

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta
Degree Programme in International Business

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Impact of humor in advertising on consumer purchase decision

Thesis 2013

Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to study the consumer decision process and its determinants, explore the concept and usage of humor in advertising to find out its impacts on consumer's purchase decision.

The theoretical framework gathered data from articles, books and previous researches. The author explained the process of purchase decision making, consumer buying behavior and presented the classification of humor, effects of humor and appropriate product types. Empirical data was collected by mixed research method: self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interview. The research aimed to find out Vietnamese consumer's buying behavior and the impacts of seven types of humor.

As a result of this thesis, Vietnamese consumers tend to undertake nominal and limited decision making. When shopping for "yellow goods", consumers usually make affective choice and attitude-based choice. In-depth interview's results showed that personification, surprise, silliness and exaggeration humor are effective in attract attention but can distract consumers from urges to purchase. Pun, sarcasm and comparison were perceived not as suitable to target Vietnamese consumer and does not create significant impact. The research revealed that humorous advertising has impact on consumer's recall when accompanied by aligning campaign and product placement. Humor has relatively impact on encouraging repurchases but appropriate for building brand's image and gain consumer's fondness.

Keywords: humor, advertising, purchase decision

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The term “advertising” originates from the Latin word “advertere” which means “to turn the mind towards”. Advertising has a psychological impact on consumers and influences the buying decisions of consumers. As a marketing vehicle, one of advertising’s features is to aim at persuasion of potential customers (Kotler, Armstrong 2010). A mean to achieve this ultimate goal is advertising appeal, which is a force that stimulates customer mindset towards the product or service and initiates buying decision.

Opportunities and benefits of using humor as a stimuli in advertising is appealing to any advertiser and businesses as they all aim for boosting sales. However, influencing the human’s mind is never easy. One of the quotes from advertising genius David Ogilvy is “The consumer is not a moron, she is your wife. Don’t insult her intelligence” (Ogilvy, Parker 2004). Even though there are various approaches in using humorous appeal, advertisers have to invest in researching their consumer like one has to understand his wife. In this thesis, the study of consumer behavior and buyer decision process will be included to find out how consumers response to humorous appeals in advertisements and their impact on consumer’s decision to purchase. An empirical research will be conducted to examine Vietnamese consumer’s response towards humor advertisement and how it impacts their buying behavior.

Thereby, the aim of this paper is to study the concepts and usage of humor in advertising, consumer decision making process and how humor creates impacts on consumer purchase decision.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

Nowadays, most advertisements communicate with their audience by applying humor and the extent of its creativity is beyond borders. However, for an adver-

tisement to be successful, consumers need to do more than enjoying and laughing when they see a magazine advertisement or a TV commercial. The advertisement should change consumer's behaviour and attitudes. It also has to make them remember the product, so that when they make a purchase the product or the brand will come to their mind (Clow, 2007).

At the beginning, the paper provides definition, categorization and impact of humour (1). Then, the consumer decision making process and purchase behaviour will be studied and presented in detailed (2) to deliver a theoretical foundation for the empirical research of humorous advertising on Vietnamese consumer's buying behaviour (3). Therefore, this study aims to answer these questions and sub questions:

What is humour in advertising?

This question will define humour, present types of humour in advertising and humour's impact generated from previous studies and researches on humour.

How does the consumer make purchase decision?

This question is aimed to carefully study consumer's buying behaviours, types of consumer decisions and decision making process from a marketer's point of view.

How is Vietnamese consumer purchase decision influenced by humorous advertisement?

This question will be answered by a survey to examine Vietnamese consumer behaviour towards various styles of humour used in advertisement and determine appropriate approaches of humour appeal for Vietnamese consumers.

The thesis is aimed to benefits marketing students and/or "advertiser-to-be" with understanding of humour in advertising and consumer's decision making process. With the study of Vietnamese consumer's buying behaviour and decision process, this paper can assist advertisers who plan to approach and influence Vietnamese consumers by using humour.

1.3 Delimitations

Humour as an advertisement appeal is getting popular in many countries. According to Fletcher (1995) society nowadays simply shops for pleasure, enjoyment and fun, where in most case; humour is the suitable choice of appeal. Many of the most memorable ad campaigns tend to be funny. Humour will be one of the two main focuses in this paper. However, the psychological aspects of humour in consumer's perception are not deeply studied. The foremost concentration is its effectiveness in delivering marketing messages.

Audiences in different cultures respond differently to humour and possess different behaviour in purchasing and decision making. To maintain validity and reliability, this empirical study concentrates on studying Vietnamese consumer behaviour and acquires empirical data among Vietnamese consumers.

Similarly, humour has various approaches when designed for diverse product type. For this reason, the empirical research aims to identify how humour used in advertising campaigns of packaged food and beverage products impact Vietnamese consumer's purchase behaviour. Other product types and their use of humour in advertisement are not covered in this paper.

2 Humor in advertising

2.1 What is humor?

Humor is a universal phenomenon that is easy to spot and enjoy, often triggering laughter. It is also an elusive entity that is difficult to define and analyze. A dictionary definition of humor is the quality of being amusing or comic, the ability to express humor or amuse other people, a mood or state of mind (Oxford dictionary). Stern (1996) suggests that "the term humor itself breeds confusion by confounding the formal aspects of the stimulus advertisement with the response aspects of effects on consumers". Still, humor appears in various forms that such a standard definition cannot cover. Weinberger and Gulas (1992) pointed out in

their work that “an all-encompassing, generally accepted definition of humor does not exist”.

Even though there is various ways to define humor, incongruity seems to be an essential ingredient (Suls, 1972). A study based on a sampling of television advertisements from four countries (Germany, Korea, Thailand and the United States) determined that humorous advertisements involve the use of incongruity resolution (Shimp, 2010). Tellis (1998) defined humor as painless incongruity between two elements that the communicator brings together. The response from the target audience is firstly surprise because of the unexpected and unusual combination of the two elements. The incongruity can arise from incongruous events and images, a pun or word with two meanings.

2.2 Types of humor in advertising media

There is no universally accepted classification of humor types but there is perceived importance to sort humor in to conceptual, theoretical or practical-oriented categories (Specks, 1972). A study about humor in advertising by Catanescu and Tom (2001) provides a categorization of humor to help defines humor in different advertising medium. They suggest that managers should definitely consider the types of humor as a variable in their decision to use or not to use humor in their advertisement. Advertisement in different types of media and different products also perform better with appropriate types of humor.

To establish consistency with the scant previous research that has considered different types of humor, Catanescu and Tom (2001) used Reick’s practitioner-oriented classification system and added two more categories: comparison and personification.

1. Comparison - Putting two or more elements together to produce a humorous situation. An example is a magazine advertisement for Hewlett Packard. On one page the ad features a happy family in a Christmas picture that is to be sent to the grandmother. Everything would be perfect if the son did not look like a punk in a leather jacket, chains and an outrageous hair-do. The second page of the ad

presents the same picture, but this time with a very conservative son who is nicely dressed with clean, short hair. With the help of HP PhotoSmart System, which allows modification of pictures, the ad claims the "grandmother spared holiday shock, heirs breathe easy."

2. Personification - Attributes human characteristics to animals, plants and objects. The Benson & Hedges advertisement depicting cigarettes engaging in human-like activities is an example of personification.

3. Exaggeration - Overstating and magnifying something out of proportion. One of Wendy's commercials makes use of exaggeration as two young men order "4 Biggie Fries and 4 Biggie Drinks" at a drivethru. As soon as they pick up the order, the car tilts on one side.

4. Pun - Using elements of language to create new meanings, which result in humor. The phrase "absolute masterpiece" takes on a new meaning when it is pictured with Absolut Vodka.

5. Sarcasm - According to Reick (1997), sarcastic comments or situations are classified as silliness. In this study, however, sarcasm is a separate category including blatant ironic responses or situations. An advertisement for Lexmark features a sister and a brother in conflict. The brother, with his legs up on the desk, is thinking of printing "some sort of a real cool sign" for his room. The sister's sarcastic response is "How about 'For Rent'?"

6. Silliness - In this study, silliness ranges from making funny faces to ludicrous situations such as the one created in the commercials for "1800-Collect," when a couple of muscular men run around the beach on their toes to avoid the hot sand. Another example is the commercial for the Weather Channel in which two men paint their faces red and blue in an effort to predict the weather.

7. Surprise - Includes all advertisements where humor arises from unexpected situations. The advertisement for Primestar Satellite TV makes good use of the surprise element to arrive at a hilarious outcome. The ad starts with a man carefully washing his car. Just before he gives the car a kiss, he notices a giant pipe rolling down the street toward him. In a state of desperation, the man manages to quickly move his car. As he breathes a sigh of relief, the punch line hits the

audience: The car is badly damaged as he saves the satellite dish, which he initially intended to protect by moving his car.

Catanescu and Tom's (2001) research shows that humor is used more in television advertisements than in print advertisement. These findings support the belief of advertising and creative executives that television is a more effective channel to use humor. Sarcasm is the most popular form of humor used in magazines, while silliness predominates in television.

Pricken (2008) provides several more types of humor derive from comedians and entertainers which is also used in advertisements but tends to easily cause resentments. These two were included in "Creative advertising", a collection of recent ideas and techniques from advertising campaigns.

Black humor is what happens by canceling out the serious side of socially taboo subjects like death, illness, morality or sex and approached playfully. However, the advertisers need a light touch and sensitivity or the humor could backfire. There is also a good possibility of audience feeling offended.



Figure 1. Example of black humor.

Unexpected and situation humor

The situation dependent jokes do not spring from imagination but are written by a person is in perfectly normal, everyday situation. Suddenly thanks to some unforeseen event or an accident he himself caused, he is projected in a humorous situation. The key factor of unintentional humor is the character is unprepared.

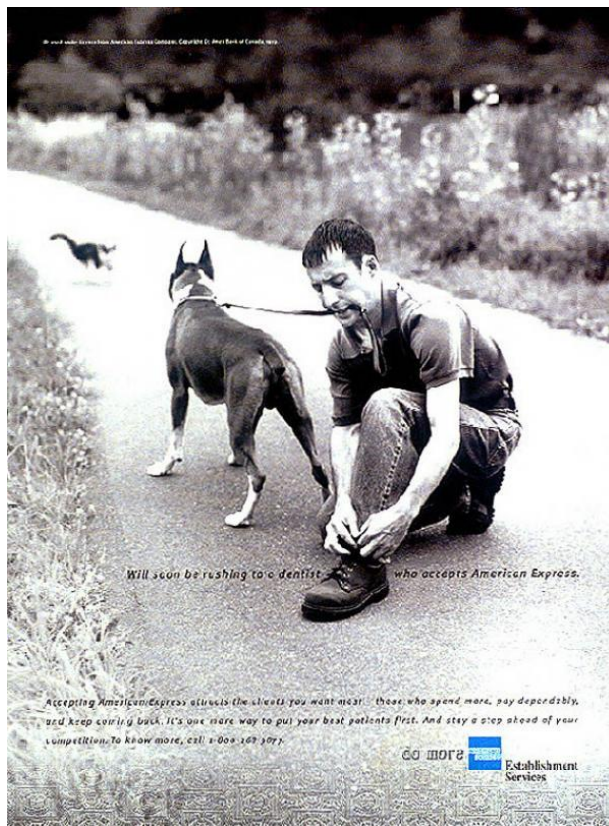


Figure 2. Example of unexpected and situation humor

Blue humor

Blue humor does not refer to any specific type of joke; it is just the category of humor that deals with sexuality and bodily functions. The humor comes from breaking taboos, leading to an inner conflict which resolves itself in laughter. Marketers can think of a sexual side to the product or service, and find ways to show it in a classy and amusing life. At the same time, they also have to develop an instinct for cases of resentments.

