



A Study on Impact of Humour in Advertising on Consumer Purchase Decision: With Special Reference to Guwahati City

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of humor in advertising on consumer purchase decisions, focusing specifically on Guwahati City. Humor is a popular advertising strategy aimed at capturing attention and enhancing brand recall. Through surveys and data analysis, the research explores how humorous advertisements influence consumer attitudes, emotional responses, and subsequent purchasing behavior in Guwahati. The findings reveal that humor in advertising significantly enhances consumer engagement and brand perception, ultimately leading to increased purchase intentions. However, the effectiveness of humor can vary based on cultural context and individual preferences. This study underscores the importance of tailored advertising strategies that align with local consumer sensibilities to maximize effectiveness.

Keywords: humor, advertising, consumer purchase decision, Guwahati City, brand perception

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “advertising” originates from the Latin word “advertere” which means “to turn the mind towards” (Hoang, 2013). Advertising affects consumers psychologically and has an effect on their purchasing decisions. One of the functions of advertising as a marketing tool is to try to convince potential clients. Advertising appeal, which is a force that activates client thinking toward the product or service and begins buying decisions, is one way to accomplish this final goal.

Crafting an effective advertising message is critical to business promotion. Businesses employ a variety of persuasive advertising strategies to persuade customers to purchase goods and services. One of those draws in advertising is humor. The primary goal of humor is to grab the audience's interest with a thought-provoking, provocative, surprising, abrupt, and memorable message. The goal of humor is to aid customers in their purchasing decisions. But if humor offends, is applied incorrectly, or is overdone, it can have unfavorable consequences. Businesses that utilize “intelligent” humor that is relevant to the nature and purpose of their products are successful.

Everyone enjoys a good laugh. Everyone aspires to happiness. Everyone in the planet enjoys humor. Everyone wants to be content and at ease in our hectic lives, which are full of risks, uncertainties, and a never-ending competition for a job, money, health, and warm shelter. Businesses take advantage of this innate human trait to increase sales of their goods and services. Businesses utilize humor in combination with their products, both conditioned and unconditioned (neutral) stimulation, to market their goods and services (Sathiyaneela, 2022).

Businesses use humor as one of several strategies to market their goods and turn a profit. Their primary motivation is maximization of profits rather than altruism. It is incredibly challenging to contact customers because there are so many businesses and so many products and services available. Many businesses, goods, and services go unnoticed by the public. The primary cause of this is the consumers' inadequate mental capacity. Getting customers' attention is the true battle that businesses face. For any organization, this is the hardest duty to complete.

Businesses now have to deal with the so-called “attention deficit” among customers. Customers with attention deficits notice less and fewer advertisements, businesses, promotions, and campaigns. Information from TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, billboards, friends, brochures, leaflets, word-of-mouth, social media, supermarkets, and other sources is overwhelming them. There is a lot of advertising overall (Ramanatha Pillai St Joseph, 2021).

The majority of ads these days use humor to connect with their viewers, and the level of ingenuity they display has no bounds. When customers view a TV commercial or magazine advertisement, they must do more than just laugh or enjoy

it for it to be successful (Kewlani et al., 2022). The commercial need to alter the attitudes and behaviors of the audience. Additionally, it must help them recall the product so that it or the brand will be front of mind for them to buy.

An empirical study will be carried out to investigate how humor advertisements affect consumers' purchasing decisions. Thus, the purpose of this essay is to examine the ideas and applications of humor in advertising, the process by which consumers make decisions, and the ways in which humor influences those decisions.

