


# “Impact of using humor advertisement on airline customers’ mental image”

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## Impact of using humor advertisement on airline customers' mental image

### Abstract

The study aims to investigate the impact of using humor advertisements on airline customers' mental image. To achieve the main objective, a questionnaire was designed according to research hypotheses. The study population consists of airline customers that operate in Jordan and those who were exposed to a humor advertisement on the planes. Each person was asked before filling the questionnaire if he was previously exposed during one of his flights to humor advertisement or not. A convenient sample of 700 people was selected, 587 valid questionnaires have been collected. The research concluded that humor advertising has a significant impact on the formation of airline customers' mental image, moreover, aggressive humor variable is considered the most influential variable on airline customers' mental image. The research suggested some recommendations, such as: airlines should adopt humorous marketing activities in high level, and to benefit from leading companies experiences in order to meet customer needs and desires. As well as, they should encourage customers to respond to them in expressing their opinion about humor advertisements they make.

**Keywords:** humor advertisement, mental image, affiliated humor, self-enhancement humor, self-defeating humor, aggressive humor.

**JEL Classification:** M3.

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### Introduction

Access to customers' feelings and impact on their mental image for purchase is of great importance, so various organizations are trying to use integrated marketing techniques based on humor as a way to increase their sales (Navrátilová & Milichovský, 2015). Since humor has become one of the most widely used emotional appeals in universal advertising. Previous studies and researches have provided a variety of views on humor advertisement effects in increasing customer demand for products and services of various organizations (Chang & Chang, 2014). In the same context, few studies and researches have attempted to analyze the emotional response of customers to humoristic advertisements (Limbu et al., 2012).

It is clear that business organizations are looking for all favors their continuation and growth and increasing their market share in order to gain customers marketing when facing the intensive competition. Recently, many modern business organizations in general have started flying companies to use humor in their ads as an effective communication tool with their customers. For example, New Zealand Airlines has replaced the

boring instructions for passenger safety with videos that include fun humoristic scenes, which later become a strategy that be used by other airlines around the world. Companies use this strategy more than ever before to ensure that their customers are continually satisfied (Mathies et al., 2016). In Jordan, Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) launched this new type of marketing advertising for the first time in October 2016, before the US presidential election.

The results of many studies and researches in the field of advertising have confirmed the role of number of cognitive process, emotional and personal processes in formation and interpretation of humor. Each process highlights different aspects of customer motivations, which create a sense of humor. These processes provide an opportunity to interpret humor in the context of multiculturalism. However, various types of humor have been used successfully in advertising, although there is insufficient knowledge of the cultures diversity in some countries (Hatzithomas et al., 2011). Some studies and researches have indicated that humor advertisements always offer better results than non-humor ones (Limbu et al., 2012; Lee, 2014). The most important marketing benefits of humor can be summarized as follows (Fugate, 1998; Venkatesh & Senthilkumar, 2015; Upadhyaya, 2015; Djambaska et al., 2016; Mehmood & Masood, 2016):

1. Increases customer attention.
2. Be more convincing to customers.
3. Enhances source credibility.

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4. Increase customer awareness and interest in products and services.
5. Contributes to customers convincing.
6. Enhances customers' good mood.
7. Reduces customer complaints.

According to Mathies et al. (2016), most of previous studies regarding the use of humor in advertising have identified many measures, but the most widely used metric is provided by Mathies et al. (2016), which includes four dimensions (the affiliative humor and humor of self-enhancement and self-deprecating humor and aggressive humor), In this research it can be relied on as dimensions to measure the variable marketing humor for the comprehensiveness of all cases of positive and negative, and they can be illustrated as follows (Mathies et al., 2016):

**1) Affiliated humor:** this humor is targeting others in a positive way, and often arises in everyday situations, such as when people share funny stories. In social relationships, the affiliative humor can contribute to reducing unpleasant personal tensions, facilitating recognition of others, and increasing group cohesion. In light of this context, affiliative humor has extensive applications in marketing field to enhance meetings between service providers and customers, and it promotes building of good social relationships to add value to customers. At the same time, it is useful for service providers as it brings them to joy with high levels of self-esteem, emotional stability and caring for others.