2.3 The impact of humorous advertising

People use humor every day as a communication tool. Humor tends to relax the audience, break the ice and create a connection between the communicator and the audience (Tellis, 1998). Thus, many public speakers often open their speech with a joke. Humor helps setting a good mood to transfer message and gain acceptance. For this reason, humor is used in about 24 percent of prime time television advertisements and 35 percent of radio ads (Clow, 2007). Some academic researchers have shown that advertisements using humor draw more attention and liking than advertisements that do not (Speck, 1991). However, the efficiency of humor in advertising is elusive because humor is a complex topic that is affected by wide variety of factors (Weinberger and Gulas, 1992). Many scholars have been experimentally studied the effectiveness of humor and this paper aim to present several common impacts of humor in previous researches.

According to Clow (2007), Weinberger and Gullas (1992), humorous advertisements grab attentions and attracts viewer's interest by its ability to cutting through clutter. In a test of attention effects, Speck (1987) compared humorous ads what non-humorous controls on four attention measures: initial attention, sustained attention, projected attention and overall attention. It was found that humorous ads outperform non-humorous ads on each of the attention measures. As mentioned, humor is often executed by using incongruity, the initial response may be a cognitively recognition of discrepancy. When the meaning of humor is resolved, the consumers generate a response by laughter and amusement. That is one of the aims of marketers when using humorous advertisements to communicate with their target consumers.

Humor can solve the distance among people in communication and it can reduce the resistance to the message (Tellis 1998). In the scenario where consumers already hold negative beliefs and resistance to the product type, they may resists to accept information about it. Like a person, humorous advertisements approach them by making them laugh. The laughter can distract the consumer from their existing judgments and opinions and make an effort to introduce the central message. Several researches also show that humor can enhance liking of the advertisement and the advertised brand. (Weinbeger and Gullas 1992, Shimp 2010)

Most of the ads that became viral are humorous ads such as the Budweiser’s “Whasssup?”. Many advertisements have the power of lasting in consumer’s memory for an impressively long period. Figure 3 presents a part of Nielsen Global Survey of Trust in Advertising, polled more than 29000 respondents in 58 countries showed that humorous advertising resonated most. Humorous TV commercials have also dominated the Superbowl advertising over the years and audiences including football fans consider commercials as tradition. However, there are mixed findings on whether humor can always generate a strong memory for the brand name or brand claims (Spotts, Weinberger and Parsons, 1997; Shimp 2010). It is a commonly accepted fact that things attached to humor tends to make us remember it longer, but this impact is also relied on humor relevance.

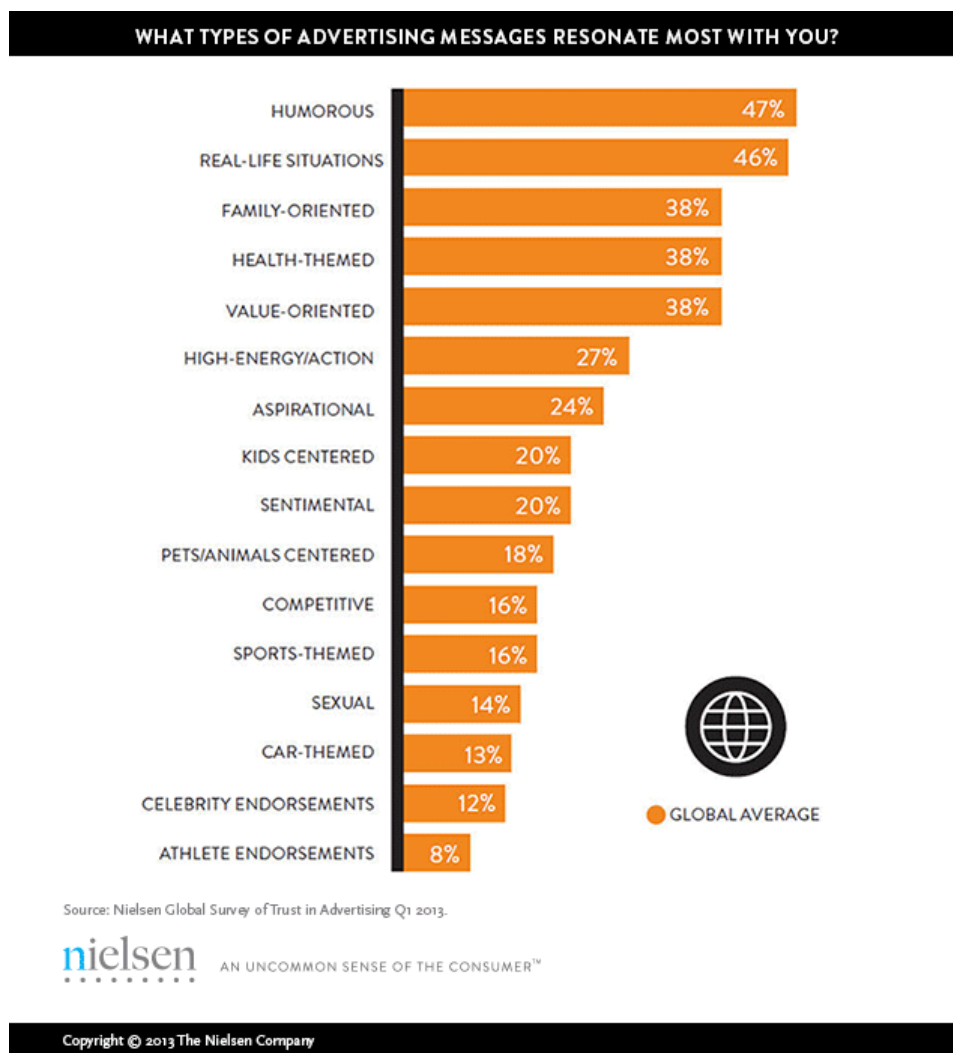


Figure 3. What types of advertising messages resonate most with you? – Nielsen Global Survey of Trust in Advertising Q1 2013

Fugate (1998) provides a list of humor's benefits in advertising that has also been shown and proved by many other studies

- Humor grabs attention
- Humor encourages people to remember the ad and therefore the message
- Humor shows we are human – we can laugh and smile with the rest of humanity
- Humor makes people like us – and by extension improves our brand image

Weinberger and Gulas (1992) state that humor cannot assure more successful in advertising by simply attach humor into an advertisement. Humor related directly to the product works more effectively than the unrelated humor (Fatt, 2002) In spite of the increasing numbers of humorous advertisement, it is important to understand that humor can be appropriate and effective in some situations. Humor varies in their effectiveness and perceived differently across demographic groups, cultures and even among individuals. Shimp (2010) included in his text that many evidences shows that humorous ads are more effective than non-humorous ads only when consumers' evaluations of the advertised brand are already positive.

With the recognized impact of humor in attracting attention and influence customer's attitudes positively, Shimp (2010) suggests that this chain of effects can create brand awareness. He also produced a list of tentative generalizations that was generated from researches on humor.

- Humor is an effective method of attracting attention to advertisements.
- Humor can elevate consumers' recall of message points in advertisements
- Humor enhances liking of both advertisement and advertised brand.
- Humor does not necessarily harm comprehension and may in fact increase memory for advertising claims if the humor is relevant to the advertised brand.
- Humor does not offer an advantage over non humor at increasing persuasion.
- Humor does not enhance source credibility.

- The nature of the product affects the appropriateness of using humor. Specifically, humor is used more successfully with established rather than new products. Humor is also more appropriate for products that are more feeling oriented, or experiential, and those that are not very involving (such as inexpensive consumer packaged goods).

2.4 Humor and product type

The appropriate type of products advertised also determines the effectiveness of humorous advertisements. In a recent study of Weinberger and Gulas (2005), they state that consumer nondurables including soft drinks, alcohol products, snacks and candies received strong support for being well suited humor (70 percent of top U.S. agencies). Many executives also expressed that humor is specifically ill suited to business services, medical services, and higher education and durable products. Spotts (1989) also identified that nondurable or low involvement products have the highest usage of humor in the U.S. and UK. For low-involvement product, there is not a lot of information search and evaluation required for low-involvement decisions.

The ELM (elaboration likelihood model) framework developed by Cacioppo and Petty (1984) is a model of persuasion developed in the 1980s. This model took into account two extremes on a continuum: high-personal-relevance setting and low-motivation situation (low-involvement learning). Such peripheral cues as cartoon characters, music, humor and celebrities could help influence the audience with low-motivation have a positive impact on liking the messages. Advertisers tend to use more peripheral cues in the lower motivation situations. Humor as a dominant rather than as a support role works best with lowest motivation to process ad information (Gulas et al 2005).

To create an effective message, advertiser should acknowledge the differences of product in involvement and hedonic value. The product color matrix is presented to demonstrate the differences between products that need to be consid-

ered when developing different message appeals and humorous appeal in particular. The PCM draws on ELM theory and classified the products into color groups.

Consumer objective	Functional/ tools	Expressive/ toys
Higher risk	“White goods” – bigger tools Large appliances Typical cars Business equipment Insurance Auto tires	“Red goods” – Bigger toys Fashion clothing and accessories Hair coloring Motorcycle Sports car Fashion luggage Jewelry
Lower risk	“Blue goods” – Little tools Detergents and household cleaners OTC remedies Motor oil and gas Most non-dessert foods	“Yellow goods” – Little treats Snack foods Desserts Beer Alcohol Tobacco products

Table 1. The Product Color Matrix (PCM) and Prototype Products

The yellow goods are the most suited for humor. The ELM framework would classify this product group into a low-motivation-to-process category because of the low risk and routinized decision making (Gulas et al. 2006). Consumers tend to undertake nominal decision making in purchasing these products. The results often are affective choice or attitude choice. A study by Weinberger et al. (1995) tested the impact of humor with different product groups. It shows that yellow goods have the highest incidence of humor use for all the media that were tracked (Gulas et al. 2005).

2.5 Offensive humor

Gruner (1997) a superiority theorist argue that all humor is based on the concept of “winners” and “losers”. The “losers” are associated with some group by gender, age, occupation or race. Therefore, people from these groups are likely to be offended by the humor that targets at “losers” group. Humor that targets at a particular individual or a public figure can offend the target and people who have an affinity with the target. From the superiority theorists, humor definitely has the potential of offending someone (Gulas et al 2005.)

In many advertising practice, offensive humor has made many advertising campaign become the target of criticism and resentment from audiences. This circumstance is a backfire from advertiser’s attempt to breakthrough, the failed attempt turns to a shocking message appeal. It is a fine line between effective and offensive when social norms are misused as a source of humor. This includes racist humor, sexist humor, religious, political events... (Gulas et al 2005.)

