



Is Funny Enough?

An Analysis of the Impact of Humor in
Advertisements

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Executive Summary

Humor is one of the oldest and most common tools that television advertisers use to connect with audiences. The concept is simple: use humor as a vehicle to connect with viewers and hopefully they'll either start to buy or buy more of your product. Despite the simplicity of the concept, large-scale research into the role of humor has been problematic. Because of our unique approach to scoring all television/video advertisements, Ace Metrix was able to perform a large-scale analysis and was able to determine the funniest ads, the funniest brands, the funniest industries, and most importantly— determine if humor equated with effectiveness.

Because humor is so ubiquitous in advertising, we examined every single nationally-breaking advertisement in the United States from January 2011 through the end of March 2012 – a sum that includes more than 6,500 ads, to measure different aspects of funny. Using a newly devised, objective measure to determine how many viewers found an advertisement humorous, this study reports on both the funniest ads and funniest brands over the past five quarters. In addition, we confirm and extend previous research demonstrating that there is little evidence that humor alone is an effective advertising strategy.

Our work resulted in the following key findings:

- Approximately one-in-five advertisements on television was funny
- Certain industries and brands consistently produced humorous ads
- While ads that aired during the Super Bowl measured nearly three times as funny as ads that debuted at another time, Super Bowl ads were not any more effective than ads that ran elsewhere during the measurement period
- Humorous ads tend to garner higher levels of viewer attention, increased likeability for the ad, and improved willingness to watch the ad again in the future
- Humorous ads tend to be light on informative content and, ultimately, are not a prescription for advertising success

Other key takeaways from our study include:

It is all about the message.

Messages must be built of substance and should use humor as a supplement—not a replacement—to create the most effective ads.

Relevance drives lasting impact in funny ads.

The most effective funny ads were relatable. The funniest ad in our study, “Baby Wets the Room”, from Huggies has broad relevance to many people. Conversely, a funny ad on a fictional space ship, while funny, does not deliver the effectiveness of a highly relatable ad. Febreze’s latest campaign, using real people in unusual situations scored high on both relevance and the funny score. The key question to ask your creative team is this: ‘Is the funny aspect of the story relatable?’

Funny and informative wins.

The most effective funny ads are also informative. Take the Chevy Cruze 42 MPG ad (described below) for example; a hilarious ad communicating 42MPG to retirees that unmistakably drives the message of 42 MPG.

Funny drives Attention and Likeability of an ad.

Depending on the campaign objective, driving attention and likeability are the most highly correlated metrics with humor, along with a measure of likelihood of repeat viewing of the ad (watchability). These measures alone, however, don’t drive overall effectiveness. Keys to effectiveness are relevance and information in addition to the ad’s attention-getting and likeable attributes.

Demographics don’t matter.

Surprisingly, we found that with a few extreme exceptions, people of different demographics perceived the degree to which an ad was funny the same way. This was surprising considering that ads typically poke fun at particular demographics, men or women for example.

Funny ads are less likely to drive purchase intent than other ads.

Funny ads drive other great advertising attributes such as attention and likeability. However, low information and relevance on many funny ads results in creating lower desire for the advertised products than non-funny ads.

Introduction

One of the oldest and most common approaches to succeed in television advertising is to leverage humor to connect with the audience. For many advertisers, the link between effective advertising and humorous content is inseparable. Moreover, many scholars and practitioners alike believe that humor is a fundamental persuasion strategy that redirects viewers' attentions to the subject-at-hand and creates an opportunity to convince the audience of the merits of the product being advertised. Ads that are funny are supposedly more memorable, more effective, garner greater brand recognition, and promote greater brand differentiation.

While academic meta-analyses on the benefits of incorporating humor in advertisements are mixed (Eisend, 2009; Binet & Field, 2007), ads featuring humorous content are nonetheless commonplace on television (Beard, 2005; Eisend, 2009). Indeed, one needs to pay only casual attention to the ads featured during each year's Super Bowl to gain a full understanding of how much the advertising profession believes in the power of humor as a communication medium.

Our analysis had three goals:

First, we wanted to take stock of humor in advertising and report on the top funniest ads and funniest brands in the past five quarters. Since Ace Metrix tests every nationally-breaking televised advertisement, we are in a unique position to provide a landscape-view of how the funniest-of-the-funny stacked up against each other.

Second, from a contextual perspective, there is nothing in the world of advertising that's bigger than the Super Bowl. We wanted to understand what role humor played in Super Bowl ads. Were Super Bowl ads funnier than ads that aired at other times during the year? If so, how much funnier were they?

Finally, we wanted to better understand what role humor had in terms of explaining advertising effectiveness. While numerous scholars and professional organizations have considered this question, none of them has had the luxury of such a large and robust sample of ads to examine. Are funny ads better ads? We wanted to explore the relationships between our standard scores—which measure advertising effectiveness—and a new metric, the “Funny Index,” that measures humor in advertising.

Methodology

To determine how “funny” an ad was we needed an objective method for scoring advertisements—a “Funny Index”. Because being funny is typically considered a subjective appraisal, we developed an approach based on voluntary open-ended comments made by viewers in our surveys. That is, each Ace Metrix survey includes an optional open-ended response that instructs viewers that “The advertiser wants to know what you think about the ad.”

Viewers can choose to comment about an ad with a response up to 2,000 characters long. In general, about 50% of respondents leave an open-ended comment, yielding a sizeable pool from which to derive a “Funny Index”.

