The joint impact of humor and argument strength in a print advertising context: A case for weaker arguments

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Abstract (Summary)
Humor is used extensively in advertising, but with mixed results. Drawing on the heuristic systematic model of persuasion, a study explores a contingency underlying the impact of humorous execution on ad and brand attitudes for a convenience good. Results of a laboratory experiment with print ads show that the presence of incidental humor can interact with message characteristics such that humorous ads engender more positive attitudes when they employ weaker arguments, and less positive attitudes when they use stronger arguments.

Full Text (5480 words)

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The role of humor in advertising has been the focus of considerable research. A survey of successful U.S. advertising practitioners revealed that 94% believed humor was effective in gaining attention, and 38% felt humor increased comprehension (Madden & Weinberger, 1984). In a Video Storyboards survey of randomly sampled consumers, 62% said that humorous ads were the most influential. An American Advertising fax poll showed that 92% of respondents claimed that humor was either highly or moderately effective as a selling tool (Custer, 1995). In addition, a mounting body of anecdotal evidence suggests that humor is an effective communication technique for a wide range of products and channels.

Numerous empirical studies have attempted to explain the relationship between humor and advertising effectiveness (e.g., Chattopadhyay & Basu, 1990; Smith, 1993; Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell, & Parsons 1995; Zhang, 1996a, 1996b). In a review of the research literature, Weinberger and Gulas (1992) outlined the impact of humor on a number of communication goals. Their review suggests that humor attracts attention and enhances ad likability, but does not significantly affect ad comprehension. Perhaps most importantly, their review indicates that humorous ads do not always produce systematic advantages over nonhumorous ads at increasing persuasion (e.g., brand attitude and purchase intent). Indeed, they suggest that the persuasive effects of humor elude broad generalizations. Hence, the fundamental question about humor's effectiveness in advertising remains unresolved. Given the mixed evidence, it would seem appropriate to ask when humor in advertising is effective rather than if humor is effective.

The purpose of the present research is to investigate a contingency underlying humor's effect on message persuasiveness. Specifically, this article examines the joint interplay of humor with argument strength in a print advertisement. In prior research, Zhang (1996a, 1996b) investigated the influence of need for cognition (NFC) on the processing of a humorous print ad for a high-involvement product. Not surprisingly, he found that whereas high-NFC subjects were less influenced by humor than by argument strength, low-NFC subjects were more influenced by humor than by argument strength. Smith (1993) examined the extent to which the humorousness of a print ad influenced ad processing. His results show that incidental humor in an ad for life insurance can disrupt systematic processing of the arguments. The present study extends this stream of research by analyzing how the interplay of incidental humor and argument strength can shape evaluations of the advertisement (A^sub ad^) and the brand (A^sub b^) for a low-risk convenience good. Because theory suggests that attitudes are important antecedents to purchase behavior, A^sub ad^ and A^sub b^ were chosen as measures of advertising effectiveness.
BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Why should the strength of ad claims interact with humorous (vs. nonhumorous) ad executions to affect attitudes toward the ad and brand? Studies involving magazine ads (Madden & Weinberger, 1982), radio ads (Weinberger & Campbell, 1991), and television spots (Stewart & Furse, 1986) provide converging evidence that humorous ads are more attention-getting than nonhumorous ads. This evidence is also consistent with practitioners' views (Madden & Weinberger, 1984). Further, psychological theory suggests that increased attention should generate more extensive processing. It follows that humorous ads are likely to be processed more extensively than nonhumorous executions. More extensive processing, however, does not by itself suggest a definitive moderating role for humor in shaping the persuasive impact of ad claims.

The heuristic-systematic model (HSM) of attitude change (Chaiken, 1980) provides a useful theoretical framework for predicting the moderating impact of humor on the effects of argument strength. The HSM contends that different methods of inducing persuasion may work better, depending on the probability of message-relevant processing. When capacity to process is high, the central features of a communication (e.g., argument strength) should have a greater impact on persuasion. Conversely, under conditions of less effortful processing, superficial features should have a greater impact on persuasion.

It is plausible that humor in an ad may invoke either systematic or heuristic processing depending on the relatedness of the humor to the central arguments. If the humor is integral to understanding or reinforcing the ad claims (related humor), it is likely to encourage systematic processing. If the humor is unrelated to the claims (incidental humor), however, it may encourage heuristic processing. Thus, to the extent that enhanced processing of a humorous ad encourages evaluation of the central arguments of the communication, strong (vs. weak) arguments may be more persuasive. On the other hand, if enhanced processing of a humorous ad encourages consideration of only the humor, strong arguments may be no more effective than weaker ones. This article focuses on the case of incidental humor.