1.1. Review of Literature

- The use of humour in promotion has become standard procedure, but its impact has not been updated since the last major study, which was conducted about twenty-five years ago. A great deal of humour research has been conducted in the interim. The investigation's outcome somewhat supports earlier conclusions and emphasizes the need to use humor sparingly. While the humor in no way guarantees better promotions, its influence can be enhanced by carefully considering the goals one wants to achieve as well as the audience, situation, and type of comedy (Weinberger & Gulas, 1992)
- Funny things can draw attention and have an obtrusive quality. Consumer's age can also be one factor contributing to humour's popularity in advertising. When people get older, they often adopt a humorous outlook on life. For humor to work, it needs to speak directly to the advantages of the product. The benefits to consumers, the unique value of the means-ends-chain, and the product attributes should all be combined. (Olsson & Larsson, 2005)
- (Mehmood & Masood, 2016) surveyed the consumers of Pakistan to determine the effect of humorous advertisements of telecom firms on their purchase intention. Customers in the mobile telecommunications sector enjoy the services offered by Ufone. In Pakistan's telecom industry, humour in advertising increases consumer purchase intentions on the Ufone network. Furthermore, they found that comedy improves consumers' opinions of items. It is crucial to note that comedy has the power to significantly alter consumers' perceptions of particular products. It has been observed that hilarious advertisements draw more attention than non-humorous ones.
- Humorous advertisements significantly impact consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement and their word-of-mouth intentions. However, it does not affect consumers' attitudes towards the brand or their intent to purchase as a direct result of humorous ads. The impact of humorous ads was limited to entertaining consumers and stimulating their word-of-mouth intentions, rather than influencing purchase intentions. (Primanto & Dharmmesta, 2019)
- (Eisend, 2022) in her findings support the arousal theory by demonstrating the effectiveness of a mechanism linked to surprise, a neutrally valenced feeling that triggers emotional responses. However, this mechanism has a challenge from another mechanism in highly involved consumers, who become distracted when presented with humour in two-sided messages. As a result, the impact of humour in two-sided advertising on these consumers is compromised, unless the humour is appropriate for the product. Thus, a crucial prerequisite for sustaining the beneficial impact of humour in two-sided advertising is the humour-product fit.
- (Agwu, 2022) discusses the strategic importance of humorous advertisements on consumer purchase decisions. It highlights the use of humour as an advertisement appeal to guide customers in making important purchase decisions for various goods and services. The study further focuses on how humour is utilized in both print and electronic media to sell products and attract customers to the showcased products. Additionally, the paper mentions incorporating celebrities in humorous advertisements to enhance product appeal and aid in better product recall among consumers.
- (Kumar et al., 2022) discuss how advertising aims to use various techniques to effectively reach consumers and achieve objectives and explore the impact of humour in advertising on consumer purchasing decisions. The study confirms that while humour in advertisements can prompt desired actions from consumers, its effectiveness in advertising is enhanced when combined with information and persuasion to influence an individual's buying decision positively.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The study will be beneficial in the following ways:-

- It will assist those advertisers who are planning to make an innovative and creative advertisement
- The study is beneficial to understand the consumers' decision-making process and purchase decisions.
- The dissertation is aimed to benefit marketing students and/or "advertiser-to-be" with an understanding of humour in advertising and consumers' decision-making process.
- This project report will prove to be a guiding document for other researchers who also want to research similar topics.

1.3. Research Methodology

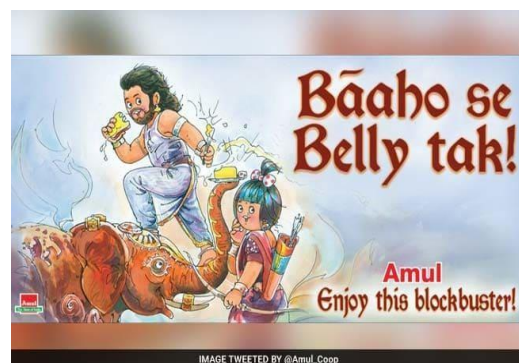
In general, there are different kinds of humour such as comparison, mockery, sarcasm, puns, exaggeration, Comparison, silliness, personification etc. Furthermore, a product can be advertised using a variety of media, including banners and hoardings, TV commercials, google Ads, YouTube Advertisements, Print media, magazines, newspapers, and social

media such as Facebook and Instagram. Because it would be extremely difficult to focus on every type of comedy that exists on every media channel, the study was limited to printed poster advertisements that contained humour. The humour's appeal was restricted to that which makes people laugh.

The study is a descriptive one where both primary and secondary data have been used to analyse the impact of humour in advertisements on consumer purchase decisions. A self-structured questionnaire was developed by using Google Forms consisting of 12 questions. The first part of the question caters to the demographic aspects of the respondents, second part consists of questions regarding the perception of consumers towards the presence of humor appeal in advertisements. Two picture-based questions were asked to study the impact of humour in advertisements on consumer purchase decisions.