**2) Self-enhancing humor:** it provides a mental defense mechanism by enabling people to deal with unpleasant situations or stress. Thus it provides positive effects that improve confidence and wellbeing and prevent clients depression. It can also be a successful strategy for service providers to reduce negative impacts in work environment. It is an effective way to deal with stressful situations well, so that it can provide a useful resource that increases the psychological well-being of service providers.

**3) Self-defeating humor:** this type of humor breaks down customers because it uses offensive jokes, and often expresses cynicism, and thus does not achieve the well-being of customers, because it is relatively frustrating self-confidence and desire to appreciate. So it is described as clearly aggressive and influenced by the level of emotional work of service providers.

**4) Aggressive humor:** it attempts deliberately to degrade customers. Examples of this kind of humor are obvious offensive jokes, discriminatory jokes, and inappropriate or degrading jokes, and thus lead to service failure.

According to Djambaska et al. (2016) the most important types of humor marketing can be illustrated as follows:

1. Funny marketing: humor depends on surprise dimension.
2. Marketing humor – emotional: humor depends on the peaceful excitement dimension.
3. Marketing humoristic – sarcastic: humor depends on routine dimension.
4. Marketing humor – comedy emotional: humor in it depends on excitement dimension.
5. Humor marketing – full comedy: humor depends on ordinal dimension and after excitement.

According to Chang and Chang (2014), humor marketing trends can be categorized into three directions:

1. Emotional orientation: The humor ads through some jokes tends to alleviate customers' bad mood and to reduce repressed negative emotions, resulting in a sense of relaxation and good feelings, and sense of humor.
2. Perception orientation: Dealing with contradictions or interpreting a number of conflicting messages can lead to humor development, which is based on contradictory decision theory.
3. Social orientation: This type of humor marketing orientation is based on excellence theory, which means that social situation resulting from humor will make customers realize that they are superior to others. Targeted customers by advertisements often feel superior.

**Image.** Image is defined as “the way the public perceives the company or its products” (Kotler & Keller, 2006). A mental image means the image of a brand, brand or product in the minds of the target consumers in an appropriate market segment (Alaq, 2008). The decision to replace the mental image is of a strategic nature, not only for the organizations concerned with the provision of goods or services, but for the development or identification of other elements of the current marketing strategy such as pricing decisions, elements or tools of promotion and distribution outlets in addition to the decisions of the product (Obaidat, 2006; Nguyen, 2006).

The image consists of three interrelated elements that will be relied upon in this study (Al-Dhamour, Aish, 2005; Stephen, Omar, Abdul Wahid, Ismail, & Harun, 2007):

- ◆ **The cognitive image element** is a set of beliefs about the thing that leads to an acceptable image, and the size of the external incentives plays a significant role in shaping the perceived image.

Some may say that the image of an individual is more accurate than the image of another individual in case it relies on more real information.

- ◆ **Affect element:** relates to incentives in terms of how the individual evaluates the subject he wants, and the motivations determine what we want to get from the thing, which in turn affects the assessment of the object.
- ◆ **The element of behavior and behavior (desire):** the desire component of the image is similar to behavior, its direct relationship with other elements as it depends on the image created during

the cognitive phase that is evaluated during the affect phase, and all the elements constitute the decision process.

**Based on the above literature review, the main hypothesis is:** Humor advertisement has a significant impact on airline customers' mental image.

### 1. Research model

Due to the above literature review, the researcher suggests the model presented in Figure 1.

