedness, the present study revealed that a great number of humorous advertisements are thematically and structurally related, further supporting Speck's (1991) findings. This is very important, since semantic and structural relatedness are strictly connected with the advertising effectiveness (Cline and Kellaris 2007). However, some advertisements seem to be more thematically and structurally related than others. Cline and Kellaris (2007) proved that when humor message relatedness is high, the impact of humor strength on the message recall is more positive. Thus, multinational and national corporations that launch their products in Greece should prefer highly related (thematically and structurally) humorous advertisements.

Regarding the relationship between humorous message taxonomy and nature of products, it appears that the use of humor does not vary significantly across product types as prior research had suggested (Madden and Weinberger 1984). However, the motivation underlying the product decision seems to affect the choice among humor-dominant, information-dominant and image dominant ads. Thus, whenever there are positive motives, Greek advertisers prefer humor-dominant and image dominant ads. On the contrary, when motivation is negative, humor-dominant and information-dominant ads are considered to be more effective. Humor placement (initial, embedded and closing humor) is influenced by product involvement. High involvement products employ mainly initial humor, whilst low involvement products use embedded humor.

Speck (1991) classifies the humorous message taxonomy as a qualitative framework that takes into account the humor types and not the level of humor.

Research in advertising has indicated that the level of humor exerts a direct positive effect on advertising effectiveness (De Pelsmacker and Geuens 1999; Flaherty, et al. 2004). In the present study, humorous disparagement seems to increase the perceived humorousness. However, the recent cartoons published by Jyllands Posten, the Dutch newspaper regarding Muhammad and the turmoil that they induced, indicate that disparaging humor can be a dangerous and dividing global creative strategy. Six's (2005) overview of humorous advertising in Russia revealed that "gag humor" although very popular in the USA should be avoided in Russia as it evokes negative feelings to Russians. A joke reflects social attitudes (Zillmann and Stocking, 1976) and can at the same time unite and divide a cultural group (Meyer, 2000). Advertisers should be careful about the use of satire and full comedy, focusing especially on low disparaging executions.

Limitations

The study reported in this paper is not without limitations. First, the study takes the form of a cross cultural analysis of the Greek and the USA advertising environments. However, the data from the USA refer to Speck's (1991) study and not to a more recent representation of humorous advertising in the country. Although this is perceived as a significant limitation of the present study it should be noted that Speck's (1991) study is the only one that employs the *humorous message taxonomy* for the analysis of humorous advertising in a low context environment.

Second, the sample size (169 humorous advertisements) imposes limitations on the generalizability of the results. However, Speck (1991) in his original research paper, analyzed 125 humorous TV commercials. Moreover, research on humorous execution messages tends to draw from smaller samples (see Table 1).

Third, the ten researchers in the study were asked to code the level of humor (low, mediate or high). Taking into account that humor is in the eye of the beholder, this can be considered just an indication of Greek consumers' preferences regarding the form of humor.

Directions for Future Research

The present study content analyzes 447 TV commercials and demonstrates the extent to which Speck's humorous message taxonomy can be employed in a Greek cultural setting. Furthermore, this study reveals how humor is employed in Greek advertising. The following extensions of this study arise:

1. In line with Speck's study, present research revealed that humor – dominant, structurally and thematically related ads are the most often employed. However, literature review indicates that advertising researchers have paid attention mainly to information–dominant ads (Speck 1991). Therefore, it is essential to undertake extensive research for humor–dominant, both structurally and thematically related ads.
2. A future content analysis should take into account the different levels of semantic and structural relatedness between humor elements and message elements since relevance may be a strong predictor for the success of an ad.
3. Future advertising research should focus on the relationship between the motives of products and the intentional relatedness that exist between humor elements and message elements. For instance, does the use of humor dominant and image dominant or information dominant advertisements for the products that fulfill positive motives or negative motives respectively lead to higher advertising effectiveness? Future research should also examine the relationship between product involvement and humor placement (initial, embedded and closing humor) in TV advertising.
4. In this study, humorous disparagement seems to increase the perceived humorousness. Thus, it could be argued that the relationship between the humor types and humor level merits further attention.
5. Finally, it may be appropriate to generalize the findings of this study to other media, because in other media there is lower incidence of humor use (e.g. in magazines and in outdoor advertising) (Weinberger and Spotts 1995).