To quantify the Funny Index, we used text analytics to flag viewers who provided a response indicating that something about the ad was humorous. The trigger-words for humor were: “funny,” “lol,” “laugh,” “lmfao,” “hilarious,” “good joke”, or “chuckle.” We then also identified open-ended comments that indicated failed attempts at humor: “not funny,” “unfunny”, or “bad joke” and removed those failed attempts at humor from those initially flagged. Ultimately, the proportion of viewers in each ad who indicated that something about the ad was humorous served as a lower-bound estimate of how many people agreed that the ad was funny.¹ In determining the proportion of viewers who indicated a trigger word, we included those viewers who chose not to respond at all to the optional open-ended response in the denominator of that ratio.²

Furthermore, because advertisements are in competition with each other for viewer’s attentions, we wanted to turn that proportion into an index—that is, a user-friendly guide for marketers to appreciate how relatively funny an advertisement was. To be clear, the “Funny Index” takes the proportion of viewers who indicated that the ad was funny and divides it by the average “funny proportion” across all ads,³ and then multiplies that ratio by 100. Scores that are above 100 are funnier than average, while scores below 100 are less funny than average. As an example: a score of 200 is twice as funny as the typical advertisement.

One might wonder about ads that elicit unintended negative responses from viewers like “not funny.” What we have observed in our data is that these comments are generally few and far between. That is, the highest number of “not funny” mentions in a particular advertisement was 5 (for a Dunkin Donuts’ ad entitled “Comedy Central Dunkin’ Commercial”). We believe that most respondents prefer to leave open-ended responses blank in situations where they feel an ad is a failed attempt at humor.

¹ It is a lower-bound estimate because the open-ended comment is voluntary.

² We believe it is more accurate to include those who did not provide a response in the denominator of the ratio as those individuals were not affected enough by the ad to provide *any* commentary—funny or otherwise.

³ The average proportion of funny trigger words is 2.2%

Findings

The Funniest Ads, Brands, and Industry

The funniest ad since January 1, 2011 was “Baby Wets The Room” created by *Huggies* from the summer of 2011. In demonstrating the benefits of new diaper technology through a series of baby “accidents”, it’s not hard to understand why more than one-in-four viewers voluntarily indicated that this ad was comical. In fact, with a Funny Index score of 1214, this ad was perceived as more than 12 times as funny as the average television commercial. Further insight about why the ad was humorous comes from the large number of open-ended comments mentioning words like “relatable” or “this really happens.” Clearly, many viewers perceived this ad as depicting a relevant, real-world situation with a humorous spin—the exact recipe that scholars of the effective use of humor in advertising have previously identified (see Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell, & Parsons, 1995).

The top 10 funniest advertisements since January 1, 2011 are presented in Table 1. What’s amazing about this list is its face validity. In reviewing these ads, we think it is fairly clear that they contain considerable humorous content. Our position, however, is not based on subjective appraisal. Ace Metrix considers itself akin to a news organization reporting facts. While other advertising effectiveness firms might proffer opinions about which ads are the “funniest”, “cutest,” or “most persuasive,” this list is made from objective scores based on how many funny-related comments each ad elicited in viewers. In other words, this list comes from data and survey responses—not our subjective judgment.

Ad Title	Brand	Air Date	Funny Index	Ace Score	Current Category Norm
Baby Wets The Room	Huggies	2011-06-27	1214	588	498
Man Would Lose June	Buffalo Wild Wings Grill	2012-02-27	1168	507	581
Man Is Afraid Of Fish	Miller Lite	2011-08-01	1107	526	479
Woman Finds Ring In Muffin	Wal-Mart	2011-12-12	999	587	529
SB 11: Reply All	Bridgestone	2011-02-06	994	558	528
He Would Lose May	Buffalo Wild Wings Grill	2012-02-29	990	482	581
Charlie Sheen: Upgrade Now	DirecTV	2012-03-01	955	519	510
Everything You Need For Back To College	Wal-Mart	2011-08-08	954	582	529
Chevy Happy Grad	Chevrolet	2012-01-22	954	618	524
Clean Up Anything	Clorox Laundry	2011-09-16	939	561	564

Table 1: Top Funniest Ads

It is important to appreciate what it means to be on top of the Ace Metrix funniest ads list. Of the more than 6,500 funny ads that we tested since January 1, 2011⁴, these ads elicited at least nine times as many open-ended comments indicating that they were humorous—a truly remarkable effect. Furthermore, when you consider that the minimum sample size used in an Ace Metrix survey is 500 respondents, there is considerable precision underlying the top entries on this list.

Another observation worth mentioning is that about one-in-five advertisements tested had at least 20 viewers who indicated that something about the ad was funny. While 20 viewers is clearly an arbitrary threshold point, we used it as a “conservative” measure to indicate whether an ad was deemed funny or not funny by the audience. What’s interesting about this statistic is that it echoes similar estimates of the proportion of humorous ads on television reported by other scholars across a variety of different studies (Eisend, 2009).

A final note about Table 1 that is immediately noticeable is that both Wal-Mart and Buffalo Wild Wings each have two advertisements on the list. Wal-Mart produced “Woman Finds Ring In Muffin,” in which an unintended marriage proposal results from a muffin baking mishap, and “Everything You Need For Back To College” where a father discovers his son pretending to be in study hall when he is actually attending a wrestling match featuring a chicken. Buffalo Wild Wing’s produced “Man Would Lose June” and “He Would Lose May” both geared toward highlighting March Madness. Although these four ads are interesting and worthy of their own analyses, it is natural when looking at the top 10 list to wonder whether some brands are particularly good at being funny. That is, have some brands figured out the funny recipe?