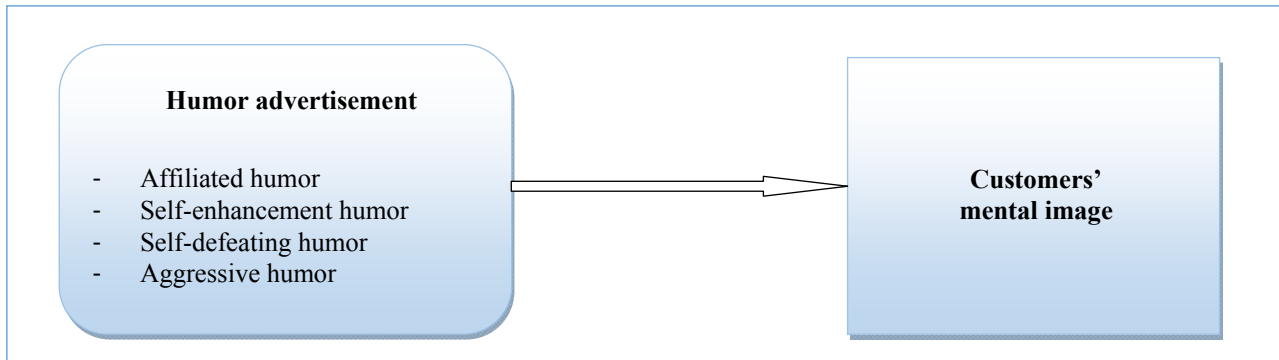


Fig. 1. Research model

Source: Mathies, Chiew, and Kleinaltenkamp (2016).

## 2. Research methodology

The research is based on descriptive analytical methodology to answer its questions and achieve its goals.

**2.1. Research instrument.** A questionnaire was prepared to collect the current research data consisting of two dimensions. The first dimension is related to demographic variables associated with research sample represented by gender, age, education level, and Monthly Average Income in USD. The second dimension includes a number of paragraphs related to the variables in question: the humor advertisement, which was based on Martin et al. (2003) and Mathies et al. (2016).

*And the mental image airlines customers gave and it was based on the main indicators identified by the researcher (Hatch and Schultz, 1997), which included knowledge, feeling and believes.*

Five point Likert scale was used as follows: strongly agree = 5 points, agree = 4 points, neutral = 3 points, disagree = 2 points, and strongly disagree = 1 point.

**2.2. Research population and sampling.** The study population consists of airline customers that operate in Jordan and those who were exposed to a humor advertisement on the planes. Each person was asked before filling the questionnaire if he was previously exposed during one of his flights to humor advertisement or not. A convenient

sample of 700 people was selected. The study questionnaire has been distributed. 587 valid questionnaires have been collected.

### 3. Study sample characteristics

Frequencies and percents for sample responses are as follows:

#### 3.1. Gender.

Table 1. Study sample distribution according to gender

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	339	57.8%
Female	248	42.2%
Total	587	100%

Source: statistical processing.

Table 1 indicates that 57.8% of the sample are males, while 42.2% are females, which indicates a high proportion of males in the study sample.

#### 3.2. Age.

Table 2. Study sample distribution according to age

Options	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30 years	98	16.7%
30 to less than 40 years	229	39%
40 to less than 50 years	196	33.4%
50+	64	10.9%
Total	587	100%

Source: statistical processing.

Table 2 indicates that 16.7% of the study sample age is less than 30 years, 39% of the sample age is between 30-40 years and 33.4% of the sample age is between 40-50 years, 9% of the sample age is more than 50 years, which indicates high proportion of youth people.

**3.3. Educational level.**

Table 3. Study sample distribution according to educational level

Option	Frequency	Percent
Secondary or Less	82	10%
Community Diploma	78	13.3%
BSC	262	44.6%
High Diploma	54	9.2%
MSC	88	15%
PhD	23	3.9%
Total	587	100%

Source: statistical processing.

Table 3 indicates that 10% of the sample have secondary qualification or less, 13.3% have community diploma, 44.6% of the sample have bachelor’s degree, 9.2% of the sample have high diploma on an average 15% of the sample have master degree, and 3.9% of the sample has doctoral, which indicates a high percentage of university qualification.

Table 4 indicates that 9.9% of the sample has a monthly average income of less than \$500, and that 5.5% of the sample has an average monthly

**5.1. Affiliated humor.**

Table 5. Means and standard deviations of sample’s responses regarding the affiliated humor variable

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
I am very interested in introducing some marketing activities that make existing customers laugh	587	1.00	5.00	4.1158	.87643
Airlines are considered very moderate in offering some marketing activities that make their current customers laugh	587	1.00	5.00	3.5349	.97410
Airlines often make existing customers laugh by providing promotion programs that we know	587	1.00	5.00	3.5162	1.02577
Airlines try to convey jokes or ridiculous situations to their current customers through their advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.6065	1.01196
Airlines are trying to make current and prospective customers laugh when they do some marketing activities	587	1.00	5.00	3.6337	1.01713
General mean	587	1.00	5.00	3.6814	.70249

Table 5 above indicates that there are positive attitudes since the sample means are more than the virtual mean 3. It is also indicated that statement (I am very interested in introducing some marketing activities that make existing

income between 500 to less than \$1000, and 33.4% of the sample has a monthly average income between 1000 – to less than \$1500, and 47.5% of the sample has a monthly average income of more than \$1500. This indicates that the average monthly income of the sample study is high.

