

# Type of Humor and Advertising Effectiveness: Study on Indonesian Children Aged 7–12

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**Abstract.** This paper examines the relationship between the type of humor and effectiveness of advertisements for dairy products on Indonesian children. A quantitative approach was used to analyze the type of humor found in dairy product advertising. A total of 840 students at both public and private schools, aged 7–12 years, completed a questionnaire. The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the type of humor had no significant influence on the effectiveness of dairy product advertisements.

**Keywords:** *type of humor, advertising effectiveness, schoolchildren, dairy product advertisement, Indonesian advertising, Indonesian children*

## 1 Introduction

Much research has investigated the influence of advertising on children in other countries, but few studies have been carried out in Indonesia. It is important to understand children's perspectives on the advertising they see daily because children constitute a unique market segment for all types of products, ranging from dairy products to gadgets. Fiates, De Mello Castanho Amboni, and Teixeira (2008) described that in recent years, there have been many changes in family composition around the world. For example, women have started to work more outside the home and couples have fewer children, which increases the importance attributed to each child. These changes may be a reason that children are involved in decisions about their family's consumer behavior (Foxman, Tansuhaj, & Ekstrom, 1989). Young (2000) suggested that children can be deemed to have a sophisticated understanding of advertising when they start to appreciate the vested interests that fund and place advertisements on television.

Indonesia is the country with the smallest milk consumption in Southeast Asia. Based on data from Nielsen (2014), the average Indonesian consumes 12 liters of milk per year. This figure is very low compared to those for the average person in Malaysia, who consumes 36 liters per year; Thailand, 22 liters per year; and Vietnam, 20 liters per year. Indonesia's low milk consumption is concerning especially for children because milk can be a source of many nutrients. According to Boenjamin Setiawan from Kalbe Farma, Indonesia consumes less milk than other countries because it does not have a milk-drinking culture and many Indonesians are lactose intolerant.

On the other hand, children who are introduced to milk from an early age tend to be tolerant of lactose. This encourages milk producers to target their products for school-aged children in order to building a culture of milk drinking from an early age. The marketing of dairy products to children uses a variety of methods, one of which is commercial advertisements that air on television or through digital social media channels like YouTube. Lawlor, Dunne, and Rowley (2016) argued that children's recognition and understanding of how they can be targeted for commercial purposes by online marketers, is an important and pressing area for research for several reasons. The purpose of this research is to find out the relationship between the type of humor and the effectiveness of dairy product advertising on Indonesian children aged 7–12 years, who attend public and private schools in the Greater Jakarta area.

## 2 Literature Review

Throughout their lives, consumers develop relationships with brands and consume countless branded products (Fournier, 1998). These relationships are developed from an early age, when the consumers are children (Ji, 2002). Furthermore, research on the phenomenon of brand relationships with children is scarce. The main purpose of this study is to gain Indonesian children's perspectives on dairy product advertisements to see whether the type of humor used in the advertisements influences the advertising effectiveness. Children differ from adults in many marketing phenomena. In terms of children's consumer behavior, consumer socialization is

one of the most studied topics. Moschis and Churchill (1978) found that family, mass media, school, and peers are the most important socialization agents for children. Ekström (2007) revealed that reverse socialization also exists, namely, from children to their parents.

Hemar-Nicolas, Gollety, Damay, and Ezan (2015) showed that brands play a major role in children's lives. The process of brand recognition starts as young as age three, when children can name multiple brands in different categories, mention brand names as product information, and even request products by their brand name (John, 1999). Ji's (2002) qualitative study of three children demonstrated that the children developed relationships with a broad range of brands embedded in their social environment. Additionally, Ann Flurry et al. (2014) described the existence of brand communities among children.

## **2.1 Humor in Advertising**

According to Cline, Altsech, and Kellaris (2003), humor may operate to elicit a response from viewers using two mechanisms: attention and effect. Humor in advertising both draws attention (cognitive mechanism) and creates a mood (mechanism of effect), which are routes into consumers' brains and hearts. Attention and effect are mediated directly by the impact of the humor and its connection with the message. Effect is directly or indirectly influenced by recall, while attention has an indirect effect on efficiency and on creating recall. Maden and Weinberger (1984) found that attention is necessary but not sufficient for an effective message. Effect may lead an advertisement directly to the heart of the message and creates a positive impact. However, humor alone does not directly affect a message's importance. The best humor-related objectives are, in fact, awareness and attention. Humor in general creates a positive mood and produces persuasion in an advertisement, but ironically the consumers' cognitive response to humorous parts could be that they are distracted from processing important message information.