To answer this question we isolated brands that aired at least 5 advertisements since January 1, 2011, a reasonable threshold for “proving” consistent ability to create humorous advertisements. Table 2 lists the top-performing brands based on their average Funny Index score.⁵ Doritos, who aired a number of high-performing Super Bowl ads, leads the pack with a Funny Index average of 635 percent. In other words, the average Doritos’ ad elicited more than six times as many voluntarily comments indicating that the ad was humorous than the typical advertisement.

Brand	Funny Index	Average Ace Score	Total Ads Aired
Doritos	635	631	6
Clorox Laundry	585	550	11
eBay	501	532	6
Farmers	454	531	9
Slim Jim	452	559	6
Aflac	442	544	6
New Era Caps	421	526	6

4 Up until April 5, 2012

5 Using the threshold of having aired at least 5 ads reduces the number of unique brands up for consideration from 960 down to 388.

Miller Lite	420	476	23
Geico	401	464	48
Bounce	365	496	9

Table 2: Top 10 Funny Index by Brand

When examining Table 2, it becomes clear that part of the story about the role of humor in advertising involves identifying brands that consistently produce funny ads. Table 3 shows how some brands have had a considerable humor-impact on viewers by airing a large number of ads that have been relatively humorous.

Brand	# of Ads Above Funny Index	Average Ace	Total Ads	% Deemed "Funnier" than
Target	85	498	110	77%
Wal-Mart	61	517	108	56%
Geico	44	464	48	92%
Progressive	37	503	42	88%
Chevrolet	26	542	96	27%
AT&T Wireless	22	565	53	42%
Best Buy	22	534	43	51%
Honda	22	496	46	48%
Verizon Wireless	22	568	79	28%
Bud Light	21	488	33	64%

Table 3: Brands With the Most Ads Above Funny Index Average (100)

Clearly, Target, Wal-Mart and Geico have each made a real commitment to humorous advertising. That is, in the last five quarters these brands have produced a startling number of advertisements that have been identified as funny. Over time, the brands featured in Table 3 have become reliable bets in terms of producing large quantities of advertising copy that aims to make viewers laugh—a point their competitors no doubt have noticed. While the distribution of industries represented on this list is fairly diverse, the Insurance industry has the highest Funny Index average where a typical Insurance advertisement elicits more than twice as many humor-related comments than the average ad on television (Insurance Funny Index Average = 231).

From a competitive perspective, it is clear that the “funny bar” is higher in the Insurance industry as many brands are battling for the title of ‘Industry’s funniest’. As a creative strategist, one might revel in this uniform industry-focus as it sets the tone and structure for campaigns.

Alternatively, a strategist might see this industry-wide similarity as an opportunity to distinguish a brand from the rest of the pack. Or, alternatively, a strategist might establish a mixed approach.

For example, consider Allstate. In running the “Mayhem” campaign, Allstate joined Geico, Progressive, Farmers, State Farm, and Nationwide in adopting humor as part of their messaging, however Allstate also runs a Dennis Haysbert-featured campaign that takes a serious, solemn approach aimed at addressing the dangers of reckless driving, the importance of being covered, and the benefits of defensive driving.

Table 4 depicts the Funny Index for each brand in the Insurance industry.

Brand	Funny Index	Average Ace Score	# of Funny Ads Aired
Farmers	454	531	9
Aflac	442	544	6
Geico	401	464	48
State Farm Auto Insurance	322	531	30
Nationwide Auto Insurance	266	516	9
Progressive	234	503	42
Esurance Auto Insurance	207	484	9
Allstate Insurance	166	508	36
21st Century	146	496	5
Travelers	94	544	7

Table 4: Insurance Brands Funny Index Performance

The Super Bowl and Humor

Perhaps the biggest opportunity for advertisers to make an impact on viewers is the Super Bowl. In an environment where every advertiser is putting forth their best work, we wondered how ads that were featured during the Super Bowl would stack up against ads that first aired at some other time. To examine this question, we gathered data from the last two Super Bowls (2011-2012) to see how funny the ads were and whether the funniest ads were also the top-performing ads of the Super Bowl.⁶

In line with our expectations, the Funny Index average for ads that aired during the Super Bowl was more than three times higher than for ads that aired at another time during the year. For the record: the funniest ad during the 2011 Super Bowl (and funniest overall of the last 2 Super Bowls) was “Reply All” by Bridgestone which depicted a man panicking after committing a common emailing mishap. During the 2012 Super Bowl the funniest ad was “Happy Grad” by Chevrolet where a young man mistakenly believes that his parents have bought him a new car for graduation.

What we found particularly interesting, however, was that while the Funny Index was heavily skewed in favor of the Super Bowl, the difference in Ace Scores (as well as our other effectiveness metrics) was relatively small. In fact the difference between ads that first aired during the Super Bowl and those that did not was only 26 points. In other words, the

⁶ All other advertisements since January 1, 2011.

Super Bowl did not necessarily produce effective advertising as much as it produced funny advertising.

	Funny Index	Average Ace Score	Total # of
All Ads	100	527	6421
Super Bowl	308	553	116

Table 5: Super Bowl Performance Compared to All Ads

The Relationship Between Humor and Effective Advertising

As an advertising effectiveness company we found this result intriguing and it spurred us to consider how the Funny Index correlated with our standard metrics. That is, we wondered about the relationship between the extent to which an advertisement was perceived as funny and the extent to which the ad was favorably rated. As noted earlier, this question is one that scholars of advertising have spent a considerable time debating with mixed results (we refer the interested reader to Weinberger & Gulas, 1992 or Eisend, 2009 for excellent reviews). What separates our analysis from others is that the database from which our sample was derived included every nationally-breaking advertisement that aired during the past five quarters. Unlike other analyses that were limited in scope, we offer a complete view of what happened in 2011 and the first quarter of 2012.