**3.4. Monthly average income in USD**

Table 4. Study sample distribution according monthly income

Option	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$500	58	9.9%
500 to less than 1000	32	5.5%
1000 to less than 1500	196	33.4%
1500+	279	47.5%
No. Responses	22	3.7%
Total	587	100%

Source: statistical processing.

**4. Reliability test**

A Cronbach Alpha test was used to ascertain instrument reliability. The value was = 0.936 for the questionnaire. All values are accepted since they are more than 60% (Malhotra, 2004).

**5. Study results**

Means and standard deviations, frequencies, and percents of the sample responses were calculated (Table 5).

customers laugh) has the highest mean amounting 4.11, while paragraph ‘Airlines often make existing customers laugh by providing promotion programs that we know’ has the lowest mean amounting 3.52.

**5.2. Self-promotion humor.**

Table 6. Means and standard deviations of sample’s responses regarding the self-promotion humor variable

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
The airlines offer some advertising (applications) for jokes, which I can resort to when I feel upset and sad.	587	1.00	5.00	3.5366	1.00167
When I feel bad or unhappy, I usually try to watch airline ads	587	1.00	5.00	3.6235	.97038
Airlines believe that the use of humor in the marketing field is the mean, which achieves many goals on the personal level of their customers	587	1.00	5.00	3.3714	1.04917
I do not feel sad or upset when reading or watching some of commercial marketing airlines programs	587	1.00	5.00	3.5196	.96219
Airlines often try to use humor in some of their marketing activities as a very effective way of dealing with or limiting their customers’ problems	587	1.00	5.00	3.4429	1.01595
General mean	587	1.00	5.00	3.4988	.70651

Table above indicates that there are positive attitudes since the sample’s means are more than the virtual mean 3. It is also indicated that statement ‘When I feel bad or unhappy, I usually try to watch airline ads’ has the highest mean

amounting 3.62 while ‘Airlines believe that the use of humor in the marketing field is the mean, which achieves many goals on the personal level of their customers’ has the lowest mean amounting 3.37.

**5.3. Self-defeating humor.**

Table 7. Means and standard deviations of sample’s responses regarding the self-defeating humor variable

The airlines I deal with	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Do not make their customers through some of their marketing activities on themselves laugh too much	587	1.00	5.00	3.7121	1.02723
Do not seek to use humor marketing activities that harm their customers and put them feel psychological collapse	587	1.00	5.00	3.5997	.94465
Have a desire to offer some marketing activities, by means of which their customers feel respect and appreciation	587	1.00	5.00	3.6934	.95532
Do not provide any humor marketing activities that harm their customers	587	1.00	5.00	3.6985	.95248
Do not exaggerate in the delivery of some ads, which include some jokes that are not ridiculous	587	1.00	5.00	3.7394	.98549
General mean	587	1.00	5.00	3.6886	.68244

Table 7 indicates that there are positive attitudes since the sample’s means are more than the virtual mean 3. It is also indicated that paragraph ‘Do not exaggerate in the delivery of some ads, which include some jokes that are not ridiculous’ has the

highest mean amounting 3.74, while statement ‘Do not seek to use humor marketing activities that harm their customers and put them feel psychological collapse’ has the lowest mean amounting 3.60.