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Table 1: Cross – Cultural Studies for Humor Advertising

Authors & Date	Type of study & Sample	Countries	Instruments	Medium	Findings regarding humor types & nature of products
Weinberger & Spotts (1989)	- Survey on US & UK ad agency executives, - Content Analysis of 450 US and 247 UK TV	USA & UK	- Kelly and Solomon's technique typology - Foot Cone and Belding (FCB) grid	The content analysis was focused on TV	- Greater use of humor in the UK (36) than in the USA (24) - Ludicrous humor was employed more in both countries (66.4% in USA and 59.1 in UK). - Humor is employed mainly in the ads of low involvement products that fulfill positive motivation - UK ad agencies use most often than US pun humor
Toncar (2001)	- Content Analysis of 848 US ads and 282 UK ads	USA & UK	- Kelly and Solomon's technique typology - Foot Cone and Belding (FCB) grid	TV	- Greater use of humor in the UK (33) than in the USA (28) - Ludicrous humor was employed more in both countries (45% in USA and 37% in UK) - Humor is employed mainly in the ads of low involvement products that fulfill positive motivation - UK ad agencies use most often understatement and least often joke in ads
Biswas et al. (1992)	- Content Analysis of 279 US ads and 259 French ads	USA & France	- Kelly and Solomon's technique typology	Print	- Greater use of humor in France (22.78%) than in the USA (10.75) - Puns was employed more in the USA (53.33%) and Jokes in France (33.9%)
Koudelova and Whitelock (2001)	- Content Analysis 102 Czech TV advertisements and 210 UK	UK & Czech Republic	- A part of Kelly and Solomon's technique typology (1975)	TV	- Greater use of humor in the UK (25.8) than in Czech Republic (8.9) - Joke was employed more in both countries - However, jokes are more popular in UK than in Czech Republic
McCullough and Taylor (1993)	- Content Analysis of 270 American, 203 British and 192 German ads	USA, UK and Germany	- Freud (1905) (aggressive, sexual and nonsense humor) and other researchers (warm humor (McCullough 1991) and pun humor (Brooker 1981))	Trade Magazines	- Overall use of humor: 26% in the UK, 21% in the USA and 23% in Germany - Puns was employed more - There is no difference among nationalities, regarding the type of humor used in advertising.

Authors & Date	Type of study & Sample	Countries	Instruments	Medium	Findings regarding humor types & nature of products
Hanna et al. (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey on 29 Japanese-owned agencies, - Content Analysis of 259 Japanese TV ads 	<p>Japan (This paper compares Japanese humorous ads with those of other countries)</p> <p>USA, Germany, South Korean, and Thailand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kelly and Solomon's technique typology 	TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28% of the ads were humorous - Ludicrous humor was employed more (77%) - Japanese executives believe that humor should be employed mainly in the ads of consumer nondurables (87.5%)
Alden, Hoyer and Lee (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content Analysis of 497 US ads, 520 Korean ads, 244 German ads and 351 ads from Thailand, 	<p>USA, Germany, South Korean, and Thailand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raskin's Script-based semantic theory 	TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humor is universal and incongruity one of its central cognitive-structural principles - Incongruent humor was more popular in Germany and Thailand than in USA and Korea
Alden and Martin (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content Analysis of 472 Japanese TV ads 	<p>Japan (This paper compares Japanese humorous ads with those of other countries)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raskin's Script-based semantic theory - Kelly and Solomon's technique typology 	TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority of Japanese humorous ads exhibit incongruity from expectations, employ the three contrast theorized by Raskin and use as main humorous device "ludicrousness"
Unger (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative study of 44 Finnish and 68 US students - 10 TV commercials 	USA & Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One Self report questionnaire 	TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It seems that their affect – based model can be applied across cultures. There are no implications for humor types and nature of products
De Pelsmacker and Geuens (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative study of 100 Polish students and 115 Belgian students 	Poland & Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm, erotic, humorous and non-emotional ads 	Print ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Poland humour triggers more favourable responses than in Belgium
Nevo et al. (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis 	USA & Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three self – report questionnaires 	Verbal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Singaporean humor is more conservative
Six (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature Review 	USA & Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature Review 	TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Gag humor" is more popular in USA

Table 2
Types of humor

	Incongruity - Resolution	Arousal - Safety	Humorous Disparagement
1. Comic wit	χ		
2. Sentimental humor		χ	
3. Satire	χ		χ
4. Sentimental comedy	χ	χ	
5. Full comedy	χ	χ	χ