The first image taken is a popular print advertisement of Happydent chewing gum to study the consumer's understanding of the humour present in the particular advertisement. The second image-based question had two different print advertisement images of the same company (Amul) but with different appeals i.e., humour and emotion to understand the consumers' preference towards both the appeal. The questions were an attempt to learn more about how customers behaved while making purchases following their viewing of the advertisement.

Image 1 from Happydent was used to study the consumers' understanding regarding the presence of humour in advertisements.



Images 2 and 3 from Amul company were used to understand the consumers' preference towards different appeals of an advertisement

A convenient sampling method was used, and a questionnaire was sent to 135 participants but only 100 participants responded. The questionnaire was uniformly distributed to the consumers of Guwahati city. For data analysis and interpretation, a simple percentage method and bar diagram were used.

II. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Profile of Respondents

A total of 100 respondents were interviewed for the study through a structured questionnaire and data were collected from consumers of Guwahati. A brief description of the profile of the respondents is given below-

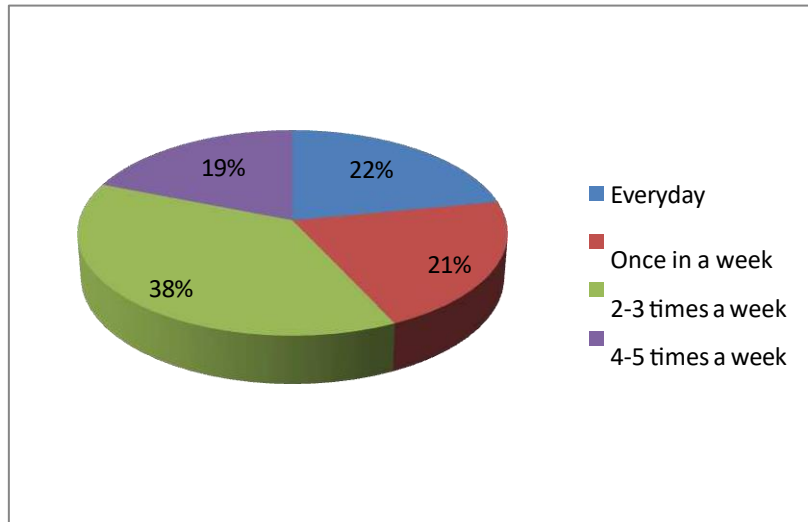
Table 2.1 shows the profile of the respondents

GENDER	Male	63	67%
	Female	37	37%
AGE GROUP	18 to 28 years	49	49%
	29 to 39 years	41	41%
	40 to 59 years	08	8%
	60 and above	2	2%
OCCUPATION	Employed full-time	58	58%
	Employed part-time	07	7%
	Unemployed	08	8%
	Retired	03	3 %
	Student	24	24%
	Higher Secondary	05	5%
QUALIFICATION	Graduate	26	26%
	Postgraduate	69	69%
ANNUAL INCOME	Above 12 L.P.A	14	14%
	8-12 L.P.A	05	5%
	4-8 L.P.A	23	23%
	1-4 L.P.A	26	26%
	Below 1 L.P.A	32	32%