3 Consumer's purchase decision

3.1 Consumer behavior's model and determinants

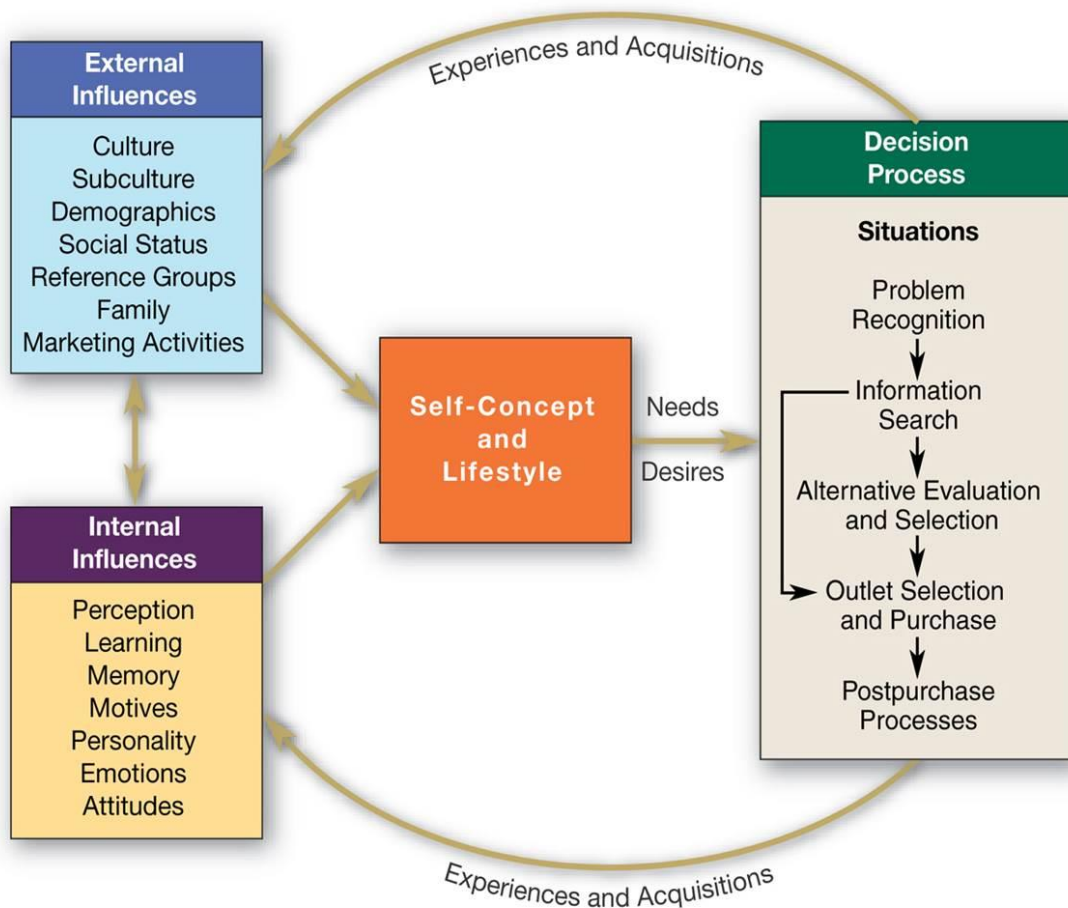


Figure 4. Overall model of consumer behavior (Hawkins/ Mothersbaugh 2010)

Consumer purchases are influenced by social, culture, personal and psychological characteristics as shown in Figure 4. For the most part, marketers cannot control these factors (Kotler, Armstrong 2010), but they need to understand and put them into account when making marketing decision. However, they influence consumer' behavior by influencing their consumption. Marketers not only focus on identifying what their customers want, they aim to make customers realize what they need. Nowadays, consumer behavior is also determined by what and how they buy (Solomon 2010, p.31). This will be presented more detailed further in this chapter about how consumers hold their purchase behavior and how they make the decisions.

3.2 Consumer buying behavior

	High Involvement	Low Involvement
Significant differences between brands	Complex Buying Behavior	Variety Seeking Behavior
Few differences between brands	Dissonance Reducing Buying Behavior	Habitual Buying Behavior

Figure 5. Four types of buying behavior

Adapted from Henry Assael, *Consumer behavior and Marketing Action* (Boston: Kent Publishing Company, 1987), p. 87.

Complex buying behavior

Consumers undertake complex buying behavior in situations that is characterized by high levels of involvement in a purchase decision and with a significant differences among brands. When the product is expensive, risky, infrequently purchase such as cars and computers, high involvement in making decision is necessary. The consumer will pass through a learning process by researching, reading reviews, talking to others and testing different models. With gathered information, the consumer develops (or sometimes changes) their beliefs and attitudes before making a choice (Kotler and Armstrong 2010).

Marketers of high-involvement products must understand the buying process and:

- Help customer learn about the product
- Differentiate their brand's attributes
- Create message that influences buyer's belief and attitudes

Dissonance-reducing buying behavior

Consumers with dissonance-reducing behavior have high involvement but there are few perceived differences among brands. Kotler and Armstrong gave an example of buying carpeting, which is expensive and self-expressive. Consumers have to involve in considering most carpet brands but the price range is about the same. Since the brand differences are not large, buyers may do some research but they will make the decision relatively quickly (Kotler, Armstrong 2010).

After the purchase, consumers might experience post purchase dissonance, when they begin to notice disadvantages of the purchase and regret their decision. To avoid these feelings of consumer, marketers should run after-sale communication campaign to:

- Gives encouragement and support to customers; help them feel good about their brand choice.
- Encourages additional purchases and referrals.
- Offers discounts and incentives. (Kotler and Armstrong 2010)

Habitual buying behavior

Habitual buying behavior refers to situations where a consumer has low involvement in a purchase and perceives insignificant brand difference. This product category includes everyday use products and commodities such as toilet paper, salt and pepper. Consumers simply buy them without considering different brands. If they keep choosing the same brand, it is a more habitual decision than strong brand loyalty.

In these situations, consumer does not pass through the usual belief-attitude-behavior sequence. Instead, they passively learn about the products by watching

television or read magazines. Consumers are buying based on brand familiarity, marketers use ad repetition to build brand familiarity instead of brand conviction. In order to encourage purchases, marketers often use price and sales promotion to initiate product trial (Kotler, Armstrong 2010).

In advertising for a low-involvement product, marketers should:

- Create message that emphasizes a few key points.
- Use more visual symbols and imagery because they can easily be remembered and associated with the brand.
- Ad campaigns should have high repetition rates and the duration of messages should be short.

Variety-seeking buying behavior

Consumers undertake variety-seeking buying behavior in situations where there is low consumer involvement, but the consumer perceives significant differences between the brands. In these situations, consumers tend to do a lot of brand switching. Common variety seeking types of products are packed food such as cookies. Consumers may already have a few beliefs about cookies but most will buy a particular brand with little evaluation before the purchase. The evaluation usually happens during consumption. In consumer's next purchase, they will buy the same brand if the experience is favorable or pick another brand just to try something different. Brand switching occurs for the sake of variety rather than negative beliefs or attitudes about the brand (Kotler, Armstrong 2010).

The marketing strategy might be different for market leaders and small brands. Market leading brands will encourage habitual buying by dominating shelf space, keeping shelves stocked and running frequent advertising. Marketers for this product type should influence variety seeking consumers by:

- Using promotions like lower prices, special deals, coupons.
- Spreading samples
- Sending messages that give reasons to try something new.

3.3 Types of consumer decisions

To understand the decision-making process, it is necessary to examine the amount of effort consumers put into a decision. Because some purchase decisions are more important than others, have higher cost or contain higher risks, the amount of effort of each differs. Sometimes consumers make fast evaluation based on little information; the decision process is almost automatic. The product can be a daily commodity or a repurchase based on positive beliefs in past consumption. In other situations, such as buying a new house or deciding between an iPhone and an Android phone, the process gets more complicated and consumers have to be more involved in making decision.

The term “consumer decision” produces an image of a consumer evaluating the attributes of a product and selecting the one that solves their identified needs for the least cost (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010, p.490) Consumers often make their choices with full awareness of rational reasoning; however many decisions involve little conscious effort. Furthermore, many consumers do not focus on brand attribute (price, functional, innovative) but on the associated feelings or emotions of acquiring the product. A product may be selected because “it makes me feel good” or “my friends will like it”.

Purchase decision and consumption behavior differs in various product types and consumers are often driven by emotional or situational needs. Therefore, the decision process model gives useful insights into all types of consumer purchases. Studying the model will help marketers understand emotion, situation and attribute based decisions.

Low involvement purchases

High involvement purchases

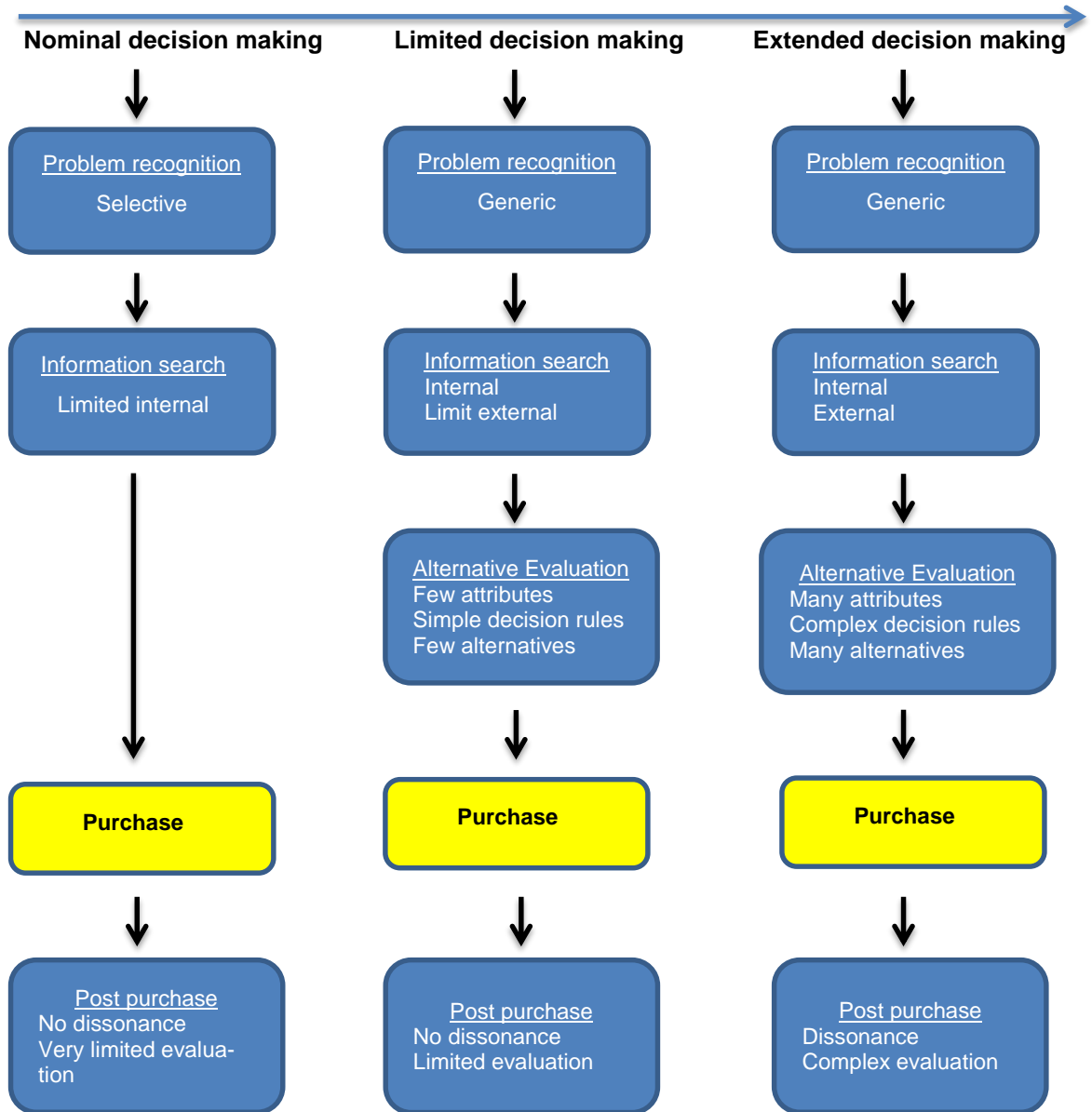


Figure 6. Involvement and types of decision making

As shown in figure 6, there are 3 types of consumer decision process. As the level of involvement with the purchase increases, decision making becomes more complex. Hawkins and Mothersbaug define purchase involvement as the level of concern for, or interest in, the purchase triggered by the need to consider a particular purchase. While purchase involvement is a continuum, it is crucial to take into account nominal, limited and extended decision making that occurs along the points of the continuum.

