

## Results

### Content Analysis

Descriptive statistics revealed the humor techniques that were used in the advertisements from the United States and the Philippines. This identified the prevalent humor techniques that would be further analyzed in the qualitative analysis later. The results are discussed by country, and are divided by audio and visual elements.

To further explain if there are significant differences between the two countries in terms of the prevalence of these humor categories, a Chi-square statistical test was conducted for each humor category. Both the audio (linguistic and non-linguistic) and visual (visual images, facial expressions and texts) elements generated different results for each category.

### American Advertisements

#### *Audio and Verbal Elements*

In terms of audio (background music, sound effects), four humor categories were identified from the sample: 1) absurdity, 2) infantilism, 3) peculiar music, and 4) sexual allusion. This is comparatively few as opposed to the verbal element, which includes dialogue and voice over scripts. (See Table 6).

Table 6. *Humor Techniques in American Advertisements (Audio)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Peculiar Music	5
Absurdity	2
Sexual Allusion	1
Infantilism	1

*Peculiar Music* stands out in the commercials because it either adds to the humorous content of the ad, such as classical music while a series of unfortunate events takes place (Doritos), or it provides the humor content by itself such as catchy, hiphop beat of “*How Low Can You Go?*” that the cool kid danced to in a McDonald’s commercial.

A good example is the cover version of the popular song, “*Eye of the Tiger*” in the

Starbucks commercial. The original song has a strong beat that may wake up anyone who is feeling tired and drowsy --- the notable effect of coffee. To add more humor, the lyrics were changed to fit the average employee who has to go through a lazy morning everyday.

*Infantilism* was identified in one (1) advertisement through the catchphrase “*Boom Chicka Wah Wah*”. The phrase was delivered with a tune to verbalize an unexplainable reaction of women upon smelling Axe deodorant on a man.

Humor techniques were more evident in the verbal element. Thirty (30) out of forty (40) techniques were identified from the sample. The top categories of the list are as follows. (See Table 7.)

Table 7. *Humor Techniques in American Advertisements (Verbal)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Sarcasm	9
Irreverent Behavior (language)	7
Pun	7
Sexual Allusion	7
Outwitting	6
Stereotype	6
Absurdity	5
Bombast	5
Peculiar Voice	5
Ridicule	5
Anthropomorphism	4
Irony	4
Misunderstanding	4
Speed	4
Embarrassment	3
Exaggeration	3
Ignorance	3
Imitation	3
Repetition	3
Conceptual Surprise	2
Grotesque Appearance	2
Peculiar Sound	2
Chase	1
Clownish Behavior	1
Clumsiness	1
Coincidence	1
Impersonation	1
Repartee	1
Transformation	1
Visual Surprise	1

*Sarcasm* is the most prevalent humor technique used in the verbal elements of the advertisements. It is an apparent expression of humor through language because it directly pokes fun at someone or something with unexpected one-liners that usually contain the twist in the advertisements. It often comes from a discouraging remark, which is either said in a pleasant or stern tone.

In the K-Mart ad, “*Daddy’s Old Shorts*”, a father proudly wears his old, green pair of gym shorts from high school that are obviously too tight for him after 20 years. He parades around the house at the shock of his own child and her friend. Acting as if nothing is wrong, he asks, “*Who wants some ice cream?*” The advertisement ends with a line, “*Who wants new shorts?*” spoken in a cold, serious tone of voice, to imply authority and to cut the embarrassment caused by wearing a tight pair of shorts.



**Figure 1. K-Mart: Daddy's Old Shorts**



**Figure 2. Subway: What does the Combo Meal come with?**

On the other hand, *sarcasm* is delivered pleasantly in a Subway commercial. As a polite reply to the customer’s question, “*What does the combo meal come with?*”, the fastfood server answered, “*Bloated feeling, regret, remorse, bigger waist, loss of self-esteem, loss of boyfriend, years of shame, therapy, fries and a shake*”. He enumerated all the bad consequences of having an unhealthy diet with a smile on his face as if they all come with the cheeseburger combo meal. *Sarcasm* is evident in the delivery of the side effects of an unhealthy diet.