Source: Field Survey

2.1. Consumer Purchase Behaviour

Figure 3.1: Figure showing the frequency level of consumer purchase behaviour

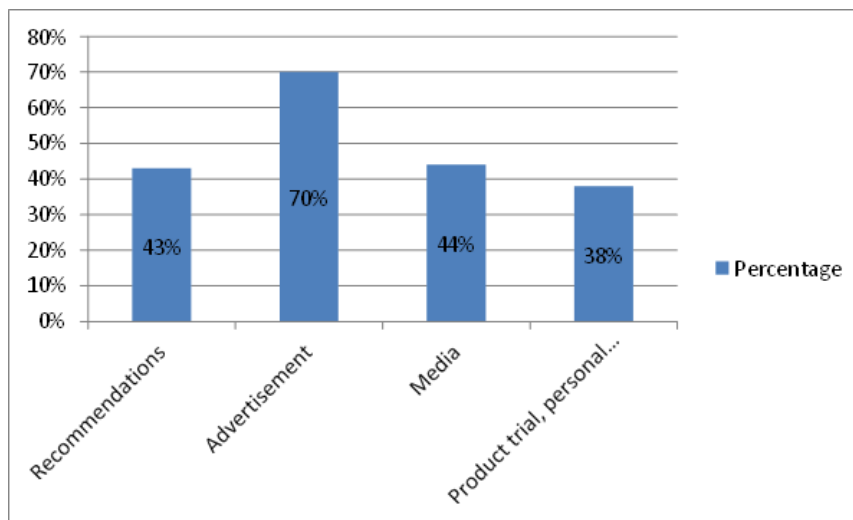


Source: Field survey

From the above pie chart, it can be depicted that 38% of the respondents purchase packaged products 2-3 times per week. On the other hand, 22% of respondents have said that they purchase packaged products every day. The third largest respondent group, 21% purchase products about once a week whereas 19% of the respondents purchase packaged products 4-5 times a week.

3.2. Respondents' information source

Figure 3.2: Respondents' information source



Source: Field Survey

In this question, respondents are asked to choose their source of information when deciding on purchasing the packaged product. The choice includes recommendations, advertisements, and independent sources of information. Most respondents obtain information from advertisements, media and recommendations.

Note: In this particular question the respondents were open to selecting more than one option hence the total responses increased to 195

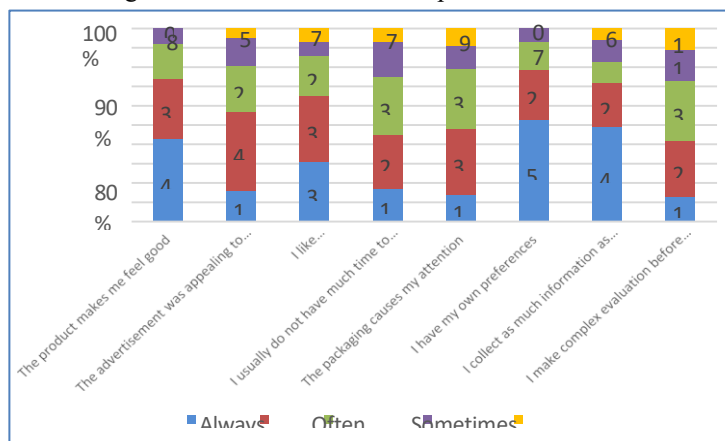
2.3. Consumer Purchase Decision

Table 2.2 shows factors influencing consumer purchase decision

Variables	Always	Often	Sometimes	Not much	Never
The product makes me feel good	43	31	18	8	0
The advertisement was appealing to me	16	41	24	14	5
I like promotions/discounts/deals/coupons	31	34	21	7	7
I usually do not have much time to consider	17	28	30	18	7
The packaging caught my attention	14	34	31	12	9
I have my preferences	53	26	14	7	0
I collect as much information as possible	49	23	11	11	6
I make complex evaluations before buying	13	29	31	16	11

Source: Field survey

Figure 3.3: Count of consumer purchase decisions

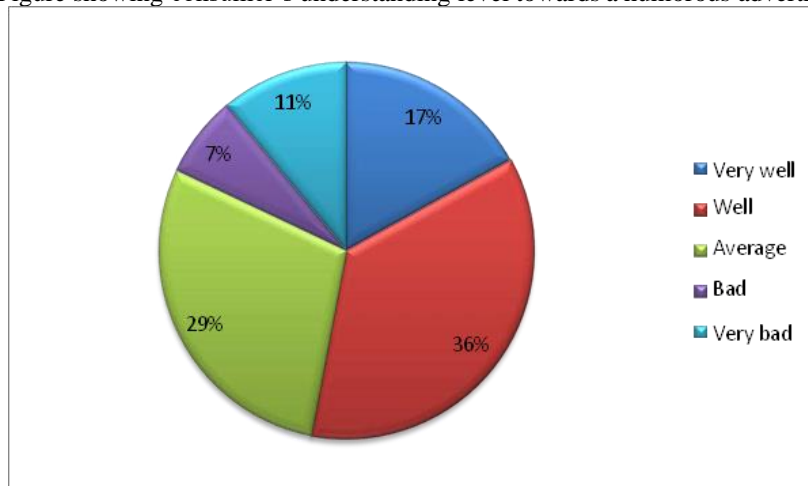


Source: Field survey

This question was asked to understand how a consumer decides what to buy. The question included various options. A majority of 53% (53 in 100) said that they have their preferences like price, reviews etc. 49% (49 in 100) said that they collect as much information as possible before purchasing a product whereas 43% of respondents said that they purchase a product because it makes them feel good. A small section of 17% of respondents said that they don't have enough time to consider.

