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## **Advertising Styles' Impact on Attention in Pakistan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The topic was selected after giving consideration to the modern environment and the use of media by advertisers for attention purposes of their products. It was also observed that the number of channels especially in the electronic media have also geometrically increased over the last two decades. It is now becoming difficult for advertisers to get the attention of their products in the minds of their viewers. The methodology used in the research was focus group and ads of different products were shown to them which included humorous and serious appeals. As the literature review revealed that these two types of appeals have significant difference when measuring attention between humorous and serious advertisements. At the end of the research it was established that there is a significant difference between the attention of humorous and serious appeals. Initially the idea was taken form a research conducted in Sweden. Same parameters were analyzed in Pakistan. We concluded that the reaction of two different societies have almost the same response for humorous and serious advertising appeals.

**JEL. Classification:** M30; M31; M37

**Key words:** Humorous Appeals, Serious Appeals, Attention

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

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The evolution of advertisement dates back into the ancient times. Societies have used symbols, criers and pictorial signs to attract product users. Over centuries these elements were used for promoting products. Definitely in the early ages they were handmade and were produced at limited scale. In the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century Johann Gutenberg in Germany developed the first printing press, which helped advertisers to print handbills at mass scale to be distributed across the country. Later on this phenomenon gained strength and was used more intensively for promotional purposes. Along with the development of society and technology advertising also evolved with time. In September 1888 Kodak printed its advertisement in the news paper. From this point onwards advertising gained momentum and in today's modern environment no company can dream to communicate its message without use of advertising.

Advertisements in today's modern environment have become one of the major sources of communication between the manufacturer and the user of products. Any company can not dream to be a well known brand unless it invests in promotional activities, which for consumer markets have been dominated by advertisements. Use of any other source of promotion is normally not considered feasible for such markets. This may be due to the fact that personal selling requires higher investments than use of mass media vehicles.

In today's world without use of advertising the message to the buyers can not be delivered by the advertisers or advertising agency. Perhaps this may be because of the globalization and availability of hundreds of channels for the viewers of this modern era. Previously there were very few channels which use to operate for a specific society. There were fewer choices available in terms of channel or programs. In today's media dominated modern global society, the varieties along with the channels have also increased. Today we have news, entertainment, movie and music channels available in hundreds of numbers.

In today's busy environment, audience are now moving from monochromic time use towards polychromic time use that means people today are not willing to give their precious time to anything else than to what they want to see at a given time. This is exaggerated when in each category of channel immense variety is available. At commercial break time audience normally browse to other channels even if they are watching their favorite show on any given channel. This attitude has posed several challenges to the communicators of a given market for gaining the attention of their target market in order to make their message through. Advertising agencies have developed numerous ways to get the attention of their target audience in these cluttered bulldozed commercials on media channels. What may be attractive to one member in a given society may be an irritating and unacceptable appeal to another member of the same target audience. In order to avoid ethical lapse in advertisements, advertising agencies find it difficult to be more creative than what is accepted in a given society. This requires higher standards of creativity for developing ads which are appealing to given target market.

Developing serious or comic messages to be carried out on different media vehicles is a decision which requires close scrutiny and deep analysis of the product personality, characteristics of the target audience and desirability of the advertisers. To match and agree all three on one single idea is a difficult goal to achieve. It becomes even more difficult when budgets allocated to such activities run into millions of dollars and the investors banks heavily on these activities for the return on their investment.

There have been many researchers which have revealed various behaviors related to attention of advertising messages targeted towards a specific audience for having an impact on them using

different exhibition styles of advertising appeals. These researches have revealed varied responses from the target audience.

The objective of this research is to establish whether there is a significant difference between the attention of products when serious and comic appeals are used for the audience of television in Pakistan. We would be selecting one target market for our research so that we can provide a preliminary data for researchers to further study the difference between the two advertising appeals.

The research is focused on identifying the significant difference between attentions of products. It will cover the general as well as focused area of the research problem which is whether there is a difference between attentions of viewers when various advertising appeals are used. In accordance with the studies conducted by Bovee, Thill, Dovel, and Wood (1995); Fugate (1998); Olsson and Larsson (2005); and Stern (1996), we conducted research upon the following problem:

- Humor attracts attention.

Key research question is humorous ads have higher attention than serious ads.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Advertising**

It is the paid, non-personal communication of information about products or ideas by an identified sponsor through the mass media in an effort to persuade or influence behavior (Bovee, Thill, Dovel, and Wood 1995).

Advertisements in the modern era have become one of the most important tool through which marketers of products are converting suspects to advocates. So for any company wanting higher sales and share in the market advertisements play a pivotal role in achieving their financial and commercial objectives. In companies today the highest allocation to expense is given to promotional activities.

There are various types and tools of advertisements that are being used by companies. It is a very important aspect that must be considered by organization while selecting a vehicle for advertisements. According to Bovee, Thill, Dovel, and Wood (1995) there are basically five types of advertisements: Target Audience, Geographic Area, *Media, purpose*, Product and non product advertisements, Commercial and non commercial advertisements

### **2.2 Types of Appeals**

Following are the types of the appeals: Logical appeal, Emotional appeal, Price or value appeal, Quality appeal, Star appeal and testimonials, Ego appeals, Fear or anger appeal, Sensory appeal, Sex, Love and social acceptance appeal.

