



Effects of Three Humorous Advertising Techniques on Purchase Intention

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Abstract

The number of varied advertisements makes each brand or company need to find suitable ways and methods to package its advertisements to attract consumers. One form of method that can be done is the use of humorous advertisements. The goal of this research is to compare the effects of three humorous advertisement techniques on college students' purchase intention. This experimental study used between-participants posttest-only design. 108 college students were recruited using the simple random sampling technique and were assigned to three different experimental groups with 36 participants in each group. These three experimental groups were given self-made humorous advertisements with different techniques (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement). The advertisements were 30-seconds long, for a made-up brand, a strawberry flavored milk drink. Then, they were given a purchase intent scale to measure their purchase intention of the advertised product. The results showed all three experimental groups are at neutral or slightly disagree to have the intention to purchase the advertised product. The hypothesis test was done using One-Way Anova. No significant differences were found between three humorous advertisement techniques. Possible explanations for this result are presented in this study.

Keywords: Humor; Advertisement; Humorous Advertisement; Purchase Intention and Experimental Research

Abbreviations: AS: Arousal-Safety; IR: Incongruity-Resolution; HD: Humorous Disparagement and NFC: Need For Cognition.

Introduction

Along with the development of industries in various sectors, people are given various choices of products in the form of goods, services, services, and platforms through broadcast and distribution of advertisements. American Psychological Association [1] describes advertisement as a public announcement that can take the form of printed documents, broadcasts, and electronic media designed to gain

attention and encourage individuals to purchase, consume, and increase the use of goods or services. Advertisements need to have appeal, whether rationally, emotionally, or morally in order to attract attention, persuade, and influence consumers' mental processes to buy certain products or services [2]. One of the most famous types of advertisements with emotional appeal is humorous advertisement [3,4].

Humor is a way to convey messages and persuade people, making it a great tool to use in advertising [5]. Various studies have shown that humor in advertising increases consumer attention by providing interesting, entertaining, unexpected, provocative, sudden, and memorable messages [2,6].

There are three different techniques used in humorous advertisement, namely arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement [7]. Arousal-safety is a mechanism to elicit relief from some kind of strain, while incongruity-resolution involves the feeling of contentment after working through the confusion that was caused by an incongruity that happened [8]. Humorous disparagement is the pleasure coming from superior feeling over other people [9].

This study will cover the effect of the three humorous advertisement techniques on purchase intention. Schiffman, et al. [10] define purchase intention as the plan or possibility to buy a certain brand in the future. Purchase intention might increase if the attitude towards the advertisement is better and more positive [11].

There have been several studies examining the use of humor in advertising and purchase intention. Palikhe's [6] study found that the use of humor in advertising has a significant impact on consumer's purchase intention. In addition, the joyful nature of humorous advertisements can also increase consumer attention. Research by Hameed, et al. [11] also found that the impact of combining responses to the three types of humor in advertising (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement) resulted in purchase intention predicted through perceived humor.

However, to date, no experimental study has been done to compare the effects of three techniques of humor in advertising (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement) on purchase intention. Moreover, according to Eisend [12], findings on the effects of using humor in advertising are not always consistent. People's perception of humor is also influenced by their cultural background [13], hence, humor used in a certain country may be perceived differently and cannot be used in another country. Thus, there are still many discrepancies in the results of previous experiments on the effects of humor in advertisement. With this, further and more comprehensive research is needed to be conducted. Conclusively, this study hypothesizes that there is a significant difference between the effects of three humorous advertisement techniques, arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous

disparagement, on college students' purchase intention.

Methods

This experimental study used between-participants posttest-only design. The participants in this study are 108 students from the Faculty of Psychology in a University in West Java, 17 to 22 years of age ($M = 19.36$, $SD = 1.211$). They were recruited using the simple random sampling technique and were assigned to three different experimental groups with 36 participants in each group. These three experimental groups were given self-made humorous advertisements with different techniques (arousal-safety [AS], incongruity-resolution [IR], and humorous disparagement [HD]). The advertisements were 30-seconds long, advertising a made-up brand, named 'SUSUMWA', a strawberry flavored milk drink. It was done to minimize participants' bias to the brand. Then, a manipulation check was given to ensure the participants were manipulated. The manipulation check includes 3 items measuring perceived humor, 3 items measuring attention, adapted from Duncan, et al. [14] and 3 items on why the ad was perceived as funny. Each group was also given different manipulation checks regarding the humor process. The AS and IR group were given 4 items adapted from Spielmann [15]. Meanwhile, the HD group was given 2 items adapted from Speck [8]. To measure participants' purchase intention, a bahasa Indonesia version of the purchase intent scale [16] was used. This measure consisted of 4 items and was answered using a 7-point Likert scale. The translated version of the scale has been tested for validity and reliability and is valid ($r = .87$, $r = .85$, $r = .85$, $r = .88$) and reliable ($\alpha = .88$). All of the procedures were done online via Zoom meeting and using PsyToolKit. We performed assumption tests for normality and homogeneity on the data. After the data was declared normal and homogeneous, we conducted One-Way Anova to test the proposed hypothesis.