2.4. Evaluation of the humorous advertisement's message

2.4. Figure showing consumer's understanding level towards a humorous advertisement

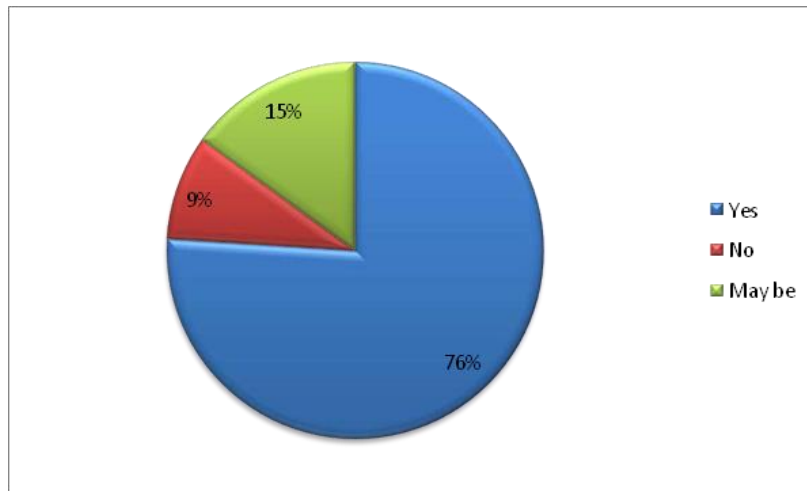


Source: Field Survey

In this section of the questionnaires, a humorous print advertisement from a campaign of Happydent was 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 (36%) thought that the product was well described; 29% of the respondents marked the advertisement was average in communicating the attributes, 11% of respondents said that the advertisement was very well and 7% thought they were "bad" whereas 11% thought it was "very bad"- the message was unclear and difficult to understand.

2.5. Level of humour in the advertisement

Figure 2.5 showing if the consumers find the advertisement funny or not

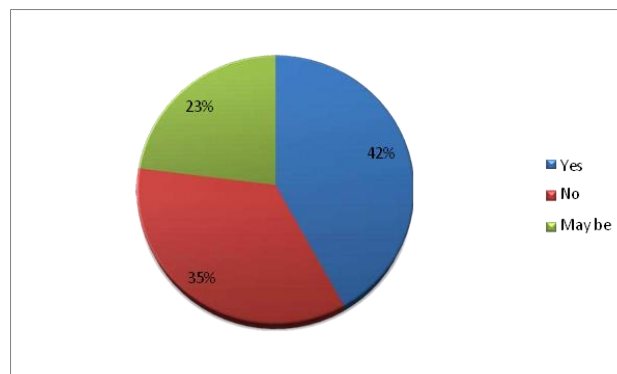


Source: Field Survey

The next question required the respondents to answer whether or not they found the advertisements funny. There is an optional open-ended question for those who chose "No". There were 76 in 100 respondents (76%) answered "yes" and 9 respondents (9%) answered "No". The reasons given for "no" will be discussed in the findings.