Smith (1993) suggests that a humorous ad may increase attention while at the same time disrupt processing. The increased attention may focus consumers on the humorous part of the ad and simultaneously divert them from the ad claims. Smith found that the perception of incidental humor (vs. the perception of no humor), in a print ad for life insurance, led subjects to be less sensitive to the strength of the ad claims. In addition, perceptions of humor enhanced both $A^a$ and $A^b$, but only for the weaker (vs. stronger) claims. Smith’s findings can be interpreted within the HSM framework. He implies that his experimental treatments induced low to moderate processing (by virtue of low product relevance). Thus, heuristic processing was likely to have occurred. To the extent that incidental humor may have induced heuristic processing, the strength of the arguments were not likely to matter in the humorous condition. Conversely, in the nonhumorous condition, the message was likely to be more important, and thus was processed systematically.1 In fact, this is what he found. Smith further suggests that in situations characterized by higher levels of involvement (e.g., the purchase of a personal computer), argument strength may influence attitudes, regardless of the presence of humor.

Do conditions also exist where humor and argument strength might interact such that strong arguments negatively affect consumer attitudes? Although Smith (1993) found strong arguments to be inconsequential when using incidental humor for life insurance, the use of humor for this product may be considered inappropriate, and consequently disrupt the processing of the ad claims. And, because the purchase of life insurance involves some risk, strong claims, per se, are unlikely to harm evaluations. In contrast, it is possible that a product more suited to humor (e.g., bubble gum), whose ad claims are inherently less relevant, may produce overkill by introducing strong arguments. For example, because strong arguments may be relatively unimportant for a low-risk, convenience item, their use may detract from the positive affect generated by the humor. In short, strong arguments may be inconsistent with what a low-risk, convenience product is all about—fun, whimsy, playfulness. There are other reasons to expect humor to interact with argument strength.

According to the distraction hypothesis, a persuasive message that is discrepant with a position strongly held by consumers will be more successful in generating attitude change if the consumer is distracted during the message presentation (Festinger & Maccoby, 1964). This hypothesis suggests that distraction may enhance message persuasiveness by interfering with the audience’s subvocal attempts to counterargue against the dissonant information. In an advertising context, this condition may be relevant when a persuasive message is aimed at consumers with preferences for competing brands or when a new product is introduced that conflicts with existing attitudes, values, or product use patterns (Duncan & Nelson, 1985).

Research suggests that humor may induce distraction (Duncan, 1979; Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Affective responses elicited by humor may divert a consumer from counterarguing against a discrepant message. Reduced counterarguing, in turn, may allow for greater yielding to the persuasive message. It follows that, in a low-involvement setting (i.e., the purchase of a low-risk item) the use of stronger arguments may counteract the distracting effects of humor by refocusing the consumer on the potentially disputable ad claims. In sum, whereas weaker claims may play a secondary role to the humor in an ad for a low-risk product, stronger claims may overpower the humor and encourage unwanted counterarguments. Therefore, it is
anticipated that incidental humor and argument strength will interact such that a humorous (vs. nonhumorous) print ad for a low-risk convenience good will have a more positive impact on advertising effectiveness ($A^{ad}$ and $A^{b}$) under conditions of low (vs. high) argument strength.

Although some studies provide evidence of humor’s positive effect on $A^{ad}$ (e.g., Madden, 1982; Speck, 1987), findings on the direct impact of humorous ads on $A^{b}$ are equivocal. Gelb and Zinkhan (1986) found humor to be positively related to brand attitude, and Speck (1987) found that humor increased perceived product quality. Madden's (1982) caution that no differences in viewers' evaluations of the products advertised ($A^{b}$) have emerged from laboratory studies is reinforced in the Weinberger and Gulas (1992) review, which indicates that humor does not directly affect persuasion.