Results

Before conducting hypothesis testing, the purchase intention score was described as seen on Table 1. The mean score of purchase intention for AS experimental group was 3.64, 3.35 for IR experimental group, and 3.28 for HD experimental group.

Group	Purchase intention score			
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Arousal-Safety	1.8	5.8	3.6	1
Incongruity-Resolution	1	5.8	3.4	1
Humorous Disparagement	1	5.8	3.3	1

Note: N = 36.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics data of purchase intention score.

One-Way ANOVA was used to analyze the effect of different humorous advertisement techniques on purchase intention. The test results showed that there was no difference in the average score of purchase intention between groups given

humorous advertisements using arousal safety, incongruity resolution, and humorous disparagement techniques, $F(2, 105) = 1.076$, $p = .35$. From these results, H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2.61	2	1.3	1.1	0.4
Within groups	127.2	105	1.21		
Total	129.81	107			

Table 2: ANOVA Test Results.

Discussion

Prior studies that have noted the significant effect humorous advertisement has on purchase intention. Humorous advertisements increase its popularity and are used by brands to enhance certain images and impressions so that they can attract the attention of customers in the market Palikhe. However, very little was found in the literature on testing three humorous advertisement techniques (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement) on purchase intention. It was hypothesized in this study that there is a significant difference between three humorous advertisement techniques on college students' purchase intention. Surprisingly, no significant differences were found in the use of three techniques of humorous advertisement on purchase intention.

There are several possible explanations of this finding. Based on the results of participants' purchase intention, it can be inferred that all three experimental groups are at neutral or slightly disagree to have the intention to purchase the advertised product. It can be explained by a statement that said, although humorous advertisements increase advertising effectiveness, it can affect and threaten the recall process, resulting in customers only recognizing and associating brands or products with themselves, without tendencies to do further purchase [17]. Purchase intention is also easily affected by many factors, such as consumer knowledge, celebrity endorsements, product packaging, perceived value, brand name, product quality, and advertising [18,19]. The product that is being advertised are fictitious, using non-existence brand, and presented by casts from college students with none certain influences

Based on the additional data we collected, there are also differences in participants' product preference associated with milk product and strawberry flavor that can influence the purchase intention. Appropriateness of participant preferences results in customer pleasure or satisfaction so that it can affect purchases [20]. Participants' characteristics are also potential to influence humor effectiveness, such as

their need for cognition (NFC) level. Individuals with high NFC levels tend to make higher cognitive effort and use the central processing route to process information and vice versa [21] Zhang.

Even though this research did not show significant differences between three techniques of humorous advertisement, we gained some information from manipulation check questions asking whether the ads the participants watched is considered to be funny or not. From the result, average score of humorous advertisement with technique of arousal safety gained the highest score ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.27$) and along with that, this technique also had the highest purchase intention average score ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.93$). Use of arousal safety humor techniques in advertising elicits feelings of pleasure [22] and later on predict significant purchase intention [23,24].

Conclusion

The result showed no differences in average score among three different techniques of humorous advertisement, hence the effect of these three humorous advertisement techniques (arousal-safety, incongruity-resolution, and humorous disparagement) on college students' purchase intention was not statistically significant. Therefore, this study concludes that there are no better technique of humorous advertisement to influence college students' purchase intention. Humorous advertisement can be considered by brands as one of the approaches to attract consumers and promote their products. However, it is important for brands to pay attention on how to deliver the persuasive message well and use the suitable humorous advertisement technique to promote their products to their future consumers.

Implication

Various factors can influence the results of this study, such as the storyline and situation that were portrayed in the advertisement, product choice, and the casts. Situations during the data collection process and participants'

individual differences also can affect this research finding. Future researchers can consider taking into account various possible mediating or moderating variables present in the process from humorous advertisement exposure to purchase intention, including need for cognition, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, self-monitoring, and message argument. On the other hand, this study still lacks in terms of delivering the humorous aspects of advertisement. Future researchers are advised to put more concern on producing the advertisement so that the humorous aspects can be fully delivered and participants are well manipulated by the treatment.

Authors Contributions: All authors collectively designed the experimental study, performed the research, analyzed the data, and wrote the paper.

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