#### **2.2.1 Subliminal Messages**

It includes ads in which the decoding is supposed to happen subconsciously through the use of visual symbols, sub-audio messages, or visual messages shown for a very brief period.

### **2.2.2. Novelty appeals**

A number of advertisers in recent years have tried to catch the audience's attention by creating ads that are really strange

Considering the above selling styles and appeals, we can develop serious or humorous messages. Humorous messages can be used for any type of appeal depending upon the social and cultural dynamics of the audience. This research aims to identify the use of humor in achieving any of the above appeal type. We also would like to research the difference in impact on the audience using serious Vs humorous appeals.

It is believed that humor on most occasions is considered to be an execution style through which the objective for achieving any type of appeal can be exposed. Humor also has many different types of approaches. We will now examine the various types of humor as explained by researchers and scholars of advertisements.

### **2.3 Dimensions of Humor**

According to Fugate (1998), the frequency with which humor appears and the enthusiasm of its supporters is not always justified by empirical measurement of results. According to him the simpler dimension gives way to more complex understanding of humor when simple normal relationships are researched upon. Serious studies have revealed that the nature of the product, the medium, target audience factors, the communication goal, the type of message and the placement of the message all influence cognitive, affective and behavioral responses of consumers in the market place. Controlling these factors is a small portion of understanding what humor is and what it is not. According to him humor is divided into six distinct humor types.

- Humor production
- A sense of playfulness
- The ability to use to achieve social goals
- Personal recognition of humor
- Appreciation of humor
- Use of humor as an adaptive mechanism

When advertisers or the advertising agency is using humorous execution style it seems that they are trying to achieve four or five above factors. According to Fugate "Advertising humor refers primarily to the ability of audiences to respond positively when one or others are portrayed in a playful manner". In order to obtain the attention this according to him is a sensory field. It has been researched that there is a positive relationship between humor and attention as audience normally find it easy to be attentive to the message if it is exposed in a playful manner. It is also suggested that humor may be used in sales presentations, educational settings, training sessions, after dinner speeches and in the advertising of many different types of products.

Stern (1996) claims individual and cross-cultural differences also may explain what is humorous and what is not. It is important to understand by the advertiser that the humor should not divert attention from the message; further more we should attempt to have lighter humorous messages rather than gross humor. It should also be ensured that humor is integrated with the message and it does not humiliate the customer.

Stern claims that Bergson's Theory of Laughter provides the basis for classifying comedy into four types that is verbal / physical and romantic / satiric.

Another research conducted by Catanescu and Tom (2001) has defined use of humor in advertisements and has also explained the various types of humor used by advertisers. Initially they explained five categories of humor namely exaggeration, pun, sarcasm, silliness and surprise. Later on they added two more categories comparison and personification. In total there are seven categories which were explained by them.

#### **2.4 Conceptualization-Benefits of Humor**

Based upon the literature review and the theory given by Fugate (1998) and Stern (1996), the humor is divided into four types which are verbal / physical and romantic / satiric. We would try to examine the role of humor in attention of a product.

#### **2.5 Conceptualization-Types of Humor**

Based upon the literature review we will try to find out how the various types of humor explained by Bovee, Thill, Dovel and Wood (1995); Catanescu and Tom (2001); Fugate (1998); and Stern (1996) is used by advertisers. The categorization done by them is: Comparison, Personification, Exaggeration, Pun, Silliness, Surprise and Sarcasm. According to Reick, sarcastic comments or situations are classified as silliness. In Catanescu and Tom's (2001) study, however, sarcasm is a separate category including blatant ironic responses or situation.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research is conducted by using secondary and primary data. As the information available on the topic is related to the Western society, where the cultural and social norms are different, therefore it was appropriate to conduct a primary research on Pakistani society in order to check whether it has the same impact in said society. There are three different types of research which according to Eriksson and Wiedersheim - Paul (1997) and Kumar (1996) we have chosen the Exploratory Research, Descriptive Research and Explanatory Research, where the purpose can be explored, described, or explained.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

There are two types of research approach Qualitative and Quantitative Research. We will be conducting qualitative research as our purpose is to measure the benefit of using humorous ads over serious ads, which is related to perceptions and behavior of a given target audience using the two approaches. This research area is a qualitative research area, although, we have tried to quantify these qualitative responses through using data analysis techniques.

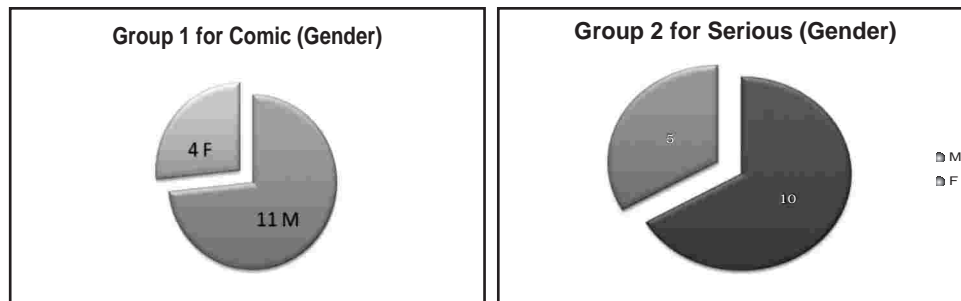
#### **3.2 Sample Selection and Data Collection Procedures**

This research is conducted in order to establish the role of advertisement for communicating with the market using serious and comic appeals for the purpose of attention in the specific locality.