Source: Speck, 1991

Table 3
Rossiter and Percy Brand Attitude Quadrants

	Type of Motivation	
	Informational (Negative Motivation: problem removal, problem avoidance, incomplete satisfaction, mixed – approach avoidance, normal depletion)	Transformational (Positive Motivation: sensory gratification, intellectual stimulation, social approval)
Low Involvement (Trial experience sufficient)	e.g. aspirin, detergent	e.g. candies, refreshments
High Involvement (Search and conviction required prior to purchase)	e.g. microwave oven, life insurance	e.g. clothes - fashion, cars, corporate image

Source: Rossiter & Percy (1997)

Table 4
USA (Speck's Study) Versus Greece (Present Study) Regarding the Nature of Products

Variables	USA %(Frequency)	Greece %(Frequency)	Significant Differences
<i>Humorous Ads</i> ¹	51 (171/335) *	37 (169/447)	$\chi^2=13,654$, d.f. 1, $p<.001$
<i>Humor Processes</i>			
1. Incongruity –resolution	88.0 (110)	85.2 (144)	
2. Arousal – Safety ²	41.6 (52)	55.6 (94)	$\chi^2=5,651$, d.f. 1, $p<.05$
3. Humorous Disparagement	30.4 (36)	34.3 (58)	
<i>Humor Types</i>			
1. Comic wit	31.2 (39)	33.1 (56)	
2. Sentimental humor	12.0 (15)	14.8 (25)	
3. Satire	14.4 (18)	11.2 (19)	
4. Sentimental comedy	26.4 (33)	17.8 (30)	
5. Full comedy	16.0 (20)	23.10 (39)	
<i>Intentional Relatedness</i>			
1. Information- dominant ³	13.6 (17)	36.7 (62)	$\chi^2=19,489$, d.f. 1, $p<.0001$
2. Image-dominant ⁴	21.6 (27)	11.3 (19)	$\chi^2=5,840$, d.f. 1, $p<.05$
3. Humor-dominant ⁵	64.8 (81)	52.1 (88)	$\chi^2=4,764$, d.f. 1, $p<.05$
<i>Humor position (in message-dominant ads)</i>			
1. Initial humor ⁶	22.5 (12)	46.9 (38)	$\chi^2=8,069$, d.f. 1, $p<.005$
2. Embedded humor	39.9 (21)	43.2(35)	
3. Closing humor ⁷	37.6 (20)	9.9 (8)	$\chi^2=15,043$, d.f. 1, $p<.0001$
<i>Semantic Relatedness</i>			
- Thematically Related	94.0 (117)	99.4 (168)	
<i>Structural Relatedness (only in humor-dominant ads)</i>			
- Structurally Related	100 (81)	100 (81)	

*Though, initially Speck content analyzed 335 TV ads in terms of humor usage, subsequently he coded only 125 national ads, regarding humor processes, humor types and relatedness between humor elements and message elements.

Table 5
General comparison of Speck's study (N = 134) and present study (N = 169)

	Thematically Related					Thematically Unrelated				
	HT1	HT2	HT3	HT4	HT5	HT1	HT2	HT3	HT4	HT5
1. Information Dominant										
a. Initial Humor	(3) 12	2	4	10	6	1				
b. Embedded Humor	(7) 8	5	(1) 5	(2) 4	2					
c. Closing Humor	(7) 2			1						
2. Image Dominant										
a. Initial Humor	(3)	(2)	(1) 3	(3)						
b. Embedded Humor	(2) 8	(4) 1	(2)	2		(2)	(1)			
c. Closing Humor	1	(2) 2	(1)	(5) 2	(2)	(2)			(1)	
3. Humor Dominant										
a. Structurally Related	(15) 24	(8) 12	(14) 10	(23) 11	(18) 31	(2)	(1)			
b. Structurally Unrelated										
Total	(134) 169	(37) 55	(16) 22	(19) 22	(33) 30	(20) 39	(6) 1	(2)		(1)

Speck's result = (x)
HT = Humor Type

Table 6
The Relationship between Humorous Message Taxonomy and Brand Attitude Grid