Another area of research indicates a mediating role of $A^{ad}$ on advertising effectiveness (e.g., MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). One stream of research in this area has attempted to explicate the causal relationships among $A^{ad}$ and other measures of advertising effectiveness, including $A^{b}$. Competing explanations use a hierarchy-of-effects framework, with ad-related cognitions determining $A^{ad}$ and brand-related cognitions stimulated by ad exposure seen as causal antecedents of $A^{b}$ (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Zhang (1996a, 1996b) suggests that humor can serve as an antecedent of $A^{ad}$, driving consumers’ affective responses to the ad. Zhang demonstrates that, for low-NFC subjects, humor's effects on $A^{b}$ are mediated by $A^{ad}$. Thus, on the basis of the sizable body of theory and evidence suggesting a mediating role of $A^{ad}$ on $A^{b}$, $A^{ad}$ is expected to mediate the joint effect of humor and argument strength on $A^{b}$ for a low-risk, convenience good.

**METHOD**

**Overview**

An experiment was conducted in which humor (present vs. absent) and argument strength (low vs. high) were manipulated in a 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design. Subjects were 122 students (77 males, 45 females) enrolled in an undergraduate marketing course at a large midwestern university. Course credit was offered in exchange for their participation. Subjects' ages ranged from 19 to 33 years (mean = 24). Subjects completed the experiment independently in a single session held in an auditorium classroom. The procedure involved randomly assigning subjects to one of four treatment conditions, exposing them individually to an advertisement, and having them fill out a self-administered questionnaire.

**Stimulus Materials**

**Humor.** To manipulate humor, two versions of a magazine ad (one humorous, one nonhumorous) were developed by the authors (see, Figures 1 and 2). The ad involved a fictitious brand, Awesum Bubble Gum. The two versions of the ad were created to be similar with respect to ad layout, claims, and presentational order of claims (see Chattopadhyay & Basu, 1990). Bubble gum was chosen because it is a representative member of a low-risk, convenience category in which the use of humor is both frequent and believed to be effective. Weinberger and Campbell (1991) found the incidence of humor in radio to be highest in the low-involvement/feeling cell of the Foote, Cone, Belding (FCB) matrix, a cell made up of personal pleasures including gum. In addition, Weinberger et al. (1995) found that the category comprising gum had the highest incidence of humor for magazine ads and uniformly positive humor effects on three Starch scores: Noted (initial attention), Seen-Associated (aided-brand recall), and Read Most (held attention). Spotts, Weinberger, and Parsons (1997) reaffirm both the persuasiveness and success of humor for low-risk, convenience goods, of which gum is an exemplar.

The humorous version of the ad included a pen-and-ink sketch of Julius Caesar blowing an enormous bubble and a subtitle reading: "Legendary Flavor." The nonhumorous version was adapted from a Freedent ad. It included a package of gum and an identical subtitle.

There are a number of attribute variables that can intervene in the relationship between a humorous treatment and its outcome, thereby confounding the effects of humor. Among these are relatedness and humor type. Both were addressed in the design of this study. First, in studies that have directly compared related versus unrelated humor (e.g., Duncan, 1979), a differential advantage has been shown for related humor. On the other hand, because the HSM suggests that unrelated humor (incidental to the message) may evoke heuristic processing, and because the interaction of incidental humor and strength of ad claims are of interest, humor that was neither intentionally nor structurally related to message processing was used Speck (1991). Second, this study used comic wit, a humor type characterized by ironic juxtapositions (Zhang, 1996a, 1996b), which generally requires less effort to process than other humorous techniques and is not known to produce gender differences. The humor treatment was screened by four marketing faculty, and the integrity of the manipulation was verified in a posttest manipulation check.

**Argument Strength.** To manipulate argument strength, two versions of ad copy (stronger and weaker) were created as per
Sanbonmatsu and Kardes (1988). Strong arguments characterized Awesum Sugar-Free Bubble Gum as the best brand, claiming that it is “Preferred 2 to 1 over Carefree,” that it comes in “Four natural flavors,” that it is “Sugar free,” that it “Helps prevent tooth decay,” and that it generates “Out-of-this-world bubble capacity!” Weaker arguments characterized the brand as an unremarkable product, claiming that it is “Preferred over competition,” that it comes in “Four standard flavors,” that it contains “No sugar,” that it “Does not harm your teeth,” and that it produces “Large bubbles.” In a between-subjects pretest involving 27 subjects, the strong arguments were judged to be significantly more convincing than the weak, \( t = 2.75; \text{DF} = 25, p < .01 \) on a seven-point scale.