**5.4. Aggressive humor.**

Table 8. Means and standard deviations of sample’s responses regarding the aggressive humor variable

The airlines I deal with	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Do not insult their customers through humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.6678	.94039
Are Interested in how customers interpret their humor marketing programs	587	1.00	5.00	3.6201	.97606
Obscure some of their humor advertisements that are not appropriate for the country’s general situation	587	1.00	5.00	3.7888	.90298
Do not use their competitors tactics from other companies to provide some marketing activities that include jokes or blunt jokes	587	1.00	5.00	3.6014	.95166
Try to offer their marketing activities without abusing their customers	587	1.00	5.00	3.6474	.93838
General Mean	587	1.00	5.00	3.6651	.66614

Table 8 indicates that there are positive attitudes since the sample’s means are more than the virtual mean 3. It is also indicated that paragraph ‘Obscure some of their humor advertisements that are not appropriate for the country’s general situation’ has

the highest mean amounting 3.79, while paragraph ‘Do not use their competitors tactics from other companies to provide some marketing activities that include jokes or blunt jokes’ has the lowest mean amounting 3.60.

**5.5. Mental image.**

Table 9. Means and standard deviations of sample’s responses regarding the mental image variable

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
1. I speak positively about any airline that offers humor advertisements to my friends and acquaintances	587	1.00	5.00	3.6337	.96372
2. I do not look for other airlines	587	1.00	5.00	3.6951	.98661
3. I do not feel frustrated when dealing with an airline that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.9012	1.05179
4. I feel that any airline offers humor advertisements through its ads is successful	587	1.00	5.00	3.8058	.91056
5. I feel that any airline that offers humor advertisements through its ads is distinct	587	1.00	5.00	3.8194	1.01596
6. I am satisfied with the service provided by airline that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.6917	.96278
7. I have a good impression upon dealing with airline’s website that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.7666	.96441
8. I have a positive perception towards the information provided by airline that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.6661	.93341
9. There is an increase in airline credibility level that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.6457	.98131
10. I have confidence in the information provided by the airline that offers humor advertisements	587	1.00	5.00	3.5111	1.00058
General Mean	587	1.00	5.00	3.7136	.66668

Table above indicates that there are positive attitudes since the sample’s means are more than the virtual mean (3).

**6. Main hypothesis**

The main hypothesis is respected in a tabulated form (Table 10).

Table 10. Humor advertisement has significant impact in airlines customers’ mental image

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.786a	.618	.615	.41346

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	160.961	4	40.240	235.398	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	99.490	582	.171		
	Total	260.451	586			

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	Constant	.419	.110		3.824	.000
	Affiliated humor	.159	.036	.168	4.478	.000
	Self-promotion humor	.154	.038	.163	4.092	.000
	Self-defeating humor	.205	.037	.210	5.560	.000
	Aggressive humor	.385	.037	.385	10.436	.000

The multiple regression test was used to test the above hypothesis. It was found that the calculated F-value = 235.398 was statistically significant at 0.05 level this indicates that the advertisement had a significant effect on the airline customers image. The strength of the relationship was 0.786 which has high impact; the t-value for each variable is statistically significant at 0.05 level, which indicates that there is an impact of each variable on the dependent variable. The

aggressive humor is the most influential variable on customers’ mental image.

**Conclusion**

The study aims to investigate the impact of using humor advertisements on airlines customers’ mental image. The study population consists of airline customers that operate in Jordan and those who were exposed to a humor advertisement on the

planes. Each person was asked before filling the questionnaire if he was previously exposed during one of his flights to humor advertisement or not. A convenient sample of 700 people was selected, 587 valid questionnaires have been collected. The research drew many conclusions that are consistent with what was concluded in previous studies. The most notably are:

1. Airlines use very different humor advertisements nowadays.
2. Humor advertising has a significant impact on the formation of airline customers' mental image.
3. Aggressive humor variable is considered the most influential variable on airline customers' mental image.

The variable of self-promotion humor is the least influential ones on airline customers' mental image.

Due to the above conclusions, the author recommends that:

1. Airlines should highly adopt humorous marketing activities, and benefit from leading companies' experiences in order to meet customer needs and desires.
2. Airlines have to encourage customers to respond to them in expressing their opinion about humorous advertisements they make.
3. Airlines should take care of all the elements of humorous advertisement to achieve the customers' psychological satisfaction which helps in forming company's positive image.
4. Local airlines have to benefit from world's leading companies' experiences in application of humor marketing activities, and how to invest interaction between company and customers to form a good mental image.
5. To carry out studies that may be applied to other service sectors.

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