	High Involvement – Negative Motivation %(Frequency)	High Involvement – Positive Motivation %(Frequency)	Low Involvement – Negative Motivation %(Frequency)	Low Involvement – Positive Motivation %(Frequency)	Total %(Frequency)	Significant Differences
Humor						
- Humorous	45.23 (57)	40.47 (17)	32.37 (56)	36.8 (39)	37.8 (169)	
Humor Processes						
1. Incongruity –resolution ¹	93 (53)^a	88 (15) ^{a,b}	86 (48) ^{a,b}	72 (28)^b	85.2 (144)	x ² =8,435, d.f. 3, p<.05
2. Arousal - Safety	52.6 (30)	58.8 (10)	57.1 (32)	56.4 (22)	55.6 (94)	
3. Humorous Disparagement	29.8 (17)	47.1 (8)	35.7 (20)	33.3 (13)	34.3 (58)	
Humor Types						
1. Comic wit	40.4 (23)	29.4 (5)	30.4 (17)	28.2 (11)	33.1 (56)	
2. Sentimental humor ²	7.0 (4)^a	11.8 (2) ^{a,b}	14.3 (8) ^{a,b}	28.2 (11)^b	14.8 (25)	x ² =8,435, d.f. 3, p<.05,
3. Satire	7.0 (4)	11.8 (2)	12.5 (7)	15.4 (6)	11.2 (19)	
4. Sentimental comedy	22.8 (13)	11.8 (2)	19.6 (11)	10.3 (4)	17.8 (30)	
5. Full comedy	22.80 (13)	35.30 (6)	23.20 (13)	17.90 (7)	23.10 (39)	
Intentional Relatedness						
1. Humor-dominant	50.9 (29)	52.9 (9)	48.2 (27)	59.0 (23)	52.1 (88)	
2. Information- dominant ³	45.6 (26)^a	35.3 (6) ^{a,b}	41.1 (23)^a	17.9 (7)^b	36.7 (62)	x ² =8,329, d.f. 3, p<.05
3. Image-dominant ⁴	3.5 (2)^a	11.8 (2) ^{a,b}	10.7 (6) ^{a,b}	23.10 (9)^b	11.2 (19)	x ² =8,911, d.f. 3, p<.05
Humor position						
1. Initial humor ⁵	78.6 (22)^a	62.5 (5)^a	27.6 (8)^b	18.8 (3)^b	46.9 (38)	x ² =21,494, d.f. 3, p<.0001
2. Embedded humor ⁶	17.9 (5)^a	25.0 (2)^{a,b}	55.2 (16)^{b,c}	75.0 (12)^c	43.2 (35)	x ² =16,696, d.f. 3, p<.001
3. Closing humor	3.6 (1)	12.5 (1)	17.2 (5)	6.3 (1)	9.9 (8)	
Semantic Relatedness						
- Thematically related	98.2 (56)	100 (17)	100 (56)	100 (39)	99.4 (168)	
Structural Relatedness						
- Structurally related	100 (81)	100 (81)	100 (81)	100 (81)	100 (81)	

^{a,b,c,d} Means and percentages with same letter within a column are not significantly different from one another (Chi-square)

Table 7
Intentional Relatedness vs. Motivation

	Negative Motivation %(Frequency)	Positive Motivation %(Frequency)	Significant Differences
Intentional Relatedness*			x ² =9.814, d.f. 2, p<.01
1. Humor dominant	49.6 (56)	57.1 (32)	
2. Information dominant ¹	43.4 (49)	23.2 (13)	x ² =6.544, d.f. 1, p<.01
3. Image – dominant ²	7.1 (8)	19.6 (11)	x ² =6.544, d.f. 1, p<.01

Table 8
Humor position vs. Involvement

	Low Involvement %(Frequency)	High Involvement %(Frequency)	Significant Differences
Humor position*			$\chi^2=20.591$, d.f. 2, $p<.0001$
1. Initial humor ¹	24.4 (11)	75.0 (27)	$\chi^2=20.525$, d.f. 1, $p<.0001$
2. Embedded humor ²	62.2 (28)	19.4 (7)	$\chi^2=14.915$, d.f. 1, $p<.0001$
3. Closing humor	13.3 (6)	5.6 (2)	