**Measures**

Two dependent variables were used: attitude toward the ad \((A_{\text{ad}})\) and brand attitude \((A_{\text{b}})\). Attitude toward the ad \((A_{\text{ad}})\) was measured by a 1-item, 7-point scale (7 = “like very much,” 1 = “do not like at all”) preceded by the question “How much do you like or dislike the Awesum Bubble ad?” In a pretest involving 37 subjects, a significant correlation \((r=.82)\) between the MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch (1986) multi-item measure and the single-item measure of \(A_{\text{ad}}\) was found. Given that the single-item measure is highly representative of the multi-item measure, the single-item scale was preferred because it should allow affective evaluations to be captured quickly before they have a chance to dissipate.

Brand attitude \((A_{\text{b}})\) was measured via a two-item, 7-point scale (“I like Awesum Bubble,” and “Awesum Bubble is a good brand”). Because the correlation between the items was high \((r = .70, p < .0001)\), responses were collapsed into a general brand attitude measure. The reduced set of items was expected to provide a parsimonious representation of the dimensions typically underlying more extensive inventories.

In addition, a manipulation check for humor was included. A two-item, 7-point scale was employed to capture subjects’ perceptions of humor (subjective humor). Subjects were asked “How funny is the Awesum Bubble ad?” and “Did you feel amused?” On the basis of their high correlation \((r = .89)\), these items were averaged to form a composite scale \(r = .89\) of subjective humor. Because asking individuals whether they perceive a message to be funny or amusing might vary significantly between individuals, a second measure was taken. Using a one-item, 7-point scale, subjects were asked to what extent they believed the advertiser was attempting to be humorous (objective humor). This scale was suggested by Madden and Weinberger (1982).

Questions assessing ad informativeness, ad quality, and brand familiarity were also included as confounding checks. Responses were measured via scales adapted from multiple sources, including previous research in consumer behavior. Ad informativeness was measured by three multiple-choice questions testing subjects’ aided recall of ad claims. Ad quality was measured by a one-item, 5-point scale (5=“much better in quality than ads typically seen in magazines,” 1=“much worse in quality than ads typically seen in magazines”). Brand familiarity was measured by a one-item, 5-point scale (1 = “never heard of Awesum Bubble,” 5 = “heard of Awesum Bubble before and used it”). The questionnaire also included some demographic items (e.g., age, gender).

**Procedure**

Subjects were told that the study involved their reactions to a magazine advertisement prototype. After being seated in a spacious auditorium classroom, each subject received a booklet containing the advertising stimuli and the dependent measures. The first page of the booklet contained the instructions; the second page was a reminder to read the instructions before viewing the ad. The third page contained the stimulus ad, immediately followed by a page reminding subjects not to flip back to look at the ad while responding to the questionnaire that followed. Because subjects’ recall of the ad arguments served as a proxy for the amount of information learned from the ad, it was important that subjects not review the ad.

Proctors monitored subjects’ compliance with the instructions and did not observe anyone turning back to the ads. After completing the questionnaire, subjects were debriefed.

**RESULTS**

**Manipulation and Confounding Checks**

Subjective and objective humor measures were used to verify the effectiveness of the humor manipulation. On the basis of the two-item measure, the humorous ad was perceived to be significantly more subjectively humorous \((t = 3.80, \text{DF} = 118, p < .0002, \text{two-tailed})\) than the nonhumorous ad. Results from the one-item measure indicate that the humorous ad was judged to be significantly more objectively humorous \((t = 7.04, \text{DF} = 118, p < .0001, \text{two-tailed})\) than the nonhumorous version. This provides strong support for the humor manipulation.

To assess whether the humorous and nonhumorous versions of the test ad differed in terms of characteristics other than humorlessness, ad informativeness, ad quality, and brand familiarity were measured. The data were analyzed in a series of ANOVAs, with the two ad conditions (humorous vs. nonhumorous) as the independent variable. Ad informativeness was not
confounded with humor (F<1). Similarly, ad quality and brand familiarity were not confounded with humor (F<1). In summary, the results suggest that the two ads (humorous vs. nonhumorous) were judged to be significantly different from each other in terms of both objective and subjective humorousness, but not in terms of any other important attribute measured.

In addition, t-tests were run to assess whether the perceptions of humor and argument strength were confounded. Results of a t-test indicate that subjects' perceptions of humor were not significantly different in the stronger (vs. weaker) argument conditions (t = 0.90; p < .37). Results of a t-test indicate that subjects' perceptions of the arguments were not significantly different in the humor (vs. nonhumor) conditions (t =0.96; p<.36). In contrast, a t-test comparing ad informativeness in humor x strong arguments versus humor x weak arguments conditions suggests that subjects recalled significantly more information in the humor x weak arguments condition (t = 2.32; p < .03).