3.3.1 Nominal decision making

Nominal decision making, also known as habitual decision making (Solomon 2010) refers to the process of making purchase decisions without or little conscious effort. As figure 3 indicates, a problem is recognized, long term memory (internal search) suggests a single preferred solution. The process is almost automatic. Many purchases are routinized that we may not realize we have made them until we check our shopping cart. For instance, when a consumer ran out of tooth paste, he usually picks the usual brand without considering other brands' prices or attributes. Although he might seem like a careless consumer but this routinized purchase reduces the time and energy he has to spend for "mundane" decision. However this type of decision making challenges the marketers who are trying to introduce a new product. In these situations, marketers have to convince consumers to replace their habit with a new one.

Nominal decisions are broken into two distinct categories: brand loyal purchases and repeat purchase decisions.

Brand loyal purchases - When consumers form an emotional attachment to the brand, they are brand loyal. With brand loyal purchase decision, it is very difficult for a competitor to gain consumer's patronage.

In contrast, consumers make **repeat purchases** when they have low involvement in considering different brands and may not attach much importance to the product categories. They are repeat purchaser because of they are satisfied with the past decision and decide without effort in the next purchase (Percy et al 2002).

3.3.2 Limited decision making

Limited decision making involves recognizing a problem with several possible solutions. There is an internal and limited amount of external search. A few alternatives are evaluated using simple selection rules. Consumers make little effort and involvement in considering different solutions. The purchase and consumption of the product are given little evaluation, unless it failed to satisfy consumers (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010). For example, when a consumer need to buy dish soap, he has a decision rule that he will buy the cheapest brand available. Next trip to the store, he simply scans the prices and pick the cheapest. The process is straightforward and allows him to make quick purchase decision.

3.3.3 Extended decision making

Extended decision making correspond most closely to the traditional decision making process. Consumers initiate the process when the purchase decision is complex and the consequence might be risky. When the problem is recognized, consumers try to collect as much information as possible, both from internal and external search. Then, the product alternatives and post purchase are evaluated carefully (Hawkins/ Mothersbaugh 2010). As an example, when looking to buy a tablet, the author tries to gather information both from my memory and knowledge of electronics and sources like Google or several “tech savvy” blogs. With an expensive and complex recreational product like a tablet, the author considers the attributes of one brand at a time and sees how each brand relates to the results she hope to get from her decision.

3.4 Consumer decision making process



Figure 7. Consumer decision process

Figure 7 shows five stages of considerations that arise when a consumer faces a new and complex purchase situation. It is clear that the buying process starts long before and proceeds after the actual purchase (or not to buy decision). In different types of decision making listed above (nominal, limited and extended) consumers often skip or reverse some the stages. However, marketers need to focus on the entire buying process (Kotler and Armstrong 2010).

3.4.1 Problem recognition

The first stage in the consumer decision-making process is problem recognition. Without recognition of a problem, there is no need for a decision. Problem recognition occurs when consumers face an imbalance between desired and actual states. An **actual state** is one's perceived feelings and situations at the present time. A **desired (ideal) state** is the way one wants to feel or be at the present time (Solomon, 2010, p. 326).

Figure 8 is an illustration of shifts in actual or ideal states by Michaela R. Solomon (Consumer behavior, 2010). It shows that a problem arises in two ways, a decline in the quality of the actual state (need recognition) and a rise of the ideal states (opportunity recognition). Either way, consumers activate the decision process in response to the discrepancy between the ideal and actual states.

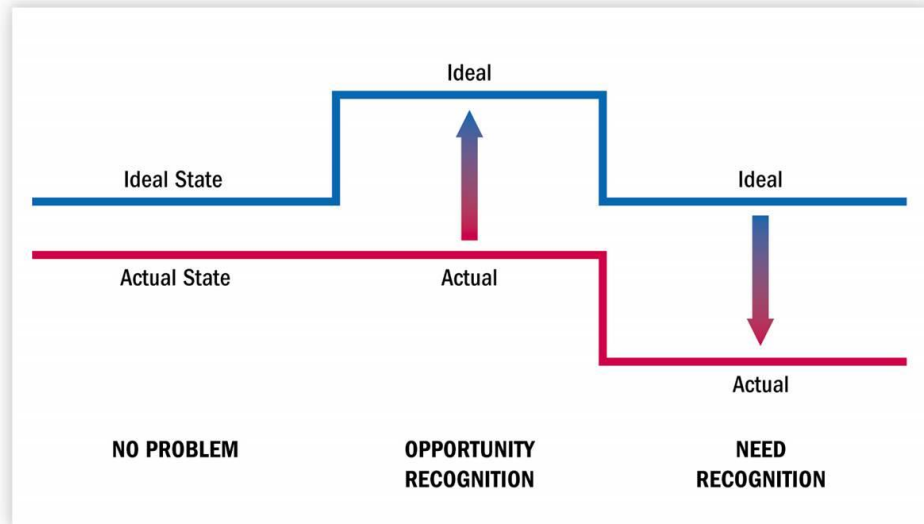


Figure 8. Problem recognition: Shifts in actual or ideal states

Consumer's problem can be either active or inactive. An **active problem** is the one that consumer is or will eventually aware of. **An inactive problem** is one of which the consumer is not aware. Marketers often need to trigger problem recognition for the consumer. With active problems, marketer should convince consumers that the brand is the superior solution. In contrast, inactive problems require marketer to show consumers that they have the problem and marketer's brand is the superior solution. (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010, p. 496)



Figure 9. A brand's attempt to cause consumer to realize the problem of bad smell in cat's litter boxes (inactive problem)

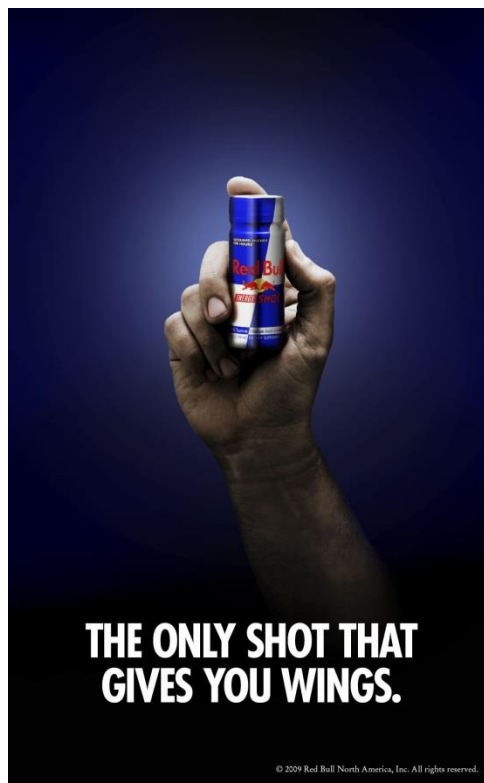


Figure 10. Redbull ad assumes that consumers are aware of the problem (active problem) and focuses on brand's unique attribute.

3.4.2 Information search

After recognizing a need or problem, consumers search for information about various alternatives available to fulfill it. Figure 11 provide the sources of information involved in this stage. An information search can occur internally, externally or both. In an **internal information search**, relevant information from long-term memory is recalled to determine characteristics and satisfaction of potential or previous solutions and ways to compare solutions. If consumers cannot come to a final resolution, then the **external information search** is initiated. There are several types of external information:

- Personal sources (family, friends, neighbors).
- Commercial sources (advertising, salespeople, websites, packaging, displays).

- Independent sources (mass media, consumer rating organizations, and Internet searches).
- Experiential sources (handling, examining, using the product).

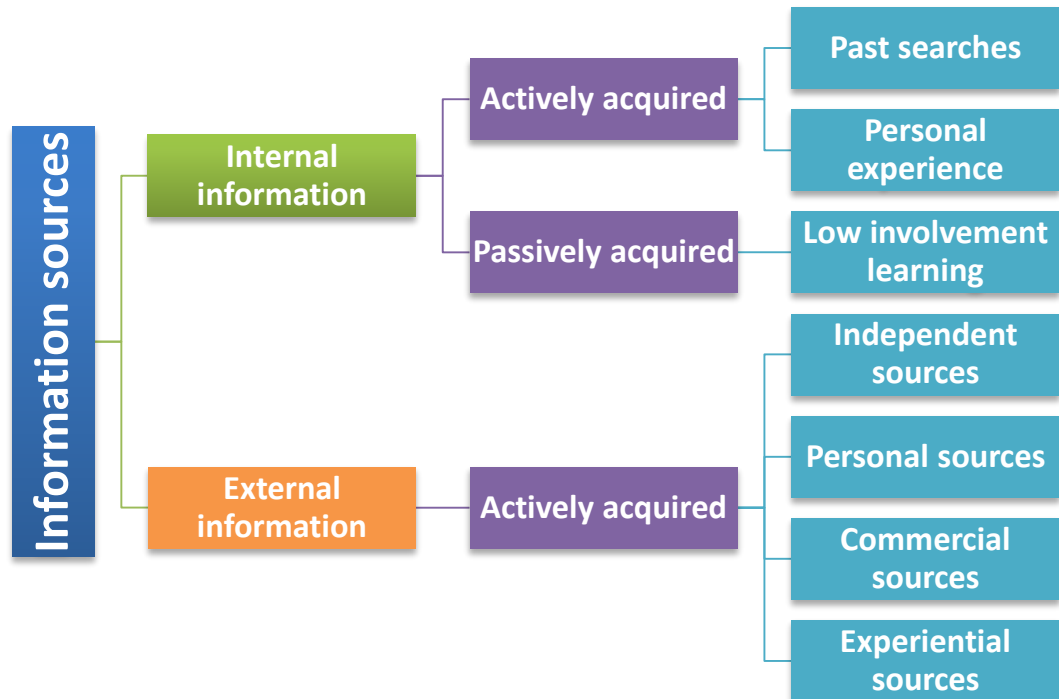


Figure 11. Information sources for a purchase decision

For example, when you want to see a movie, you may search your memory for past experiences at several cinemas (personal experience). To choose which movie to see, you may look for recommendation of a friend or a family member (personal sources) or read the movies rating and critical reviews websites (independent sources).

Consumers receive most information from commercial sources which are controlled by the marketers. Many consumers, however, are suspicious of the information from these sources, believing that most campaigns stress the product's attributes and ignore the faults. A survey found that 78 percent of consumers found recommendations from others to be the most credible sources for making purchase decision (Kotler and Armstrong 2010, p178). This explains the rising number of online ratings and reviews such as on Amazon, Ebay and Tripadvisor.

Appropriate alternatives

As more information is obtained, the consumer's awareness and knowledge of available brands increase. The information search should yield a few groups of alternatives. These alternatives are called **awareness set**, and sorted into three subcategories:

- The **inert set** is composed of those brands consumers are aware and have a neutral opinion. Consumers are open for positive information but inactive in seeking it.
- The **inept set** contains those brands consumers are aware of and view negatively.
- The **evoked set** (also called the consideration set) includes brands or product consumer will evaluate for the solution of a particular problem. These are consumer's most preferred alternatives (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010).