2.6. Consumers repurchase decisions solely on one advertisement

Figure 2.6 shows consumers' decision about comparing the product with their existing based solely on this advertisement

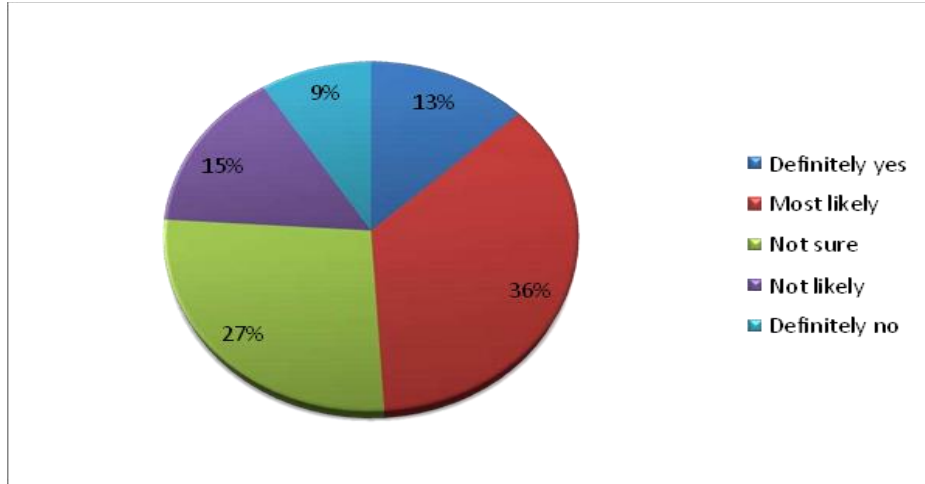


Source: Field Survey

This question started to investigate how consumers are involved in purchasing the product based solely on one humorous advertisement. This question asked the respondent if they would purchase the product based only on the particular advertisement or will they compare it with their existing product choice. The majority of the respondents 42% said that they will purchase the product based only on this advertisement. A medium section of people 35% said that they would not purchase the product while 23% were confused and hence selected the 'Maybe' option.

2.7. Consumers' opinion about gathering enough information based on the advertisement

Figure 2.7 shows consumers' opinions about gathering enough information based on the advertisement

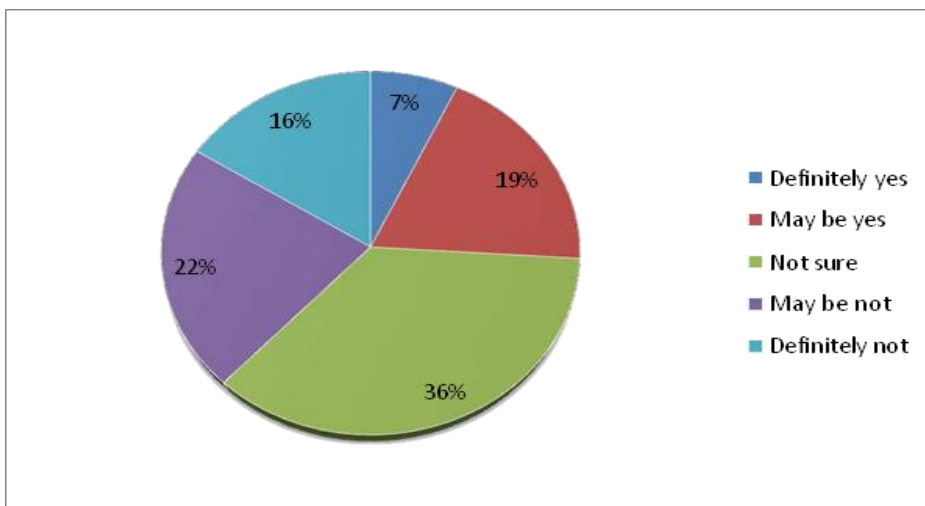


Source: Field Survey

This question was raised to understand if these kinds of humorous advertisements can provide enough information about the product to the consumers (Image 1). The majority of 36% (36 in 100) selected the 'Most likely' option whereas 27% (27 in 100) said they were not sure. A small section of 9% (9 in 100) said they would not find any information about the product based on these advertisements.