Humor in advertising is a feature aimed at putting people in a good mood (van Kuilenburg et al., 2011). The use of humor in advertising is a complex topic, according to Zinkhan and Johnson (1994). Spotts, Campbell, and Parsons (1995) showed that 55% of executives believe humorous advertising is superior to non-humor advertising. Dong-Hun (2009) added that humor is powerful in attracting consumers' attention and creates a positive effect. His study showed that the use of humor in advertising has widely increased. Meanwhile, Teixeira and Stipp (2013) considered that in reality things are not strictly predictable. That is, humor does not guarantee success, and overuse of it could yield a lower effect.

## **2.2 Type of Humor in Advertising**

Few studies focus on the content and specific types of humor used in video advertisement, even though researchers generally acknowledge that any research on the audience perception of humor must begin with an identification of the different types of humor (McCullough & Taylor, 1993; Unger, 1996). There are several types of humor, such as aggressive, sexual, and incongruous humor (Goldstein & McGhee, 1972; Veatch, 1998). To date, however, there is no empirical verification of the occurrence and relative importance of these types of humor in video advertisements.

Weinberger and Gulas (1992) stated that humor may play a role in determining the efficacy of some factors in each advertisement treatment. These factors can be divided into two groups. The first group is the relationship between the humor treatment and the product or message. The second is the humor type. Humor can then be categorized into "content" or "technique." Based on typology, humor is placed into one of three classifications: aggressive, sexual, or nonsense. Another definition of humorous advertisement technique typology recognizes the following: 1) pun, 2) understatement, 3) joke, 4) ludicrous, 5) satire, 6) irony, and 7) humorous intent. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004) developed a typology of humor in which they identified seven types of humor: slapstick, clownish humor, surprise, misunderstanding, irony, satire, and parody.

The simple forms of humor are usually appreciated by young children, such as those aged 2–7 years (McGhee, 1979; Shultz, 1996). Shultz (1996) added that in early childhood, children are very visual in their orientation to the world; therefore, they have a strong preference for visual and physical humor such as funny faces, grimaces, and sudden visual surprises, as in playing peek-a-boo. Other particular types of humor that may appeal to young children, according to Acuff and Reiher (1997), are slapstick, vigorous arm and leg movements, clownish behavior, and anthropomorphism. Children also laugh at other simple forms of humor like unusual voices and sounds.

On the other side, children in middle childhood, around ages 8–11, have developed a more complex preference and abstract humor, such as playing with logic and the meaning of words (McGhee, 1979). Furthermore, slapstick is a favorite type of humor among 10-year-olds. The misfortunes of other people are also perceived as humorous only in accidental or unintentional cases or if the object of humor is an unpleasant character (McGhee, 1979). Children increasingly favor more complex forms of humor at the end of their middle

childhood, such as word play, sarcasm, and sexual allusion. Gross forms of humor such as disgust, violence, and irreverent behavior are also increasingly appreciated (Acuff & Reiher, 1997).

**2.3 Humor Effectiveness in Advertising**

Very little is known about the risks and benefits of using humor in advertising (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Sternthal and Craig (1973) conducted research on the effects of humor in advertisement and proposed two impacts: (1) humorous messages attract attention, and (2) audience characteristics may confound the effect of humor. Januz (1977) pointed out that if the humor in an advertisement is not done well, it could leave a bad taste or even be a disaster. Humor is thus more difficult to create (Maden & Weinberger, 1984). Yet even though the risk of using humor and its negative effect is very high, humorous advertisements still work better than non-humorous ones (Djambaska, Petrovska, & Bundaleska, 2016).

Two factors might be expected to influence the positive effect of humor, according to Runyon (1979). First, humor should be related directly to and integrated with the objective and message of the advertisement. Second, the product or service advertised should be appropriate to be a subject of a joke. The benefit of using humor is that it may make the advertisement funnier and more enjoyable. It may also attract audience attention and create a positive influence and positive emotion overall. Humor produces a positive effect in an advertisement without changing or improving any brand information in the advertisement (Strick, van Baaren, Holland, & van Knippenberg, 2009). Humor utilization in advertisements eventually attracts more consumer attention and creates a recall. It increases purchase more often than any other forms of entertainment, while too much humor also reduces purchase intent (Teixeira & Stipp, 2013).