After gathering information and creating an evoked set of alternatives, the consumer engages in the next stage, evaluation of alternatives. The obtained information will be used to develop a set of attributes to compare the brands. These attributes are called **evaluative criteria**. Evaluative criteria are defined by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) as various dimensions, features or benefits a consumer looks for in solution for a problem.

Consumers associate evaluative criteria with desired benefits. For instance, consumers want fluoride (evaluative criteria) in their toothpaste to reduce cavities (desired benefits). Marketers often choose to communicate brand benefits rather than evaluative criteria since it is more specific and persuasive.

Evaluative criteria can differ in type, number and importance. The type of criteria consumers use in evaluating alternatives varies from tangible (cost, functions) to intangible factors (style, taste, feelings and brand image). Evaluative criteria and their assigned importance have great influences on consumer's decision (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010). For example, consumers who think car style is

more important than its cost tend to buy more often than those with the opposite importance ranking. Marketers aim to understand which consumers use to evaluate their brands so they can develop and communicate the brand benefits to the target consumers.

3.4.3 Purchase decision

In this stage, the consumers do not simply decide to purchase or not. There are three types of decision process that consumers might undertake.

Affective choice

The evaluation of products is primarily based on the immediate emotional response to the product or service. Consumers imagine or picture using the product or service and evaluate the feeling that this use will produce. Affective choice is likely to activate when the motive is consummatory rather than instrumental. **Consummatory motives** trigger behaviors that are pleasing to the individual involved. **Instrumental motives** activate behaviors designed to achieve a second goal (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010).

Marketers need to continuously study affect-based decisions because they require different strategies than the cognitive decisions. For decisions that are likely to be triggered by consummatory motives, marketers should design products and services that help consumers visualize how they feel during the product experience. For example, figure 10 shows an ad that encouraging consumers to imagine the pleasure they will derive from owning the product.

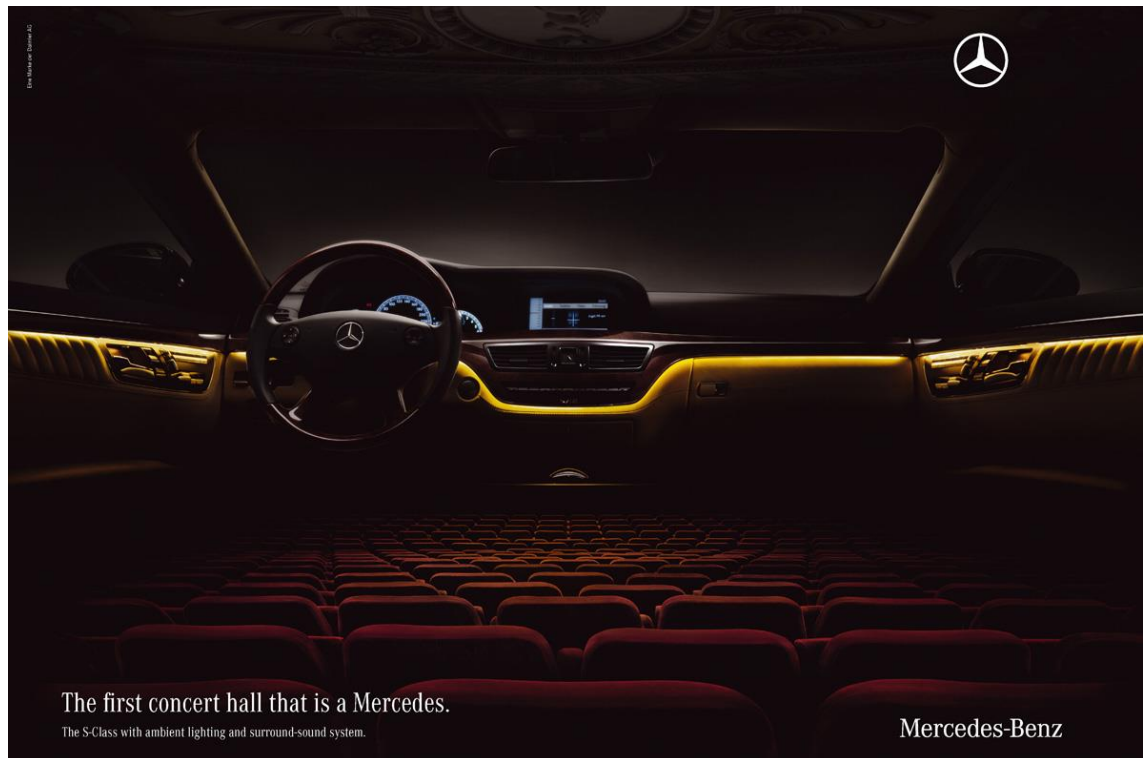


Figure 12. Mercedes-Benz ad helps consumer envision the experience of the lighting and sound system of a Mercedes.

Attitude-based choice

Attitude-based choice involves the use of general attitudes, impressions, intuitions and no attribute comparisons are made at the time of decision. The lower the motivation the make an ideal decision, the more likely an attitude-based choice will occur. This scenario can be related to in nominal and limited decision making. When information is difficult to find, consumers face time pressures, they have a tendency to make attitude-based choices. Figure 11 is an example of Pepsi diet ad that focuses on overall impression of the product and its users to encourage attitude-based choice (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2010).



Figure 13. Pepsi O print ad – example of encouraging attitude-based choice.

Attribute-based choice

Attribute-based choice requires the knowledge of specific attributes at the time of purchase and it involves attribute evaluations and comparisons. This process is much more effortful and time consuming than affective and attitude based choice. The decision also tends to be closer to the ideal choice. Consumers with high purchase involvement and motivation are more likely to make attribute-based choice (Hawkins/ Mothersbaugh 2010).

Marketers can apply this approach to brands that have important attribute based advantages but lack strong reputations or images (Percy et al 2002). This could be done by providing attribute-based comparisons in easy-to-process format and displayed on ads, packages, point-of-purchase displays, websites, etc.

3.4.4 Post purchase behavior

Post purchase behavior is the stage in which consumers take further action after purchase, based on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. When buying products, consumers expect certain outcomes from the purchase. How well these expect-

tations are met defines the satisfaction level of the consumer. When they recognize inconsistency between their expectations and performance, they tend to feel a tension called **cognitive dissonance**.

It is considered an important object for marketers to reduce any dissonance, doubts, or anxiety and make consumers believe that their decision was optimal. Post purchase letters sent by manufacturers and dissonance-reducing statements in instruction booklets may help consumers feel at ease with their purchase. Advertising that displays the product's superiority over competing brands or guarantees can help relieve the dissonance of consumers who already purchased the product (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010).

4 Research methodology

American Marketing Association defined marketing research as the function that links consumer and public to the marketer through information (Proctor 2003). Companies conduct market researches to gain insight of the customer buying behaviour and preferences in a specific market.

In order to cover major factors in the research, objectives or problems of the research have to be determined. Objectives are goals of decision maker that must be considered in order to conduct successful marketing research (Malhotra 2006). This is primarily crucial in the process as it allows researcher to focus efficiently and narrow down the research.

4.1 Data Collection

This research is carried out to examine impact of humour used in advertising on consumer's purchase decision. In other words, the researcher aims to find out effectiveness of humour as a persuasive technique reflects in consumer's purchase behaviour. For this purpose, the research requires two types of data: primary data and secondary data.

Secondary data are existing and available data collected by others. These data have already been collected for some other purpose (Saunders et al. 2009). Researchers are advised to start with examining secondary sources of information (Proctor 2003). Secondary data are useful not only for solving the research problem but also to better understand and explain the research problems. For example, in this case, the researcher initially gathered information, studies related to emotions as message appeals, consumer behaviour, and marketing communication. Secondary data was obtained from various sources such as books, journal articles and online data sources.

In contrast, primary data were collected by the researcher himself and for his own project. In situations where secondary data are not available and cannot answer the research questions, one has to acquire data that directly relevant to the problem. Despite the fact that collecting primary data consumes plenty of time and depends significantly to the willingness, capability and honesty of respondents, it provides prosperous information for researchers. The answer to research question Vietnamese consumer's buying behaviour towards humorous advertising is obtained mostly from primary data. This data was collected from empirical research results, transcripts of interviews and recorded observation. Following in this chapter is method choice to collect primary data.

4.2 Research method

The methodologies used in this research are qualitative and quantitative. Both methods can be used in one research and this choice of methodologies is called "multiple methods" research. This method is increasingly executed in data collection for business and management research (Saunders et al. 2009). The patterns displayed in quantitative research can be enriched with the addition of qualitative information (Proctor 2003). The combination of two methods provides a thorough understanding of the customer.

4.2.1 Qualitative method

Qualitative methods collect data concerned with describing meaning. These methods are exploratory in nature and answer how and why decisions are made and perceptions are formed. In marketing research, qualitative methods examine the attitudes, feelings and motivations of consumers (Proctor 2003). It helps the researcher to become familiar with the complexity of consumer activity and concern. The assumption behind qualitative method is that unstructured stimulus specifies the person's basic perceptions of the phenomenon and his or her reaction (Aaker 2003). Likewise, in this thesis, the researcher aims to define consumer's response and perception towards humorous advertising.

The method used to collect data is **in-depth interview**, which is conducted face-to-face with the respondent. In the interviews, the subject is explored in detail (Aaker 2003). In this study, the interviews aim to examine consumer's reaction to different types of humour used in food and beverage advertisements. The respondents were shown seven TV advertisements with different humorous appeal. Then they were guided by the interviewer and the questions to explain their reaction, opinion and degree of involvement in purchase decision. This method can elicit more detailed and useful information from consumers because group pressure is eliminated; the respondents are comfortable to reveal more honest feelings (McDaniel and Gates 2006).

4.2.2 Quantitative method

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative methods are those which emphasize on facts, numbers and frequencies. The respondents can represent opinions of the whole population. Quantitative research is mathematically oriented and involves statistical analysis such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The most common quantitative technique is perhaps "market research survey". It is also the chosen technique in this research. Essential in conducting a survey is questionnaire, a data-collection instrument that consists of various types of questions given to the respondent to acquire desired information (Proctor 2003).

In this study, self-administered questionnaire is chosen to collect data about consumer's buying behaviour. The questionnaire is designed to find out consumer's

pattern in making purchase decision and how they involve in the process with packaged food and beverage products or “yellow” goods. The questions collect demographic information and type of purchase decision from the respondents. A set of three print advertisements are presented and consumer will evaluate their reaction and possible purchase activities based on the given advertisements.

4.3 Empirical research implementation

The empirical research of this study gives the answer to the third research question: How is Vietnamese consumer purchase decision influenced by humorous advertisement? As mentioned in the previous chapter, the self-administered questionnaires collect and analyse data to answer the sub question: How does Vietnamese consumer make purchase decision with packaged food and beverage products or “yellow” goods? (1) The qualitative method, in-depth interview take an exploratory approach and seek insights into Vietnamese consumer’s reactions and opinions about different types of humour used in advertisements (2).

4.3.1 Self-administered questionnaires

Self-administered questionnaires were printed and distributed in a convenience store in Hanoi, Vietnam. The target population was selected by random sampling. At the beginning, the questionnaires was created with Webropol and intended to be tested by a small group of respondents. The feedbacks reveal limitation of online survey in approaching the appropriate population. According to the respondents, a majority of mothers and women in households was hard to be reached because not many of them used the Internet or were willing to participate online. Therefore, the questionnaires were modified to suit a more traditional method, printed questionnaires. The chosen location (convenience store) also increases the possibilities of suitable population for the study.