Table 6 depicts the correlations between our standard metrics and the Funny Index. As can be seen, there are moderate-sized positive relationships between Likeability, Attention, and Funny Index and a smaller relationship between Watchability and the Funny Index.⁷ In other words, the more an ad is perceived as funny the more viewers pay attention, like an ad, and are willing to watch the ad again in the future. What's interesting about these correlations is that they echo consistently published findings in the academic literature on the effect of humor in advertising. For instance, in a meta-analysis examining 54 different studies, Eisend (2009) found that there was a solid, positive relationship between humor and attention. In addition, other meta-analyses have concluded that assessing an ad as humorous results in increased likeability of the ad (not the brand). For an example, see Weinberger & Gulas, 1992.

	Correlation with Funny Index
Ace Score	0.05
Persuasion	-0.02
Watchability	0.15
Desire	-0.08
Relevance	-0.07
Change	-0.07

⁷ The correlation between the Funny Index and our Standard Metrics among those ads that aired during the Super Bowl are strikingly similar.

Attention	0.30
Information	-0.22
Likeability	0.31

Table 6: Funny Index Correlated with Standard Ace Metrix Scores

While we found these relationships particularly interesting, we were determined to investigate whether they were reliable and held up to further analytic inquiry. To do this, we conducted a series of regressions that allowed us to control for the one known confounding variable that could have affected these results: Industry. That is, because we were aware that certain industries tend to have better overall advertising scores than others, we statistically “controlled” for differential industry performance by including an “Industry” grouping variable in regressions of Likeability, Watchability, and Attention (see Appendix I). Regardless, we found that the relationship between the Funny Index and each of these three outcomes held despite the introduction of the “Industry” grouping factor thereby ruling out the confounding explanation.

Although these findings are meaningful, the question remained about whether funny ads were actually effective ones. To answer this question we considered the relationship between the Funny Index and the Ace Score. As an organization, Ace Metrix has spent considerable efforts validating the Ace Score (our composite metric) in terms of demonstrating its correlation with other known advertising effectiveness metrics (i.e., establishing convergent validity) as well as with in-market sales figures. Consequently, we have enormous confidence in the legitimacy of the Ace Score as an overall gauge of advertising effectiveness.

Figure 1 depicts that relationship between the Ace Score and the Funny Index. As can be seen, these variables have a near zero relationship ($r = .05$). What this means is that to the extent to which an advertisement is humorous has no bearing on whether the advertisement is effective.

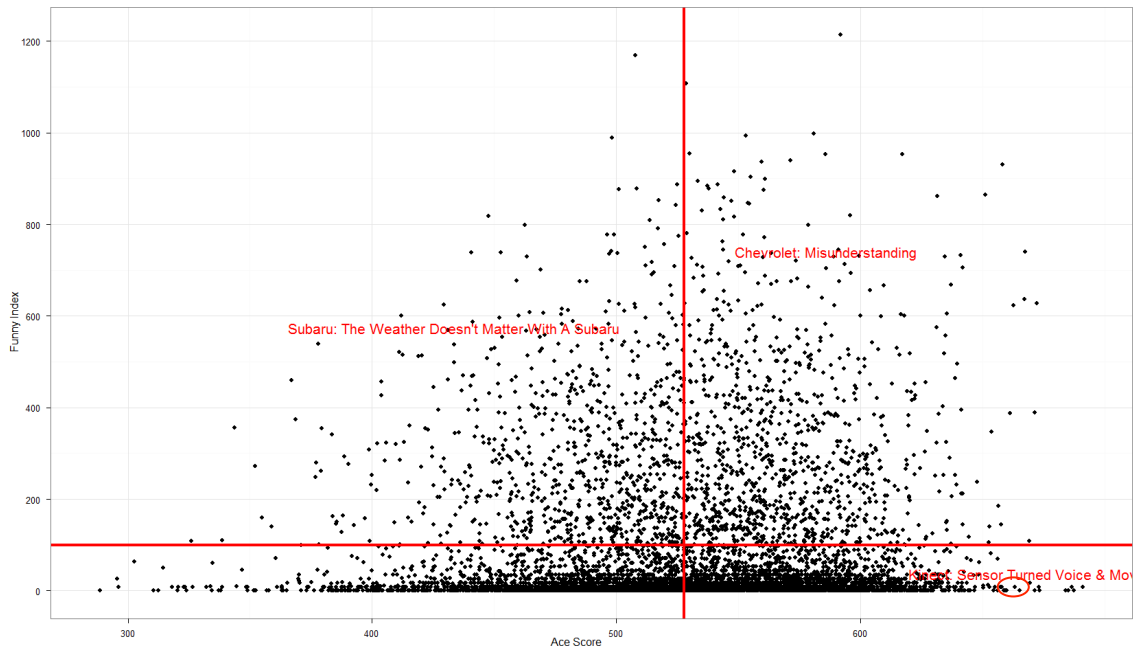


Figure 1: Relationship Between Funny Index and Ace Score (n = 6,547)

As can be seen, the probability of having an above average Ace Score given an above average Funny Index score is evenly divided—indicating the lack of relation.^{8 9} At a granular level, consider some of the examples depicted in Figure 1. These ads are creative content that was both highly funny and highly effective (“Chevrolet: Misunderstanding”), highly funny but not very effective (Subaru: The Weather Doesn’t Matter With A Subaru”), and highly effective but not funny (“Kinect: Sensor Turned Voice & Movement To Magic”). These examples help show that humor has little to do—in and of itself—with how effective an ad is.