2.8. Consumer's purchase decision based on the advertisement

Figure 2.8 shows consumers' purchase decisions based on the advertisements

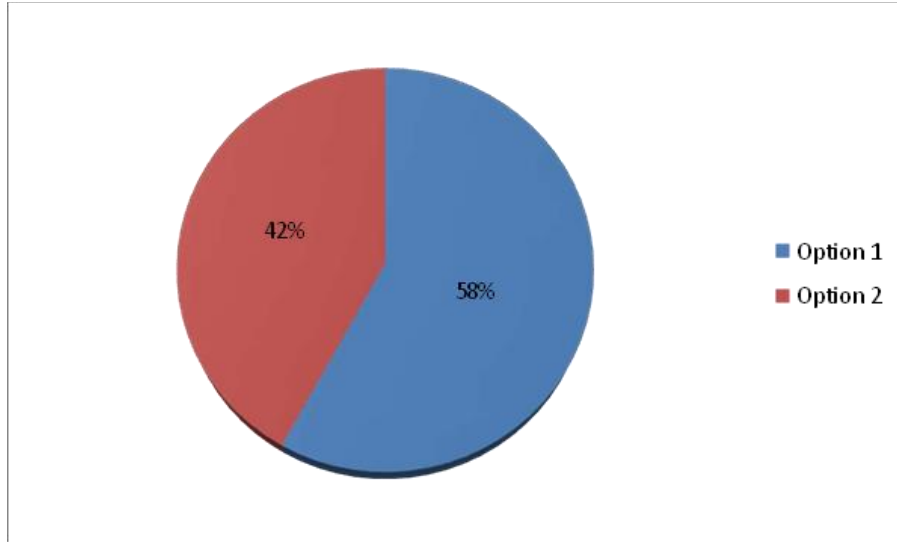


Source: Field Survey

Here, the respondents were asked if they would purchase the product based only on the advertisement (Image 1). The majority of 36% (36 in 100) said they are not sure. The second largest group was respondents who said, "Maybe not". 16% of respondents said they will not purchase whereas 7% (7 in 100) said they are sure that they will purchase the product.

2.9. Comparison of two advertisement

Figure 2.9 Consumers' responses about the attractiveness of the advertisement

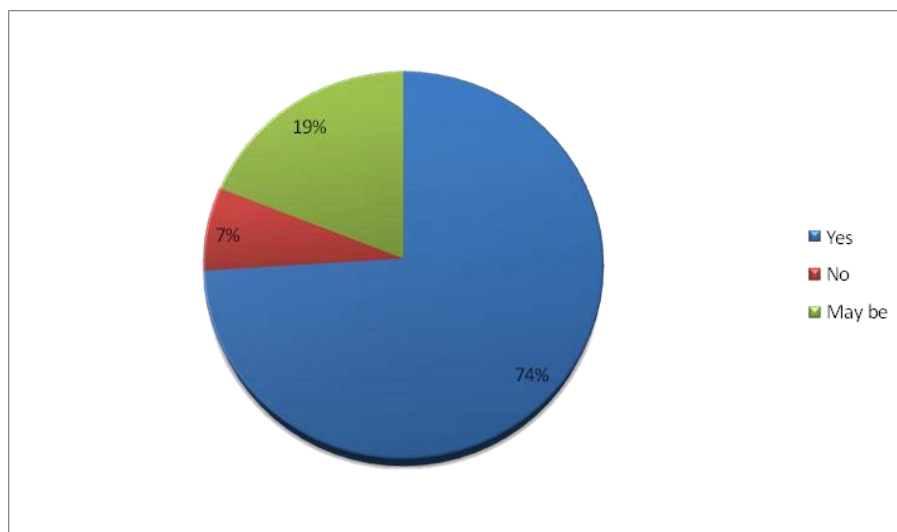


Source: Field Survey

This question included two different advertisements from a same brand Amul (Image 2 and 3). Option 1 was a topical advertisement of the brand depicting a famous movie character 'Bahubali' shown in a funny way, whereas option 2 was a plain yet signature advertisement of the brand. The majority of 58% said that they found the 1st advertisement more attractive whereas 42% of respondents said that they found the 2nd advertisement more attractive. There is an open-ended question to know the reason behind their decision. The reasons are discussed in the findings.