The survey contained 14 questions with different types of questions: closed-ended, open-ended, and dichotomous. Several questions at the beginning were related to gender, marital status and children in household to collect information about respondents’ demographics. The next three questions asked respondents about their frequency, information sources and decisions in shopping for packaged food and beverage. Afterwards, three print advertisements from a campaign

of Vinamilk, a Vietnamese dairy brand were presented. The respondents were asked to mark their evaluation of the advertisements and how the advertisements affected their purchase activities.



Figure 14. Vinamilk print advertisements

4.3.2 In-depth interviews

Seven humorous advertisements were shown to the respondents individually. The advertisements were examples of seven types of humour: comparison, exaggeration, personification, surprise, pun, sarcasm and silliness. The respondent was asked to express their ideas about each advertisement or about the ones he or she liked. There was no particular order or rules, the respondent is free to talk and reveal his or her thought freely. The guiding question was given to the interviewer to drive the conversation revolve around the topic and ensure that the interview attained sufficient and necessary information for the purpose set out in the study. The interviewer will also suggested and initiated the flow of the conversation, encouraged the respondent to be active in exchanging ideas and sharing perspective.

5 Data analysis

In this chapter, data collected from questionnaires and in-depth interview will be presented and analysed according to different topics in theoretical framework and research questions.

5.1 Vietnamese consumer

The questionnaires were available at the convenience store for one day. At the end of the day, 35 responses were collected and no disqualified response. Most respondents participated in the survey were women (24 in 35). With the marital status question, 62% of the respondents (22) are married (with or without children). No respondents marked "Other" in this question. The majority of the women took part in the survey are married (71%) while there were more single than married male respondents (54% and 46%). There were no respondents who are single and have children.

Respondents	Women		Men	
Total	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	24	68%	11	32%
Marital status				
Single	7	29%	6	54%
Married with no children	7	29%	2	18%
Married with children	10	42%	3	28%

Table 2. Demographics of respondents

5.2 Consumer purchase behaviour

The next question aimed to find out consumer's frequency in buying packaged food and beverages product. With a daily necessity product, there was no surprise that no one marked "never". The majority of the respondents purchase packaged food and beverage products 1-3 times per week (13 in 35) and 4-5 times per week (11 in 35). The third largest group in this question purchase these products about once in two weeks (6 in 35). Finally, 9% of the respondent purchase packaged food and beverage every day and 6% purchase about once per month.

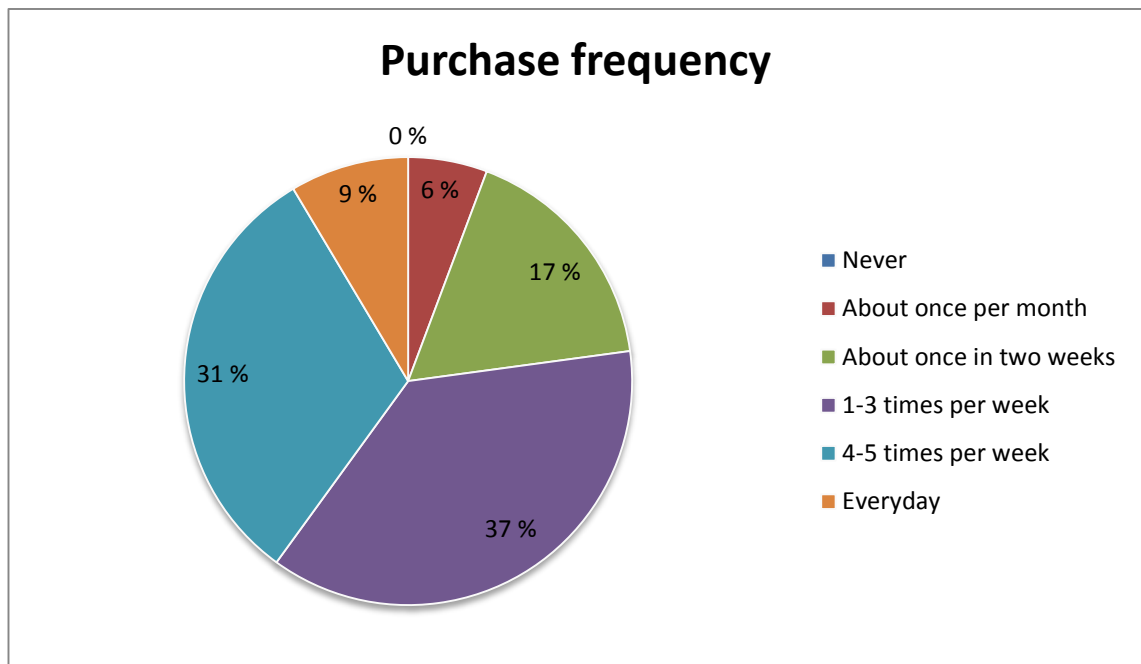


Figure 15. Consumer's purchase frequency

In question 5, respondents are asked to choose their source of information when making decision in purchasing packaged food and beverage. The choice includes personal, commercial, independent sources of information. Most respondents obtain information from advertisements, brand's websites, packaging and store displays (13 in 35). The second information source that the respondents used in purchase decision process is their own experience (10 in 35). Seven in 35 respondents get information by receiving recommendations from family or friends. Finally, the independent sources like Internet searches and rating forums are not so popular in packaged food and beverage products. Five respondents use these sources in their decisions.

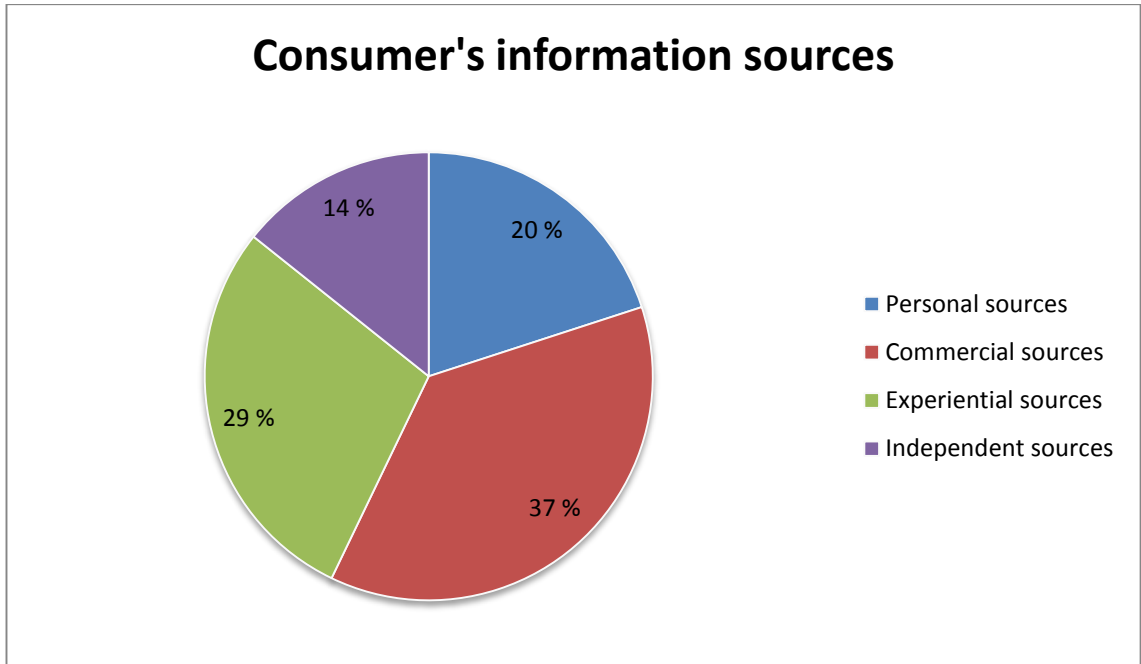


Figure 16. Consumer's information sources

Question 6 required the respondent to describe their purchase decision when shopping for packaged food and beverages by their ratings of the given statement. There are 8 statements that describe 3 types of purchase decisions mentioned in the theoretical study: affective choice, attitude-based choice and attribute-based choice. The table below displays the number of responses of each statement.

	Just like me	A lot like me	Some-what like me	Not much like me	Not at all like me
The product make me feel good	9	13	3	2	8
The advertising was appealing to me	12	9	5	4	5
I like promotion/ discounts/ deals/ coupons	15	8	2	3	7

I usually do not have much time to consider	11	6	1	8	9
The packaging/ displays caught my attention	10	11	1	7	6
I always have my own criteria (prices, preference...)	7	3	8	10	7
I often collect as much information as possible before purchase (nutrients data, preservatives, benefits...)	6	5	0	7	17
I make complex evaluations before buying	5	7	0	8	15

Table 4. Response count of purchase decision question

In table 3, the first two statements describe the affective choice. Statements number 3, 4 and 5 refer to attitude-based choice and the last three define consumers with attribute-based choice. The numbers of responses are calculated by percentages and displayed in the chart below. From this chart, it can be seen that consumers are more likely to make affective choice and attitude-based choice than attribute-based choice when shopping for packaged food and beverage products.

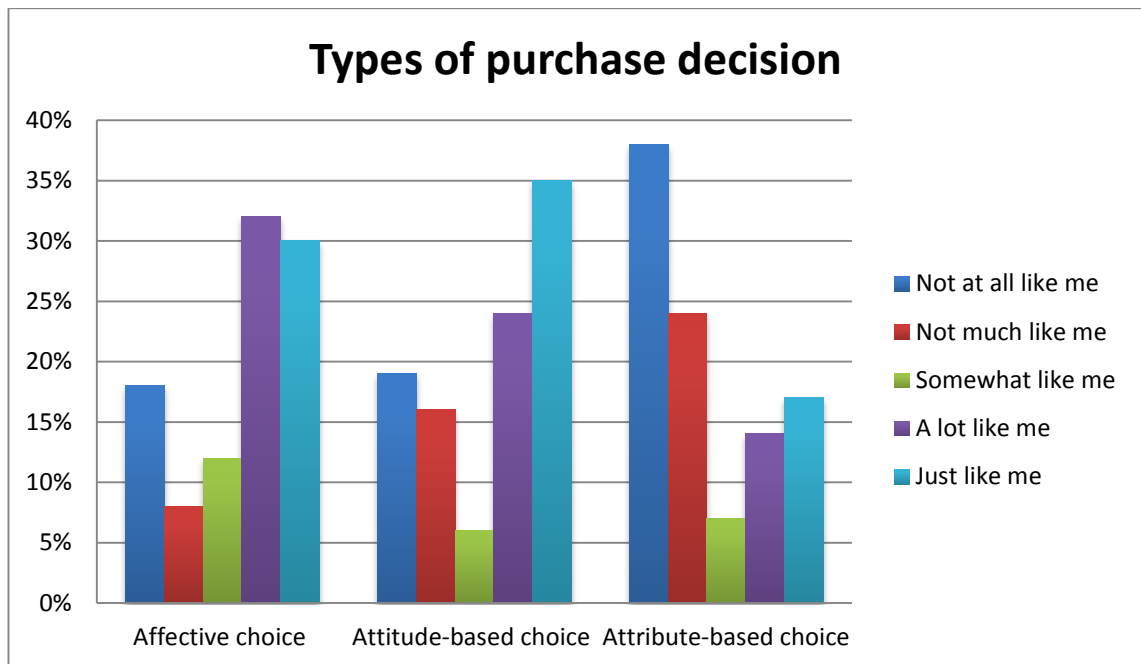


Figure 17. Types of purchase decision

5.3 Consumer decision process

In this section of the questionnaires, humorous print advertisements from a campaign of Vinamilk are shown to the respondents. These advertisements aimed to express the brand's attributes such as freshness, convenience and being a product for everyone. Respondents are asked to evaluate how these advertisements describe the product or how well the message is perceived by audiences. The majority of respondents (34%) thought that the product was well described; 10% of the respondents marked the advertisements were average in communicating the attributes. Eight in 35 respondents gave the highest evaluation "very well" and 14% thought they were "bad" and "very bad"- the message was unclear and difficult to understand.