The basic objective of this research is to establish the fact whether the research done by scholars in Sweden and other European countries comparing the humorous and serious advertisement are similarly applicable in Pakistan or not. As there is a limitation of time and human resources that is why it was not possible to include all demographic and geographic variables in Pakistan and this study is restricted to students of KASBIT, Karachi. Separate questionnaire for attention was developed for serious and humorous appeals. Same numbers of questions for each brand were made in the questionnaire for serious and humorous appeals. In total there were twenty four questions in each questionnaire. Group of fifteen students, which included females and males for serious and humorous appeals, were selected separately from BBA (KASBIT) program as a sample for the experiment. Same procedures were adopted on both groups separately when the experiment was conducted. The ads were shown without brake to both groups then attention questionnaire which included open ended questions, were made to be filled by each group separately just immediately after they have viewed all twelve ads. The data of the two types of questionnaires were then tabulated in the Excel Sheets for the analysis of the data collected.

### 3.4 Sample Characteristics

For this test the sample selected includes 15 respondents in 2 separate groups. The approximate average age of the total 30 respondents is between 18 – 22 years. The sample contains both gender however not distributed equally as it was neither the focus of this report nor the requirement of the test applied.



## 4. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The analysis of the exhibit is done by using Chi-Square test as data analysis technique. The significance level is  $\alpha = 0.05$ , as the sample is a focus group.

### 4.1 Test of Attention

Is there a difference between attention paid by the viewer towards an advertisement which uses serious and comic appeal. The technique used is chi-square test as mentioned above. The respondents were asked a series of questions which were then ranked and graded. The hypothesis tested is reported as under:

- $H_0$  = Humorous and serious ads generate equal attention.
- $H_1$  = Humorous ads have higher attention than serious ads.

The grades obtained are then grouped into two categories: respondents obtaining = 30% result and > 30% result. The data is presented in the following table and was derived from the tabulated data collected during the study.

Table-1: Regarding Observed Values, Comic Attention and Serious attention

Observed Value	= 30 %	> 30%	Total
Comic Attention	1	14	15
Serious Attention	10	5	15
Total	11	19	30

Table-2: Regarding the Expected Value Required for Performing the Test

Expected Value = $R_i C_j$ N	= 30 %	> 30%
Comic Attention	$(11 * 15) / 30 = 5.5$	$(19 * 15) / 30 = 9.5$
Serious Attention	$11 * 15 / 30 = 5.5$	$(19 * 15) / 30 = 9.5$

Table-3: Regarding Observed Values and Expected Values

	Observed	Expected	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{\cdot^2}{E} = (O-E)^2 / E$
CA = 30	1	5.5	20.25	3.68
SA = 30	10	5.5	20.25	3.68
CA > 30	14	9.5	20.25	2.13
SA > 30	5	9.5	20.25	2.13

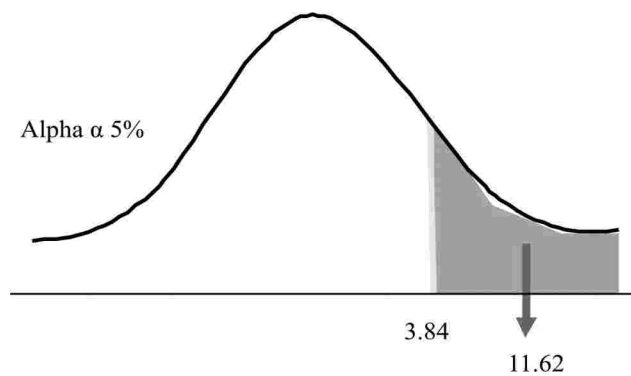
**11.62**

The degree of freedom required for this test is conducted as per the following calculation:

$$d_f = (R-1) (C-1)$$

$$d_f = (2-1) (2-1)$$

$$d_f = 1$$



The tabulated value of chi square table at  $d_f = 1$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$  is 3.84 which is less than the calculated value 11.62 therefore it can be concluded that we have rejected the null hypothesis.



The attention paid to the comic advertisement is higher as compare to serious advertisement. To further test the association the chi square tabulated value at 0.01 was considered which 6.64 was therefore at 99% significance level the null hypothesis is rejected

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Depending upon the literature reviewed and the focus group experiment and their analysis, we can conclude that our Ho is rejected. Hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted which is

- Humorous ads have higher attention than serious ads.

Therefore it is suggested that advertisers of products may use humorous appeals if the purpose of advertisement is to attract attention, but more research needs to be conducted in order to establish whether the attention achieved will be converted into higher sales.

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