**3. Method**

This research uses an experimental design with pretesting and post testing. Babbie (2011) stated that in the simplest experimental design, pretesting occurs first, whereby subjects are measured in terms of a dependent variable. Then, the subjects are exposed to a stimulus representing an independent variable. Finally, in post testing, they are remeasured in terms of the dependent variable. Any differences between the first and last measurements on the dependent variable are then attributed to the independent variable. In the pretesting, children were shown a movie with advertising, and in the post testing they watched advertising with humor on YouTube.

This research used a quantitative method. A questionnaire was administered to 840 children aged 7–12 years old within the Greater Jakarta area. Quantitative research methods are used in situations when the researcher wants to study how one specified variable affects another, disregarding the effects of other variables (Powoh, 2016). The 840 children were 47.9% male and 52.1% female. They studied at public (41.4%) and private elementary schools (58.6%). The questionnaire contained six items about advertising effectiveness. It used a four-point Likert scale Rossiter (1977) (“NO—I disagree very much,” “no—I disagree,” “yes—I agree,” and “YES—I agree very much”). Hereunder factor analysis was processed to identify the factor structure of the scale. Items with factor loadings less than .40 were dropped individually from the dataset (Baiocco, D’Alessio, & Laghi, 2009). However, this article maintains reliability to be at least .50 Cronbach’s alpha (Table 1).

**Table 1. Construct Validity and Reliability**

Variable	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach’s alpha
Advertising Effectiveness	After watching the advertising, I will certainly buy the product	.918	.516
	I like this advertising very much	.548	
	I don’t like this advertising at all (reverse code)	.705	
	I would really like to see this advertising again	.703	
	I wouldn’t really like to see this advertising again (reverse code)	.748	
	The advertising gives valuable information on the product	.749	

We collected data in May 2018 by visiting six different elementary schools, both public and private school, within the Greater Jakarta area. Prior to that, ethic approval was obtained from the school principal. The researcher observed and then described what was observed. Babbie (2011) contended that scientific observation is careful and deliberate, and scientific descriptions are typically more accurate and precise than casual ones.

The children filled out the questionnaire in their classroom during school hours. The data were collected in three stages. Firstly, the children were shown short movie footage with advertising before and after. The advertisements were three 15-second videos about Indonesian dairy products for children aged 7–12 years, namely, Zee, Boneeto, and Real Good. All three products are milk that is suitable for the research target and can be found easily on the market. Secondly, the children were asked in the questionnaire whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about the video they saw. This stage was intended to obtain ethical approval from the children to take part in the survey. Lastly, after the six questionnaire items, we asked some demographic questions. All the children were treated equally and responded to the same questionnaire. In some cases, children who had a handicap or difficulty understanding the question were assisted by our students in filling out the questionnaire. The whole procedure took about 20–30 minutes from start to finish.

All gathered data were then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science to conduct ANOVA. Post hoc analysis following ANOVA was carried out using Tukey to detect group difference ( $p < .05$ ).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In any research, enormous data are collected, and, to describe it meaningfully, one needs to summarize the same. The bulkiness of the data can be reduced by organizing it into a frequency table or histogram (Manikandan, 2011). Frequency distribution organizes the heap of data into a few meaningful categories. Collected data can also be summarized as a single index/value, which represents the entire data. These measures may also help in the comparison of data.

To begin exploring the relationship between type of humor and advertising effectiveness, we first conducted ANOVA on the variable of advertising effectiveness (AE). Table 3 shows the results. The results of the test of homogeneity of variance, shown in Table 2, indicate the subjects were homogenous and the data were distributed normally.

**Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variance**

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
AE	16.210	2	832	.000

**Table 3. ANOVA**

		F	Sig.
AE	Between Groups	2.489	.084

**Table 4. Post Hoc Analysis**

**Tukey HSD**

Dependent Variable	(I) Subject	(J) Subject	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AE	Susu_Zee	Boneeto	-.038	.048	.706	-.15	.07
		RealGood	.068	.048	.337	-.05	.18
	Boneeto	Susu_Zee	.038	.048	.706	-.07	.15
		RealGood	.106	.048	.071	-.01	.22
	RealGood	Susu_Zee	-.068	.048	.337	-.18	.05
		Boneeto	-.106	.048	.071	-.22	.01

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to the results of ANOVA shown in Table 3, there is no significance for the AE (Sig. 084,  $p < .05$ ). Post hoc analysis and means plot following ANOVA were carried out (see Table 4 and Figure 1). The significant result of AE was lower or insignificant based on the ANOVA results, although the AE of the three dairy product video advertisements was only slightly different (Mean score: Susu Zee = 2.29; Boneeto = 2.33; Real Good = 2.23). From the figure hereunder, we see assume that the Boneeto video had the greatest AE.

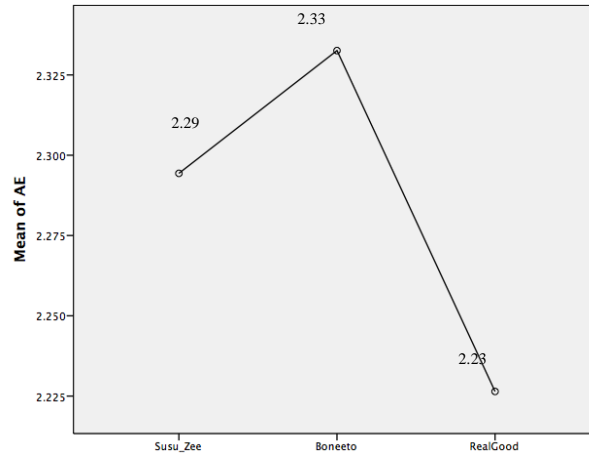


Fig. 1. Means plot analysis

### 5. Conclusion

From the discussion and results above, we can conclude that type of humor had no significant influence on the effectiveness of dairy product advertisement videos about Zee, Boneeto, and Real Good for Indonesian school children aged 7–12 years in the Greater Jakarta area. The highest mean (2.33) was for the Boneeto advertisement with its mascot, as seen in Figure 2. From a theoretical perspective, it can be explained that the Boneeto video used clownish humor, while the other two videos (Zee and Real Good) did not. As Buijzen and Valkenburg (2004) described, there are seven types of humor: slapstick, clownish humor, surprise, misunderstanding, irony, satire, and parody. The use of clownish humor in Boneeto video appears at the end of the clip with the representative of the Boneeto mascots and the product itself.



Fig. 2. Boneeto mascots

The mean of Zee is 2.29 on the four-point Likert scale, and visually, its advertising is very orientated to children’s world, as it takes place in a school setting (see Figure 3). This is in accordance with the findings of Shultz (1996), who described that in early childhood, children are very visual in their orientation to the world and have a strong preference for visual and physical humor. In the Zee video, the message is relatively easy to understand due to the simple type of humor, such as a funny face, grimaces, and sudden visual surprises. Furthermore, Lawlor and Prothero (2008) argued that a fuller and richer picture of children’s understanding of advertising can be accessed by placing to one side the traditional perspective that advertising serves to inform, persuade, and sell to children.



Fig. 3. Children’s world orientation in the Zee video advertisement

The last dairy product is Real Good, which has a mean of 2.23 on the four-point Likert scale. The advertisement contains abstract humor, for example, the word *nyot-nyot*, or “slurp” in English (Figure 4). In response to the Real Good advertisement, children laugh at simple forms of humor like unusual voices and sounds. Similar results appeared in McGhee’s (1979) research, where children aged 8–11 were shown to have developed complex preferences and abstract humor such as playing with logic and word meanings.



Fig. 4. Meaning of words in the Real Good advertisement

In general, the three Indonesian dairy product video advertisements did not have significant effectiveness. This may be attributable to the different backgrounds of the Indonesian children including their tribe, religion, school background (public or private), or domicile. A suggestion to advertisers in Indonesia is to use a combination of different types of humor, such as clownish humor, abstract humor, and visual humor. In addition, advertisers should consider children’s backgrounds when creating advertisements. These strategies may lead to greater AE. Olson and Larsson (2005) also suggested communicators need to understand their targets before encoding message so that they are credible. Otherwise, the response may be disbelief and rejection.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank students in the advertising class of the 2017 Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia, for their help with the field survey and data collection in May 2018. The author is also indebted to the Advertising Laboratory of Communication Studies, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia.

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