Table 9
Humor Intensity

	Low level of Humor %(Frequency)	Moderate level of Humor %(Frequency)	High level of Humor %(Frequency)	Significant Difference
Humor types				
1. Comic wit ¹	71.4 (35)	14.3 (7)	14.3 (7)	$\chi^2=6,090$, d.f. 2, $p<.05$
2. Sentimental humor ²	94.4 (17)	- (0)	5.6 (1)	$\chi^2=10,043$, d.f. 2, $p<.01$
3. Satire ³	31.3 (5)	6.3 (1)	62.5 (10)	$\chi^2=11,306$, d.f. 2, $p<.005$
4. Sentimental comedy ⁴	79.3 (23)	10.3 (3)	10.3 (3)	$\chi^2=6,038$, d.f. 2, $p<.05$
5. Full comedy ⁵	28.2 (11)	20.5 (8)	51.3 (20)	$\chi^2=22,871$, d.f. 2, $p<.001$
Intentional Relatedness				
1. Humor-dominant ⁶	41.8 (33)	13.9 (11)	44.3 (35)	$\chi^2=22,589$, d.f. 2, $p<.001$
2. Information- dominant ⁷	78.2 (43)	36.8 (7)	5.3 (5)	$\chi^2=15,003$, d.f. 2, $p<.001$
3. Image-dominant ⁸	88.2 (15)	5.9 (1)	5.9 (1)	$\chi^2=6,362$, d.f. 2, $p<.05$
Humor position				
1. Initial humor	83.3 (30)	13.9 (5)	2.8 (1)	
2. Embedded humor	74.2 (23)	37.5 (3)	16.1 (5)	
3. Closing humor	100 (5)	-	-	
Product types				
1.High Involvement – Negative motivation	57.4 (31)	9.3 (5)	33.3 (18)	
2. High Involvement – Positive motivation	64.3 (9)	-	35.7 (5)	
3. Low Involvement – Negative motivation	56.9 (29)	21.6 (11)	21.6 (11)	
4. Low Involvement – Positive motivation	68.8 (22)	9.4 (3)	21.9 (7)	

APPENDIX

Operational Definitions

Humorous Message Taxonomy

1. Humor Processes

1.1 Incongruity Resolution Process

Incongruity resolution process constitutes a cognitive mechanism to create humor. When the ad content differs from generally expected beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviours, coders should recognize incongruity resolution process. It constitutes some kind of problem solving that leads to a humorous resolution.

1.2 Arousal Safety Process

Arousal safety is a warm way to produce humor. When the target audience laughs with the characters or personified creatures of the advertisement, coders should recognize the arousal – safety process. Arousal safety aims at sharing pleasure as well as creating affective bonds with advertising audience.

1.3 Humorous Disparagement Process

Humorous – disparagement constitutes a hostile process to generate humor. When the target audience laughs at the characters or personified creatures of the advertisement, coders should recognize the humorous – disparagement process. Humorous disparagement enables advertising audience to “derogate” others (in most of the cases advertising characters).

2. Humor Types

The five humor types, generated from the combination of three humor processes (table2).

3. Semantic Relatedness

Humor can be thematically related or unrelated to the product themes. Advertisement’s humor is thematically related when it draws on product-related themes.

4. Intentional Relatedness

Initially humorous advertisements should be strictly categorized into humor-dominant and message-dominant.

4.1 Humor-dominant ads

Humor - dominant advertisements always have the structure message-within-humor and if humor is removed, they will not make sense any more.

4.2 Message-dominant ads

Message - dominant advertisements always have the structure humor-within-message. If humor is removed, they will still have a meaning. Then message-dominant ads should be strictly categorized into information-dominant and image-dominant.

a. Message-dominant ads

Coders should take into account that the information – dominant advertisements aim at informing us or reasoning with us.

b. Message-dominant ads

The image – dominant advertisements want to excite us. For advertisements that feature more than one type of messages (information or image), it is proposed to record only the dominant type (information or image).

5. Structural Relatedness

This test will be employed only for humor-dominant advertisements. It is the use of product information as structural elements of humor.

6. Humor Placement

This test is employed only for message-dominant advertisements. Research coders should define the position of subordinate humor elements (initial humor, embedded humor, and closing humor). Initial humor means that humor occurs at the beginning of the advertisement. Embedded humor means that humor occurs in the middle of the advertisement. Closing humor means that humor occurs at the end of the advertisement.

Brand Attitude Grid

1. Motivations

Motives are negative when brand claims satisfy the human need for: problem removal, problem avoidance, incomplete satisfaction, mixed – approach avoidance, normal depletion. Motives are positive when brand claims satisfy the human need for: sensory gratification, intellectual stimulation, social approval

2. Involvement

Involvement deals with the perceived risk (fiscal or psychological) in the decision to buy or use a product or service.