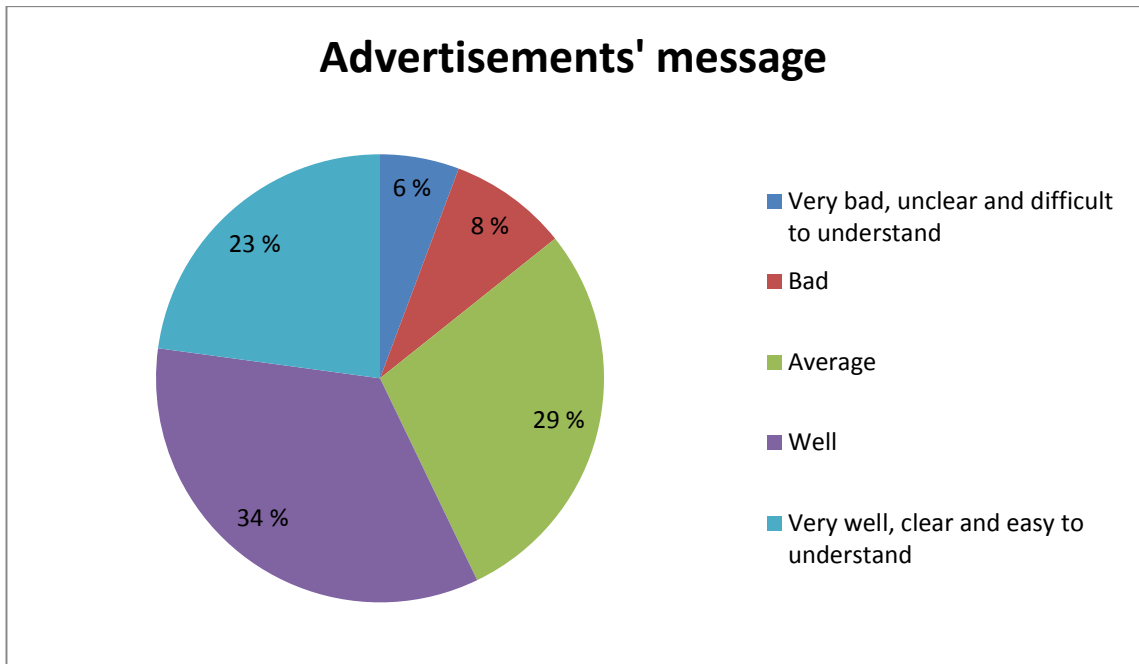


Figure 18. Evaluation of humorous advertisement's message

The next question required the respondents to answer whether or not they found the advertisements funny or amusing. There is an optional open-ended question for those who chose "No". There were 21 in 35 respondents (60%) answered "yes" and 14 respondents (40%) answered "No". However, there was no reason given for the open-ended question.

Question number 9 started to investigate how consumers involve in purchase or repurchase the product based solely on the advertisements. This question asked the respondent if they have purchased the product. If one has bought the product in the past, they would proceed to question 11. Question 10 is designed to find out how likely the respondent consider this product with his/her current choice.

There were 32 respondents who have purchased the product and only three have other product choices. One of them explained in the open-ended question that her family has another favorite brand. Two in these three respondents will "most likely" to consider this product and one will "definitely not" consider. The last three questions examined how the advertisements affect consumer's involvement in purchase decision. Respondents will evaluate their possibility of initiating purchase activities based on the given advertisements. It can be seen from the graph that the majority of the respondents would "most likely" buy the product (12 in 35)

and recommend to others (10 in 35). However, the highest number of respondents would “not likely” to find information about the product (13 in 35). And there is a second biggest group that “definitely will” find information.

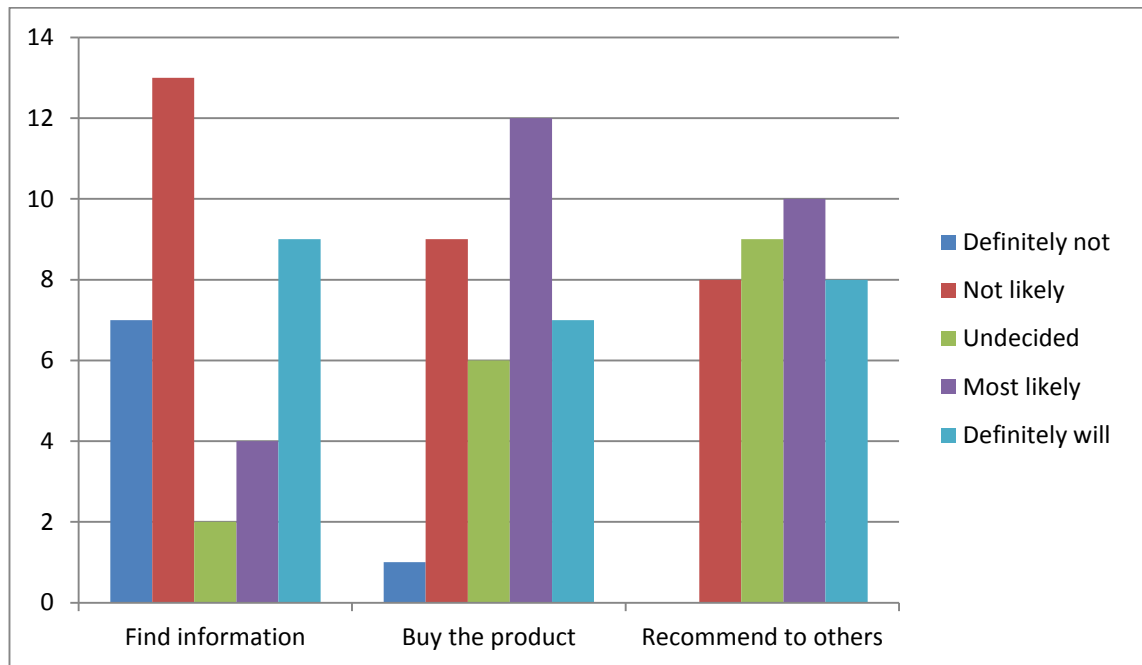


Figure 19. Consumer’s involvement in purchase decision

5.4 Impact of different types of humor

There were three respondents in the in-depth interviews. In this study, names of the respondents are not published according to their requests. The first respondents were a married woman, mother of two children and a business owner. The second interview was conducted with a single woman, recently graduated and working as an accountant. The last respondent was a man who is a university student. The respondents were shown seven TV commercials. After watching, with the guiding questions of the interviewer, they expressed their opinions, described their feelings and reactions.

5.4.1 Comparison

The advertisement used to demonstrate this type of humor is from KFC Vietnam. In this TV commercial, a couple is preparing to have their dinner in a fine dining

restaurant. They were surprised by how small the portion of their meal. Later, they gladly enjoy their big and delicious “Big and Juicy” order in KFC.

All respondents were able to tell the message of the commercial and found it quite amusing. A respondent described it as funny but “not the kind that you laugh out loud”. Humorous comparison was perceived as a common tactic that they all saw a lot on TV since it can easily deliver the message of the product or campaign. From a mother’s perspective, this type of humor can reach many audiences because the message is introduced in a straight forward way. She shared that the ability to deliver the message is very important because consumer needs to be provided information not only laughing at the humor used in advertisements. The brand might be recalled when there is a need. Other two younger respondents have relatively same opinions about comparison humor. The commercial might deliver a distorted image of reality and the message can be perceived as not credible. On the other hand, for products like fast food, snacks or beer, this type of humor can be used but not so entertaining.

5.4.2 Exaggeration

Example of exaggeration humor used in the interview is a TV commercial from Oreo. Two people in a library argue about which part of an oreo is better, cookie or cream. The argument turns into a disastrous whisper battle.

The commercial were perceived by the respondents as very entertaining because it is used in many comedic television shows. However, all respondents pointed out that the commercial does not describe features of the brand Oreo or its product. The university student expressed that this commercial might made him pay more attention to the product. In contrast, two women respondents thought that the commercial does not affect their purchase decision because it is just purely entertaining. They all find this type of humor will be welcomed by different audiences.

5.4.3 Personification

A Vietnamese brand's commercial - Vinamilk is used in the interview. The commercial starts with a boy sipping his milk carton on a bench and the sound of straw tickles the cow sitting next to him. The cow laughs so hard that it fell off the bench.

The commercial was aired on Vietnamese TV and all respondents recognized the brand because it is very popular. They all shared that they have consumed Vinamilk products. This commercial seemed to execute the personification used in most other Vinamilk commercials. This type of humor works better than the comparison humor because it attracts attention by the silliness and is unexpected. The male respondent thought that it might work better for children. For him, the humor is close to humor of a cartoon and he did not find it funny. Overall, personification can deliver great entertainment value but the effectiveness of the message is quite vague. To affect the buying behavior, only personification humor could not achieve it but it can succeed in drawing attention and making the brand memorable.

5.4.4 Surprise

Surprise humor is demonstrated by a commercial of Heineken. In the super market, the man saw an attractive woman trying to reach the beer pack in the top shelf. He came to help but then realize it is the last pack so he decided to keep it for himself.

This commercial was very popular when aired in Vietnam. Heineken has many campaigns that express the brand's attractiveness to men. This commercial succeeds in building brand's attribute. Surprise can be very effective in making the brand memorable because of its unexpected nature. It is what makes commercials viral among audiences. However, like personification it cannot focus on delivering information of product. Therefore, it is used by many big brands to build consumer's loyalty and encourage repurchase. There are two different opinions

about surprise. One respondent thought the commercial does not have much impact on consumer decision because he is distracted from product by the humor. From another opinion, a success surprise humor used in advertising can make the consumer recall the brand and make it stand out from the shelves.

5.4.5 Pun

The commercial introduces a new product of Cheez it called Zingz. The cheese “character” uses “Zingz” in different adjective (amazing, mesmerizing...) and went too far.

All three respondents are confused by the commercial’s message. One thought that English is not her mother tongue so it is difficult to understand the pun. Another idea is pun itself could be hard to understand and deliver the humor for every audience. With a commercial failed to communicate with consumer, the product will easily be forgotten and have no impact on initiating decision making process. One suggests that pun has to be carefully designed with wit to deliver or emphasize a message. However, another respondent thought that with a humor that is not for everyone, the use of it cannot achieve the effectiveness like other types.

5.4.6 Sarcasm

Cheetos commercial: The man is frustrated because of the woman and the cheetah playing a monotone song. The man complains as if they do not have any other song and they play the same song in a higher note.

Similar to pun humor, this commercial is not well received by the respondents. One respondent said that it seemed to be pointless since she could not get the humor in this commercial and there was little concentration on the product. It might work on the one that familiar with the brand but it will soon be forgotten by others who came across a new product. Sarcasm is still quite rarely used in commercials targeted at Vietnamese consumers so the respondents think this type of

humor is quite tasteless. Moreover, one thought that it can possibly offend someone.

5.4.7 Silliness

Doritos commercial: The daughter asks the father to play dressing up as princess with her but he is about to go out with his friends. The daughter then bribes him with a bag of Doritos so he dresses up and let her put makeup on him. The whole group eventually wears long gowns and makeup too.