For instance, in Chevrolet’s “Misunderstanding,” the advertisers were able to effectively use humor to help communicate the underlying message of the ad: that “the Chevy Cruze Echo gets 45 miles per gallon.” That is, the ad’s purpose was to inform viewers that the car has good fuel efficiency. To accomplish this, the advertisers poked fun at the poor hearing of senior citizens by repeatedly coming up with different “mishearings” of the ad’s message. In doing this, they were able to keep reiterating the message of the ad thereby

⁸ $\Pr(\text{Ace Score} > \mu_{\text{Ace Score}} | \text{Funny Index Score} > \mu_{\text{Funny Index}}) = .528$

⁹ While we understand that some readers who are less familiar with the Ace Score will have difficulty relying on it as a proxy for advertising effectiveness, we reference Table 6 where independent relationships were observed between the Funny Index and Desire (The Ace Matrix version of Purchase Intent), Relevance, and Change—each non-contentious elements of creative effectiveness. Furthermore, we call-out the small inverse relationship between Information scores and the Funny Index indicating what most advertisers argue is an early decision made in the creative strategy process—should the ad take an informative or entertaining approach? Finally, it’s worth reiterating that each of the aforementioned metrics (Desire, Relevance, Change, and Information) come straight from survey respondents and are not subject to criticisms that composite metrics might garner.

reinforcing the information content to viewers—all while demonstrating a number of creative “misunderstandings” that made viewers laugh. Simply put the ad was both funny and effective. More than seven times as many viewers thought this ad was funny compared to the typical ad on television. In addition, the ad scored extremely well in terms of Information—more than 60 points above the Information score norm indicating that viewers learned something from the advertisement. Some sample viewer comments included “I think this ad is one of the greatest. It’s super funny with the seniors involved but yet Chevrolet not only made it funny, but caught my attention, provided information about this product which I was not aware of, very unique and I love it,” “Very good ad, the use of senior citizens was a nice touch. As a 62 year old male I was able to identify with the message of the ad,” and “I thought it was a great way to get the message across through repetition and it was funny so it kept me interested.”

Conversely, Subaru’s “The Weather Doesn’t Matter With A Subaru” was funny but not very effective. This commercial spent a considerable proportion of its length depicting a mock weather forecast in which a variety of presentational mishaps occur. A non-sequitur occurs with a few seconds left in the ad as the camera shifts from the newsroom to a driving Subaru with a voice-over insisting that it “doesn’t matter what the weather is...when you’re driving a Subaru.” While this ad was more than five times as funny as the typical ad on television, it lacked substantive content. Ace Metrix component scores for this ad reflected its shortcomings as it scored nearly 100 points below the Ace Score norm and was more than 100 points below the Information norm. A sample of viewer comments include “I find it confusing – it made sense at the end, but I would never have made the connection between a weather forecast and a car commercial before seeing the whole thing...”, “I’d be more interested in everything the vehicle has to offer,” and “Poor ad – Need more information on the car/SUV/Van etc.”

Finally, Kinect’s “Sensor Turned Voice & Movement To Magic” is an example of an advertisement that was devoid of humor yet scored extremely well, demonstrating that an ad need not be funny in order to be effective. Not a single viewer thought this ad was humorous...and it wasn’t. The commercial—a minute-long—demonstrated numerous unexpected innovations that stemmed from Kinect’s sensor technology developed for X-Box. While the ad made no attempt at humor, it was one of the highest ads ever scored by Ace Metrix and was nearly 150 points above the Information norm and more than 100 points above the Attention norm. Viewer comments echo the quantitative scores: “This ad really caught my attention and made me interested in knowing more about the product,” “The message behind the ad was very nice. I liked looking at the things that could be done with Kinect technology. It was very impressive,” and perhaps one of the most laudatory comments we’ve ever heard “I was really inspired by this commercial – I almost shed a tear...Very intriguing commercial and for the first time I have interest in buying a game console. Very well made!”

Brand	Ad Title	Ace Score	Information	Funny Index
Chevrolet	SB 11: Misunderstanding	591	639	705
Subaru	The Weather Doesn't Matter With A Subaru	433	467	537
Kinect	Sensor Turned Voice & Movement To Magic	683	718	0

Table 7: Selected Scores for Advertisements: Effectiveness X Funny

Conclusion

As we have seen in the large dataset we have reviewed for this paper, humor continues to play a considerable role in advertising. By our estimate approximately one-in-five ads makes enough of a humorous impression to qualify as “funny”. Some industries—like Insurance—are more humor-focused than others while some brands—Target, Wal-Mart, and Geico—are more committed to producing humorous ads than others.

Additionally, we found that while the Super Bowl is a hotbed for comedic advertising, ads that first aired during the Super Bowl excelled in terms of humor but were only trivially more effective than ads that aired at other times during the year. As with other Super Bowl research, we take this opportunity to point out that given the high cost of media, talent, and copywriting services, brands should expect maximum effectiveness for their Super Bowl ads. Based on our data, it seems as though maximum effectiveness is often traded for maximum humor.