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Because the dependent variables (A^sub ad^ and A^sub b^) are conceptually distinct but nomologically related, their correlation (r^sub Aad,Ab^ = 0.61, p < .0001) was assessed. Given correlated dependent measures, treatment effects were first examined through MANOVA to avoid Type I error inflation. Results are summarized in Table 1. The MANOVA reveals a significant interactive effect on the combined dependent measures representing attitudes toward the ad (A^sub ad^) and brand (A^sub b^); Wilk's lambda = 0.928, F (2,117) = 4.51, p < .014. Given the significant MANOVA findings, a series of univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed on each dependent variable. Results of these analyses are also reported in Table 1. Descriptive statistics appear in Table 2.

Effects on Attitude toward the Ad (A^sub ad^)

With respect to attitude toward the ad, the anticipated humor by argument strength interaction was observed; F(1,118) = 5.13, p < .025, [omega]^sup 2^=.033. The results indicate that when humor was present, subjects responded more positively to the ad with weaker (M=4.93) versus stronger arguments (M = 3.72), t = 2.21, DF = 58, p < .029 (two-tailed). Figure 3 illustrates this interaction.

Effects on Brand Attitude (A^sub b^)

With respect to brand attitudes, a significant humor x argument strength interaction was observed, F(1,118) = 8.68, p < .004, [omega] ^sup 2^=0.06. The results indicate that when humor was employed, weaker arguments engendered more positive brand attitudes (M=3.85) than did stronger arguments (M = 3.03), t = 2.68, DF = 58, p < .008 (two-tailed). In addition, when stronger arguments were present, subjects rated the brand more positively under the nonhumorous condition (M=3.81) versus the humorous condition (M=3.03); t = 2.56, DF =58,p<.012 (two-tailed). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 4.

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

The mediating effect of A^sub ad^ on A^sub b^ was assessed via ANCOVA. In ANCOVA, the within-group variance on the dependent variable (A^sub b^) attributed to the covariate (A^sub ad^) is removed from the error term, thereby allowing the assessment of treatment effects independently of any indirect effects through A^sub ad^. Results of the ANCOVA indicate that the argument strength x humor interaction on A^sub b^ is not significant in the presence of the covariate term; F(1,117)=3.78, ns. This provides evidence that the covariate (A^sub ad^) is responsible for much of the within-group variance on A^sub b^. In addition, the contribution of the covariate (A^sub ad^) to the model is highly significant; F(1,117) = 63.10, p < .0001. This confirms the authors' expectation that A^sub ad^ mediates the joint impact of humor and argument strength on A^sub b^.

DISCUSSION

Results of the experimentation suggest that the joint interplay of humor and argument strength in a print ad can significantly contribute to the formation of A^sub ad^ and A^sub b^ for a low-risk, convenience good. As shown in Table 2, consumers may react more favorably to both the ad (A^sub ad^) and the advertised brand (A^sub b^) when a humorous (vs. nonhumorous) version contains weaker arguments. It also appears that stronger arguments in an ad for a low-risk item may engender more favorable brand attitudes without the use of humor. Finally, the results suggest that the interaction between humor and argument strength on brand attitudes may be driven by consumers' favorable attitudes toward the ad itself.

These results can be interpreted within the framework of the HSM. It is plausible that humor may encourage heuristic processing by disrupting a consumer's ability to process the central arguments of the ad. Here, the humor per se may become the impetus for heuristic processing (Chaiken, 1980). Thus, to the extent that the humor successfully causes heuristic processing, argument strength may be irrelevant (Smith, 1993). In fact, the present results go one step further and suggest that when humor is used, weaker arguments may actually persuade better than strong ones. There are three possible explanations for the deleterious effects of humor mixed with strong ad claims. First, humor may have negatively
affected the perceptions of argument strength. Second, strong ad claims may have interfered with the processing of the humor. Third, humor and ad claims may have been judged to be independently successful, but the combination was considered inappropriate or ineffective (e.g., I like ice cream and I like beer, but not together).