This commercial made all respondents laugh and one said that it is more like a comedic situation than a commercial. The male respondent believed that if a commercial succeeds in making him laugh, he sure will remember the product and recall the commercial when he sees the product. Especially with a snack product, the product advertised can achieve a slight edge among the other brands. Another respondent criticized this type of humor as entertaining but only for a short time; she might be bored with it when watching it for several times more. Silliness is used more in USA's TV and it is more appropriate for consumers in United States. For Vietnamese consumer, silly commercial can be perceived as ridiculous. Unlike sarcasm and pun, it is easy to understand but it can be seen as shallow and have little effect on decision making.

6 Discussion

In this chapter, the author will give the summary of the research. Recommendations and suggestions for future research will be given.

6.1 Summary

The purpose of this research is to find out the impact of humorous advertising on consumer's purchase decision. Two topics that need to be investigated are humor used in advertising and consumer's purchase decision. There have been many research studies humor as an appeal used in advertising but very few study the persuasion of power on consumer's decision. The thesis approached theories

and researches about two topics and use the empirical research to analyze the correlation between the two to find out the impacts. Empirical research is targeted at Vietnamese consumer and the impact of humor on Vietnamese consumer's decision making. The thesis aimed to answer three research questions:

1. How does consumer make purchase decision?
2. What is humor in advertising?
 - *What is humor?*
 - *What is the effect of humor?*
3. How is Vietnamese consumer purchase decision influenced by humorous advertisement?
 - *How does Vietnamese consumer make purchase decision with packaged food and beverage products or "yellow" goods?*
 - *What is the impact of different types of humour on Vietnamese consumer's buying decision?*

To answer question 1, the theoretical study explores different consumer buying behavior and the stages that consumer undertake to come to a purchase decision. There are four types of consumer buying behavior determined by the differences of brands and consumer's involvement in making decisions – Variety seeking buying behavior, complex buying behavior, dissonance reducing behavior and habitual buying behavior. Consumer's involvement and the degree of risk in purchasing the product create three different type of consumer's decision – nominal, limited and extended decision. The process of consumer's decision making consists of five stages, not all type of decisions undertake all the stages and in a pre-determined order.

To answer question 2 and its two sub questions, definition and effects of humor are presented by collecting from previous study about humor. Humor is such an elusive concept that many scholars have different classification of humor. In this thesis, the author chose the seven types of humor by Catanescu & Tom (2001). According to the ELM model, humor is appropriate for "yellow good" which consists of snack foods, dessert, beer, alcohol and tobacco products.

Empirical data is collected using the “multiple method”, a combination of quantitative and qualitative method. The author executed self-administered questionnaires to find out Vietnamese consumer’s pattern in buying packaged food and beverage products (more specifically “yellow good”). The in-depth interview aimed to find out Vietnamese consumer’s opinion, reaction and how humor influences their buying decision.

6.2 Conclusion

With packaged food and beverage products or “yellow good”, consumers are likely to undertake the nominal decision making and limited decision making since this type consists of low involvement product. This means these products have little risk in buying. In addition, these types of product have significant differences among the brands, each with its own attributes and competitive advantage. Therefore, the consumers of “yellow goods” are variety seeking buyers. However, when the product requires low involvement and consumers are committed to a specific brand (brand loyalty); they can become habitual buyers and repurchase with almost automatic decisions.

By analyzing the data collected by the questionnaires, consumers of packaged food and beverages are dominantly woman. These products are also consumed frequently on a weekly basis (question 2). Purchasing low involvement product, Vietnamese consumers rely mostly on commercial information source includes advertisements, websites, packaging and displays. This information is made available for consumers by commercial entity and does not require much effort to obtain. Most Vietnamese consumers in the survey take affective choice and attitude based choice when shopping for packaged food and beverage products. This means that Vietnamese consumers decide to purchase based on consummatory motives that make them “feel good”, their attitudes, impressions and intuitions rather than comparing product’s attribute.

A set of three print advertising of Vinamilk, a dairy brand is given to determine its influence on Vietnamese consumer’s decision making process. Majority of consumers in the survey most likely to make the buying decision and recommend to

other based on the advertisement. The advertised brand – Vinamilk is a national popular and strong dairy brand that has been leading the market. Most Vietnamese consumers have already experienced the brand and consumed the product. Additionally, milk is also a daily necessity product so milk buyers tend to stick to their usual choice. Therefore there is very little motivation in finding information about the product. The advertisements also use humor to focus on building a strong image of the brand and reduce dissonance in post purchase stage, make the consumer more confident in their purchase decision.

Among seven types of humor, personification, surprise, silliness and exaggeration is evaluated to have the most entertaining value. Advertisements successfully executed these types of humor can achieve audience attention, make the message viral, the product memorable and differentiate from many competitor brands. However, humor can easily distract audience from delivering product information or the main message. Effectiveness of these types of humor might sound tempting but there is a thin line between amusement and ridiculousness. Personification usually is suitable for children's product since its nature is closed to children's animations or movies.

The other types of humor such as pun, sarcasm and comparison are perceived by consumers not as entertaining. The ability to differentiate advertised brand and product is not so significant compare to the humor types mentioned above. However they can focus on delivering message and product information. Sarcasm is a humor type that needs to be used with caution because it can easily offending an individual or a group of audience. Pun is the least used in commercials aired on Vietnamese TV and may not be welcomed by majority of consumers. "Yellow good" contains products that have a various target customers In order to achieve great impact, humorous advertising should be able to communicate to different consumers. Vietnamese consumers still expect credible information about the product from advertisements but humorous advertisement is considered not to be the dependable source.

To conclude, the impact of humor on consumer's purchase decision also depends on how involved or attached the consumer is to the product. With new product, humorous advertising can draw consumer attention and access consumer's long

term memory. Vietnamese consumers in this study stated that with humorous advertising, an aligning campaign and product placement, they most likely would be able to recall the product. With products that are already familiar to consumer, humor has relatively little impact on encouraging repurchases but is appropriate tactic to build brand's image and gain consumer's fondness.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

The scale of the research is quite limited because of the study's limited resources. This reveal opportunities for future research to examine the impact of other types of humor such as situational, blue humor, black humor or other classification humor in other previous studies. Research methods used in this study can also be conducted to explore the impact of other emotional appeals in advertising. More thorough insights can be drawn from in-depth interview by investing more resources such human resources and facilities to support the interviews. Similar study could also conduct focus group and record devices for better observation of the respondents.

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Figures

Figure 1. Example of black humor

Figure 2. Example of unexpected and situation humor

Figure 3. What types of advertising messages resonate most with you? - Nielsen

Figure 4. Overall model of consumer behavior (Hawkins/ Mothersbaugh 2010)

Figure 5. Four types of buying behavior

Figure 6. Involvement and types of decision making

Figure 7. Consumer decision process

Figure 8. Problem recognition: Shifts in actual or ideal states

Figure 9. A brand's attempt to cause consumer to realize the problem of bad smell in cat's litter boxes (inactive problem)

Figure 10. Redbull ad assumes that consumers are aware of the problem (active problem) and focuses on brand's unique attribute.

Figure 11. Information sources for a purchase decision

Figure 12. Mercedes-Benz ad helps consumer envision the experience of the lighting and sound system of a Mercedes.

Figure 13. Pepsi O print ad – example of encouraging attitude-based choice.

Figure 14. Vinamilk print advertisements

Charts

Figure 15. Consumer's purchase frequency

Figure 16. Consumer's information sources

Figure 17. Types of purchase decision

Figure 18. Evaluation of humorous advertisement's message

Figure 19. Consumer's involvement in purchase decision

Tables

Table 1. The Product Color Matrix (PCM) and Prototype Products

Table 2. Demographics of respondents

Table 3. Response count of purchase decision question

Appendix

1. What is your gender?

- Male Female

2. What is your marital status?

- Single Married Other

3. Do you have children?

- Yes No

4. How often do you purchase packaged food and beverages (F&B) in a week?

- Never
- Everyday
- 2-3 times per week
- 4-5 times per week
- Once
- Once in two week

5. How do you obtain information about a packaged F&B product?

- Recommendations from family, friends
- Advertisements, websites, packaging, displays
- Media (Internet searches, consumer rating/ reviews)
- Product trial, personal experience

6. How do you make your purchase decision when shopping for packaged F&B?

Please check the box that indicates how descriptive the statement is about your purchase decisions.

	Just like me	A lot like me	Some-what like me	Not much like me	Not at all like me
The product make me feel good					
The advertising was appealing to me					
I like promotion/ discounts/ deals/ coupons					
I usually do not have much time to consider					
The packaging/ displays caught my attention					
I always have my own criteria (prices, preference...)					
I often collect as much information as possible before purchase (nutrients data, preservatives, benefits...)					
I make complex evaluations before buying					

Please have a look at the advertisements below.



7. How did these advertisements describe the product?

- Very bad, it is unclear and difficult to understand
- Bad
- Average
- Well
- Very well, it is clear and easy to understand

8. Do you find these advertisements amusing/ funny?

- Yes
- No

If you chose "No", can you briefly give the reason?

9. Have you purchase this product?

- Yes (please proceed to question 11)
- No

If you chose "No", can you briefly give the reason?

10. Based on these advertisements, do you think you will consider or compare this product with your current choices?

Definitely not Not likely Undecided Most likely Definitely will

11. Will you find information about the product based on these advertisements?

Definitely not Not likely Undecided Most likely Definitely will

12. Will you buy the product, based solely on these advertisements?

Definitely not Not likely Undecided Most likely Definitely will

13. Will you tell someone else about this product?

Definitely not Not likely Undecided Most likely Definitely will

TV advertisements used in in-depth interviews

KFC (**comparison**) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=neB1-1_kU0U

A couple is surprised by how small the portion of their order in a restaurant. Later, they gladly enjoy a big and delicious order in KFC.

Oreo (**exaggeration**) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIDaX0eMeCilk>

Two people in a library argue about which part of an oreo is better, cookie or cream. The argument turns into a disastrous battle.

Vinamilk (**personification**) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duD95Xqz3-8>

A boy is sipping his milk carton on a bench and the sound of the straw tickle the cow sitting next to him.

Heineken (**surprise**) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYwT6kXWvZc>

In the supermarket, the man saw an attractive woman trying to reach the beer pack in the top shelf. He came to help but then realize it is the last pack so he decided to keep it for himself.

Cheez it Zingz (**pun**) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRK49XmGruQ>

The cheese “character” uses “Zingz” in different adjective (amazing, mesmerizing...) and went too far.

Cheetos (**sarcasm**) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_5u8JrUgXE

The man is frustrated because of the woman and the cheetah playing a monotone song. The man complains as if they do not have any other song and they play the same song in a higher note.

Doritos (**silliness**) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmhhbJIBoNs>

The daughter ask the father to play dressing up as princess with her but he is about to go out with his friends. The daughter then bribes him with a bag of Doritos so he dresses up and let her put makeup on him. The whole group eventually wears long gowns and makeup too.

Guiding questions

1. What would you say is the message of the ads?
2. How do you feel about the ads? Is it funny /entertaining/ boring/ offensive/ annoying...?
3. Is the humor used in the ads appropriate for the products? Why?
4. Which advertisement caught your attention? Which one do you enjoy the most?
5. Which product are you most likely to buy? Why?
6. Do you think the advertisement will be welcomed among other audiences?
7. Will you be able to remember this advertisement or this product after today?
8. If you have familiar with the product advertised, does the product alter your opinions or make you involve in purchase decision?
9. Can you describe or give some ideas about an appropriate advertisement for packaged food and product? What do you wish to see?
10. Do you think the message about the product advertised is credible?