It is clear from our research, as well as research conducted by others, that the advantage of humorous advertising is that it captures attention, improves likeability of the ad¹⁰, and increases willingness to view the ad again in the future. While these are all positive outcomes, success in these areas is not necessarily equal to success in advertising. That is, they are intermediary goals. Advertisers have ultimate goals of increasing sales and improving brand image as well as brand differentiation. These financial and long-term goals are at the top of every advertiser’s list of desired outcomes. Finally, it is worth noting that our analysis examines the independent—not the synergistic effect—of humor in advertising. That is, humor may accentuate what is otherwise a relevant, informative advertisement by providing a coordinated benefit. There are certainly conditions and situations where humor may enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement, however, in-and-of-itself, we found no evidence that a funny ad is a necessarily an effective one.

¹⁰ Not the brand

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Appendix I: Regression Models of Likeability, Watchability, and Attention

To estimate the effect of humor in predicting Likeability, Watchability, and Attention, we conducted a series of regression analyses. Rather than use the Funny Index (as reported throughout the paper) we used the non-indexed percent of those who provided a humor-related open-ended comment per advertisement. Our choice to using the “percent funny” instead of the Funny Index was done to aid in interpreting the regression results. However it is critical to realize that regardless of scaling, the regression results lead to exactly the same conclusions (as defined through equal semi-partial r^2 , AIC, BIC, and Mean Squared Error). Simply put, the difference in range (either indexed or in percent) does not affect the model. Below we report the results of three omnibus regressions for $n= 6,537$.

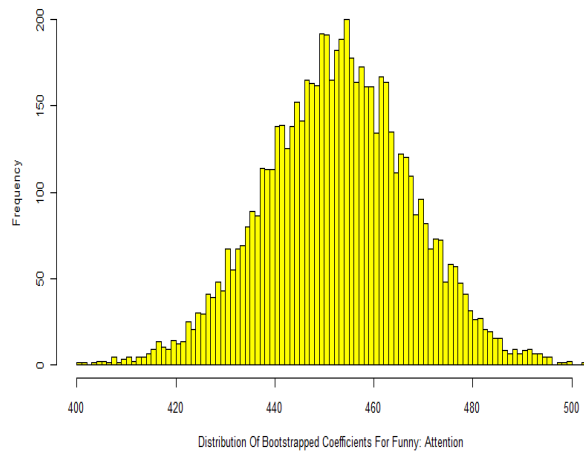
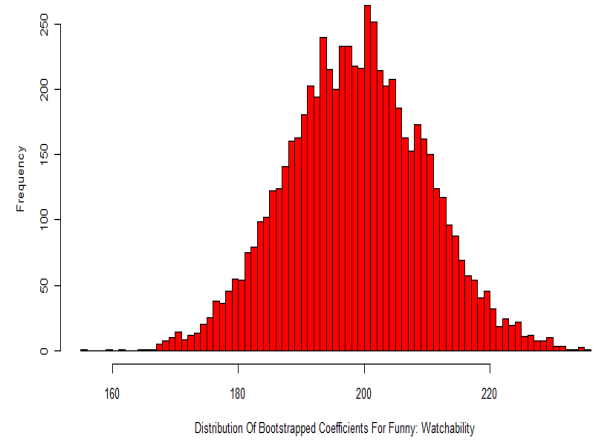
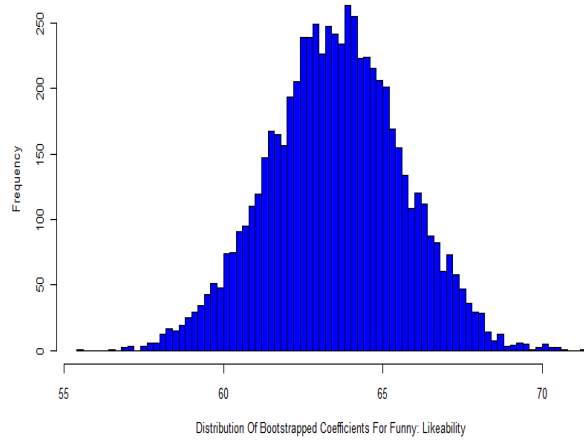
In addition, to measure the uncertainty of the funny coefficient in each regression, histograms depicting the results of bootstrapping the coefficient are reported as well.

	Likeability	Watchability	Attention
(Intercept)	98.518***	586.187***	620.383***
	-0.428	-2.336	-3.235
Funny Score	63.491***	198.662***	453.010***
	-1.978	-10.795	-14.954
Industry: Automotive	-2.103***	-16.377***	2.674
	-0.471	-2.571	-3.561
Industry: Automotive Services	-5.420***	-31.331***	-26.471***
	-0.656	-3.58	-4.96
Industry: Beverages – Alcoholic	-4.391***	-54.233***	-32.426***
	-0.544	-2.969	-4.113
Industry: Beverages - Non Alcoholic	1.620**	4.458	11.247**
	-0.557	-3.038	-4.208
Industry: Candies & snacks	3.943***	25.534***	27.084***
	-0.543	-2.965	-4.107
Industry: Entertainment	0.403	-16.06	-19.576
	-2.518	-13.742	-19.037
Industry: Financial	-7.860***	-49.431***	-45.490***
	-0.52	-2.839	-3.932
Industry: General Business	2.050**	-3.96	35.795***
	-0.656	-3.58	-4.959
Industry: Household	-1.504**	-10.267***	4.497
	-0.546	-2.98	-4.128
Industry: Insurance	-4.369***	-34.676***	-26.666***
	-0.557	-3.038	-4.209
Industry: Packaged Foods	-1.327**	-9.082***	0.797