Nonsignificant differences in the perception of argument strength in the humor (vs. no humor) conditions do not suggest that the arguments were perceived as weaker in the humorous conditions. In addition, nonsignificant differences in the perceptions of humor in the two argument strength conditions fail to support the notion that humor was perceived to be less effective in the stronger argument condition. Therefore, the first two explanations are not supported. The third explanation suggests that the combination of humor and strong arguments somehow back-fired and negatively affected attitudes ($A_{ad}^{sub}a$ and $A_{ad}^{sub}b$). Perhaps a low-risk convenience good, with a strong peripheral cue (e.g., humor) need not rely on strong ad claims to persuade consumers about product benefits, which may be largely whimsical and image oriented. It follows that the inclusion of strong arguments along with humor may signal an inconsistency regarding the nature of the product, and as a result harm attitudes. Results comparing ad informativeness in humor $x$ strong arguments versus humor $x$ weak arguments support the notion that strong arguments were not considered integral to the humorous ad. In fact, subjects recalled significantly more information in the humor $x$ weak arguments condition (vs. humor $x$ strong argument condition).

In summary, the notion that strong arguments work better with nonhumorous ads is straightforward enough: strong, persuasive ad claims may not need humor to help sell a product. However, the present findings show that a humorous print ad for a low-risk convenience good can be more persuasive without strong arguments, and strong arguments can be better off without humor. On their own, humor and strong ad arguments may be persuasive, but when combined may be less effective.

The observed humor $x$ argument strength interaction is also consistent with the distraction hypothesis. Studies indicate that humor can be distracting. It follows that the affective responses evoked by humor may reduce counterarguing and subsequently enhance persuasion—so long as weaker arguments are present. If stronger arguments are presented along with humor, however, the stronger claims may counteract the distracting value of the humor, thereby increasing counterarguing and decreasing persuasion. Similarly, when strong arguments are used, an ad that distracts consumers from the issue-relevant claims via humor may be less effective than a less distracting (nonhumorous) version.

When considering the strength of ad claims, it must be acknowledged that argument strength is relative. Few advertising copywriters would knowingly create deficient or grossly understated claims, and this research does not suggest that to do so would increase the persuasive impact of an ad. On the other hand, this research does suggest that when humor is present, ad claims for low-risk convenience goods should not be so compelling as to overwhelm; arguments embedded in a humorous ad may be better off playing a supporting rather than leading role. Clearly, however, additional research is necessary to validate these findings.

Limitations and Issues for Future Research

The present study has several limitations that suggest opportunities for further research. First, although a significant effect for the interaction of humor and argument strength on both $A_{ad}^{sub}a$ and $A_{ad}^{sub}b$ was observed, evidence for the underlying process is indirect. A useful next step might be to examine the processes underlying the observed interactive effect of humor and argument strength. A replication of the present effect, along with a measure of the diagnosticity of ad claims, may provide some insight as to why strong arguments and humor interact in such a way as to reduce persuasion. For example, measures of counterarguments would be necessary in order to test the distraction hypothesis explanation. If the present results are replicated, fewer counterarguments would be expected in the humor $x$ weak argument condition than in the humor $x$ strong argument condition. Second, the involvement level could be manipulated to address more clearly the applicability of the HSM. Based on the present experiment, results similar to Smith (1993) under high involvement, and a replication of the present results under low involvement would be expected. Third, various levels of humor relevance and appropriateness could be manipulated. Relevant humor is expected to bolster rather than harm the efficacy of the ad claims. Fourth, subjects in the present study received only one exposure to the stimulus ad. During an advertising campaign, consumers are likely to receive multiple exposures over time. Hence, it would seem useful for future research to examine the joint impact of humor and argument strength longitudinally. Fifth, the generality of the present findings is unknown. More research is needed to clarify the impact of the humor $x$ argument strength interaction across various product types and buying situations. For example, durable versus consumer goods, products versus services, and impulse versus planned purchases could be tested. Given that a consumer is in the market for a durable good, it could be anticipated that durable goods would engender higher involvement than consumer goods, and hence, strong arguments should work better than weak ones, regardless of humor. Under low-involvement conditions (e.g., a consumer goods purchase), the present findings should replicate. Finally, future research should assess the extent to which the interactive effects of humor observed in this study might be manifest in other affect-inducing features of ads, such as music (Kellaris, Cox, & Cox, 1993; Kellaris & Kent, 1994).
Footnote
1Smith's (1993) manipulation of ad humor was not successful. Accordingly, he performed a median split on subjects' ratings of the humorousness of the ad.

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