2.10. Consumers' opinion about the necessity of humour in the advertisement

Figure 2.10 shows consumers' opinions about the necessity of humour in the advertisement

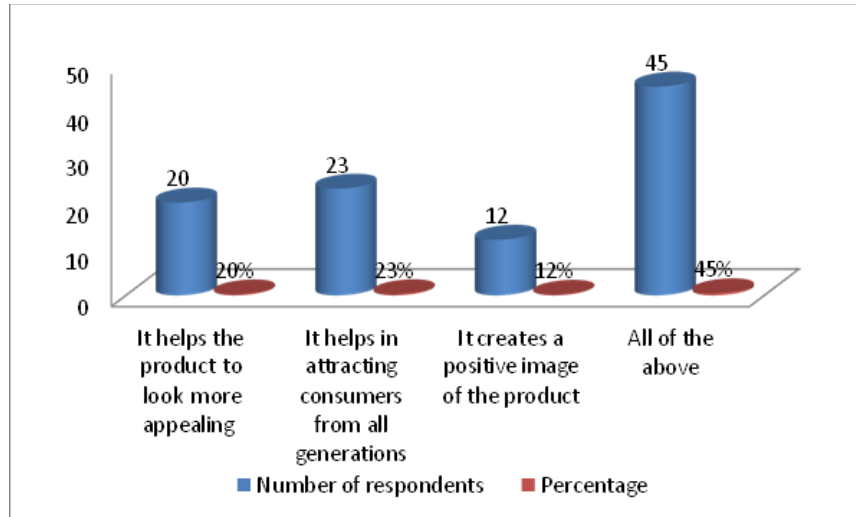


Source: Field Survey

This question was raised in order to know if the respondents think that humour in advertisement is important or not. A majority of 74% (74 in 100) said that they think humour in advertisement is important. A small section of 7% people thinks that humour is not important in an advertisement.

2.11. Consumers' reason why they think humour is important in advertisement

Figure 2.11 shows reasons why consumers think humour is important in an advertisement



Source: Field Survey

The question was asked with a view to understand why the respondents think that humour is important for an advertisement. The respondents were provided with various options. Majority of 45% (45 in 100) selected 'All of the above'. 23% respondents think that humour in an advertisement is important because it helps in attracting consumers from all the generations. 20% of the respondents think that humour is important because it makes a product look good whereas 12% of the respondents think that it creates a positive image for the product.

III. FINDINGS

1. It was found that majority of the respondents think that humour is important for an advertisement because it brings newness to an advertisement. However, many of them believe that in case of already existing well known product there is no need of any special appeal to make the advertisement more appealing.
2. Through the field study and analysis of the various data it was also found that the consumers use various attributes while making purchase decision. Most of the consumers buy a product because it makes them feel good or because they have their own preferences.
3. It was found that humour, if properly used in an advertisement can succeed in attracting consumers towards them. However, it is very important to take care of the fact that it should not offend any group of people.
4. From the study it was found that humorous advertisements can become complicated at times. Hence, the consumers find it difficult to rely on such advertisement in order to make a purchase decision.
5. On asking, if the respondents will choose to compare a product with their current choice based on a humorous advertisement, it was found that most of them are quiet not sure about it.
6. While comparing two different advertisements of a same brand, it was found that majority of consumers liked the humorous advertisement more because they believe that it will help the company to attract more consumers in this competitive world. At the same time, it was also found that some of them found the 2nd one i.e: simple and old advertisement more attractive because they were emotionally attached to it since they grew up watching that advertisement. Hence, this means that there are certain people for whom emotional appeal is more attractive than humour appeal.
7. It was found that people think humour is important for an advertisement because it helps in creating a positive image for the product and they believe that a humour advertisement can attract consumers from all the generations.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, using humor in marketing communications might draw in customers, break through the clutter of advertisements, and establish emotional connections that would increase brand equity and generate buzz. Even if humor is thought to be a simple approach to connect with a wider audience, it should be used sparingly. It is critical to pay

attention to both the target consumers' intellectual capacity and cultural sensitivity. Sentences could offend minority groups within a culture or cast doubt on the promoted brand. The appropriateness of humor for the product category and brand identity is another important factor. Humor may not be suitable for all product categories and brands, particularly those when the primary evaluation criteria are price-value balance, functionality, security, or reliability. This study investigates how Guwahati customers respond to humor as a method for marketing communication. The respondents stated that viewers of the Guwahati advertisement enjoy humor as a means of communication. During times of economic downturn, humor enhances the brand's personality and increases brand awareness and affinity more so than it acts as a direct sales strategy. Nonetheless, brand selection may not be much influenced by humor in comparison to pricing or other value-oriented offerings.

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