	-0.503	-2.744	-3.801
Industry: Personal Care	-2.353***	-16.667***	-22.798***
	-0.495	-2.7	-3.74
Industry: Pharmaceutical	-4.738***	-20.276***	-18.500**
	-0.744	-4.058	-5.622
Industry: Restaurants & QSR	2.825***	16.969***	28.719***
	-0.481	-2.628	-3.64
Industry: Retail	-4.355***	-26.905***	-17.097***
	-0.466	-2.543	-3.522
Industry: Technology	1.740***	9.737***	17.518***
	-0.474	-2.585	-3.58
Industry: Telecommunications	-1.312*	0.472	-0.961
	-0.541	-2.954	-4.092
Industry: Travel	-1.634**	-12.199***	7.213
	-0.619	-3.379	-4.681
R-squared	0.308	0.331	0.276
N	6537	6537	6537

Appendix I: Regression Coefficients and standard errors for three Ace Metrix outcomes; Dummy Variable Reference Level = "Apparel & Footwear"

Appendix II: Bootstrapped Coefficients For Each Regression Model (n & size=6,537)



Appendix III: Top 100 Funniest Ads Since January 1, 2011

Ad Title	Brand	Air Date	Funny Index
Baby Wets The Room	Huggies	2011-06-27	1213.78
Man Would Lose June	Buffalo Wild Wings Grill	2012-02-27	1168.46
Man Is Afraid Of Fish	Miller Lite	2011-08-01	1107.24
Woman Finds Ring In Muffin	Wal-Mart	2011-12-12	998.72
SB 11: Reply All	Bridgestone	2011-02-06	993.56
He Would Lose May	Buffalo Wild Wings Grill	2012-02-29	989.57
Charlie Sheen: Upgrade Now	DirecTV	2012-03-01	954.91
Everything You Need For Back To College	Wal-Mart	2011-08-08	953.68
Chevy Happy Grad	Chevrolet	2012-01-22	953.56
Clean Up Anything	Clorox Laundry	2011-09-16	939.13
SB 12: Happy Grad	Chevrolet	2012-02-05	936.55
SB 11: Pug Attack	Doritos	2011-02-06	930.06
Boy Poops In Pants	Clorox Laundry	2011-09-15	915.73
Beth Foot & Mouth	Clorox Laundry	2011-11-26	904.03
Jo's Plumbing	Kohler	2011-03-07	898.43
Urgent Care	Wal-Mart	2011-08-15	895.23
New Blockbuster Movie Pass	DISH Network	2011-10-02	887.70
Abuela	Rosarita	2011-01-10	886.41
Dad Melts Playhouse	Wal-Mart	2011-05-29	883.75
Horse Head Man	Clorox Laundry	2012-02-11	878.53
Man Plans Fishing Trip	Wal-Mart	2011-04-11	877.42
Dog & Bird 80's Music	Geico	2011-08-17	877.11
The Season's Hottest Games	Wal-Mart	2011-11-15	875.34
SB 11: Love Hurts	Pepsi	2011-02-06	864.88
Transactions	Acura	2012-02-05	861.62
You're Welcome America	Bud Light	2011-01-23	859.17
Anyone With A Camera Is Paparazzi	Wal-Mart	2011-08-22	852.19
Do Dogs Chase Cats?	Geico	2011-03-08	850.63
Boy's Brother Texts Him Wrong Line	Wal-Mart	2011-08-04	846.62
SB 12: Cheetah	Hyundai	2012-02-05	844.57
Uncle Steve Nose Groom	Clorox Laundry	2011-09-15	841.99
Couple Adopt A Rescued Panther	Geico	2012-01-27	832.42
Sponsoring Real Folks	Miller High Life	2011-01-26	830.81
ESPN Next Level	Samsung Televisions	2011-09-19	819.31
Woman Decides To Just Have A Movie Date	Zoosk	2011-12-03	818.28
Man Throws Pizza Dough On Fan	Target	2012-01-29	816.68
Agent Rescues Men From Buffaloes	State Farm Auto Insurance	2011-01-23	810.16
Don't Wake Up In A Ditch	DirecTV	2012-01-01	809.15

Adoption: Sunshine	Ad Council	2012-02-15	798.33
Man Wears Girlfriend's Jeans	Miller Lite	2011-01-01	798.11
Grandma Got Ran Over By A Reindeer	Wal-Mart	2011-11-03	791.17
Woman Needs A Mirror	Target	2011-03-04	780.63
Man Rides Scooter	Miller Lite	2011-10-10	778.05
Boy Gets Stuck After Dunk	Geico	2011-06-29	777.44
Making 3AM Deals	State Farm Auto Insurance	2011-06-13	777.08
It Is Working The More She Moves	Wal-Mart	2011-10-03	774.72
Man Gets A Heads Up	BMW	2012-02-27	771.28
Chef Locks Woman In Pantry	Miracle Whip	2011-09-13	763.29
J. K. Simmons And Kasey Kanne In Fire Suits	Farmers	2012-02-26	755.97
Choose Miller Lite For Great Taste	Miller Lite	2011-09-07	750.06
Granddaughters Make Grandpa Look Young	Wal-Mart	2011-04-16	744.66
SB 12: The Tease	Dannon	2012-02-05	744.37
Man Screams At Roller Coaster Ride	Miller Lite	2011-06-20	741.32
The Contractor	Kohler	2011-09-12	740.29
Beer Camp: Tracking The Beer	Bud Light	2011-08-17	738.96
Second Unmanly Thing	Miller Lite	2011-04-02	738.15
Pest Control	eBay.com	2011-09-19	736.79
He Would Lose January	Buffalo Wild Wings Grill	2012-03-01	736.55
SB 12: Feel The Free	TaxACT	2012-02-05	735.09
Kitchen Volcano Eruption	Clorox Cleaners	2011-09-05	732.20
SB 11: The Best Part	Doritos	2011-02-06	730.77
Sushi Solution	Geico	2011-09-01	729.67
SB 11: House Sitting	Doritos	2011-02-06	729.34
Dean Winters: 12 Days Of Mayhem	Allstate Other Insurance	2011-12-02	729.34
The Barbie Doll Has A Flat Screen	Wal-Mart	2011-06-13	727.88
Don't Sell Your Hair To A Wig Shop	DirecTV	2012-02-29	726.85
Dog Eats Family's Thanksgiving Dinner	Wal-Mart	2011-11-10	720.93
SB 12: Business Trip	Careerbuilder.com	2012-02-05	719.04
Popular Middle School Girls	Geico	2012-01-27	718.08
Man Gets A Heads Up	BMW	2012-02-27	712.52
Kid Gets Head Stuck In Railing	Wal-Mart	2011-04-11	711.68
SB 11: Parking Lot	Careerbuilder.com	2011-02-06	709.89
Kilt	Guinness	2012-03-04	709.60
Sandwich Thief	Boar's Head	2011-08-22	708.78
Don't Have A Grandson With A Dog Collar	DirecTV	2012-01-02	708.78
Duncan Interrupts	Dunkin' Donuts Other QSR	2011-07-11	707.40
SB 12: Man's Best Friend	Doritos	2012-02-05	705.26
SB 11: Misunderstanding	Chevrolet	2011-02-06	704.65

Man Gets Mardi Gras Beads The Wrong Way	Miller Lite	2011-12-05	701.28
Boys Play With Dentures	Clorox Cleaners	2011-06-27	695.85
Mailman Suddenly Dances	DISH Network	2011-10-17	695.85
SB 12: Transactions	Acura	2012-02-05	693.00
Think Fast	Hyundai Luxury Auto	2012-02-05	692.58
Gordon Ramsay Ruins Dinner	Acura	2011-11-21	690.93
Steve The Deer Is On The Hunt	Activision Video Games – Sports	2011-09-23	687.85
Man Can't Buy Kids Food	Discover Card	2011-10-01	687.56
Kicking Butt And Taking Names	La Quinta	2011-03-13	682.59
SB 11: Dog Sitting	Bud Light	2011-02-06	680.90
Stay Out Of The Tanning Bed	Miller Lite	2011-01-07	677.84
Pond Animal Rap Battle	Aflac	2011-09-10	675.97
Boy Uses Business Man's Sleeve	Clorox Laundry	2011-11-19	675.97
Man Whines When Sick	Wal-Mart	2011-10-03	675.84
Beer Camp Bird Watching	Bud Light	2011-07-13	675.84
Living Under A Rock	Geico	2011-01-28	675.61
Joan Went All Natural	Hormel Meat	2011-06-20	670.72
Duck Caps Holes On Boat	Aflac	2012-01-18	669.11
SB 11: Torpedo Cooler	Pepsi	2011-02-06	668.39
Fit Fare	Denny's	2011-12-26	667.16
SB 11: Faith Hill	Teleflora	2011-02-06	666.93
Dad Thought Wrong	Domino's Pizza	2011-08-08	663.00

Appendix III: Top 100 Funniest Ads

Note: Titles including “SB” indicate Super Bowl ads.

Report written and analyzed by Michael D. Curran, Ph.D.
June, 2012.

Appendix IV: Ace Metrix Background and Methodology

Ace Metrix began collecting advertising effectiveness scores in January 2009. As of this writing¹¹, we have collected data assessing the performance of more than 17,000 ads. Ads were tested within 48 hours of airing nationally. Subsequent to airing, each advertisement was electronically captured and shown alongside a series of other breaking ads (“a flight”) as an online survey. Survey respondents were asked to view and evaluate each ad monadically. Respondents were recruited from an online panel with each ad test exhibiting sample sizes of at least 500 respondents.

After respondent scores were collected, Ace Scores and Ace Metrix component scores were computed and assigned to each ad. The Ace Score and Ace Metrix component scores are standardized metrics that allow comparisons to be made between ads. Ace Scores and Ace Metrix component scores range between 1 and 950. Scores are normally distributed and approximately centered around 530.

Ace Metrix employs a proprietary algorithm that allows for benchmarking and comparative ad testing.¹² Since our inception, Ace Metrix has consistently used the same methodology to measure the effectiveness of every ad we have tested. As a result, we are in a unique position to assess relative advertising performance between *any* competitive set of ads imaginable both across different Industries and different time periods.

A unique benefit of the Ace Metrix methodology is that it provides advertisers with a metric of relative comparison. Unlike other measures of advertising effectiveness, Ace Scores allow advertisers to evaluate the performance of an ad in a variety of competitive settings: (i) compared with another ad; (ii) compared with the average of all ads in our database; (iii) compared with an ad’s competitive set; or (iv) compared with some other configuration of ads.

While custom research studies are limited in their ability to assess relative performance, Ace Scores provide an opportunity for advertisers to place their ad in any context they choose. Consequently, advertisers gain a substantial advantage over the competition by being able to compare and contrast their ad with any other ad or group of ads. The effect of this is that it eliminates the classic apples-to-oranges problem frequently observed as the limitation of custom research.

¹¹ As of July 7, 2012

¹² See www.acemetrix.com for further information on the Ace Score