The three second most prevalent humor techniques were: *Irreverent Behavior*, *Pun* and *Sexual Allusion*. *Irreverent Behavior* is expressed in the form of insults, implied or otherwise, not only to someone of authority (e.g. calling the boss, “Mr. Turkey Neck” in a

FedEx ad; referring to the football referee as a “jackass” in Budweiser) but also to someone who has a level of seniority or a higher level of expertise (e.g. Charles Barkley, as a veteran NBA player, compared to Dwayne Wade, in a T-Mobile ad).

*Pun* and *Sexual Allusion* have a playful component, not only to their semantic structure, like a simple change in spelling from “Yo!” to “Yao!” in one of Yao Ming’s Visa credit card commercials, but also in their meanings. In a Bud Light commercial, an Indian man successfully won the attention of a girl in a club after he bought her “*Bood Light*”, pronounced with a thick Indian accent. Although the misspelling and mispronunciation appear funny yet harmless, it has already described about the Indian stereotype from the ethnicity and accent to the preference of people to date someone from the minority.



Figure 3. Visa: Yo! Yao!

*Sexual Allusion* does not refer to the concept of romantic love. It contains physical, sexual and even lustful meanings in the humor content. Subtlety is observed in public settings such as bars, schools and offices (in the ads of Bud Light, Clearasil and Southwest Airlines) but the statements are more direct yet somehow offensive in private conversations (Bud Light’s talking monkey who wants to date his master’s girlfriend). The perfect example is Domino Pizza’s 30-minute delivery commercial. The husband had a brilliant idea to spend a romantic time with his wife while waiting for the pizza, which should be delivered in 30 minutes. The discouraging wife turned down her husband by saying, “*What will we do with the other 28 minutes?*” Thus, insulting him and questioning his sexual prowess.

A noteworthy set of six (6) ads showed *Stereotype* in their humor content. Three of the six ads connoted racial stereotypes in reference to their distinct accents. Aside from Bud Light’s Indian “*Bood Light*” joke, humor was found in portraying British and German

accents. In the Axe deodorant commercial, the British, considered to have a sexy English accent, appeared to be more sophisticated and more appealing to women than the average American joe. Whereas in the Berlitz language school ad, the German accent was emphasized when it became a cause of misunderstanding during an emergency of a capsizing boat. The remaining three (3) *Stereotype* ads were expressed through predictable lines supporting the stereotypes of a dumb blonde (Mercedes-Benz), people and their well-deserved names based on their characters (FedEx) and a caveman (Geico insurance).

The humor technique, *Outwitting*, has a distinct value of providing solution to the posed problem in the ads. The solutions and their respective outcomes are the common punch lines in the humor content. Three beer commercials, one from Budweiser and two from Bud Light, used this humor technique. Budweiser positioned their product as a reward for outsmarting a sticky situation. In the ad, the best man hired an auctioneer who is a fast talker to officiate a boring wedding ceremony. Seconds later, the ceremony ended and all men rushed to the bar to get bottle of Budweiser. However, for the two Bud Light commercials, *outwitting* is more evident in using the product as a solution or an instrument to solve a problem (e.g. bringing Bud Light in an opera performance, using Bud Light to attract women). In all commercials, the use of *outwitting* is more associated to the product and the benefits they bring. It highlights the value of the product that it is worth getting anxious for, even if it means ditching an important wedding ceremony.



**Figure 4. Bud Light: Opera**

Another prevalent humor technique is *Absurdity*, which appeared in five (5) ads. It shows a specific kind of behavior that would be considered stupid and ridiculous if it happens in reality. Because it does not always happen, or would never happen, in normal circumstances, the situations (e.g. jumping off the plane to go after a case of Budweiser,

or in the Careerbuilder.com ad, working with real monkeys and picking up the phone when it did not even ring) are obviously ludicrous; therefore, it brings the humor content in the advertisements.

*Embarrassment* was identified in three (3) commercials. The humor content is found in statements that cause embarrassment, not in the reactions to an embarrassing situation. For example, turning on a Michael Bolton song via voice activation to embarrass a friend is a situation in Ford Focus' commercial. It destroys the masculine image of a guy by his choice of music.

The humor technique, *Ignorance*, is somewhat connected to *Embarrassment*. Although both humor techniques did not appear in the same advertisements, *Ignorance* in humorous statements often lead to embarrassing situations. In the Mercedes-Benz E-Series commercial, when a blonde girl goes to the library to order food the way she would order in McDonald's, it seems to be out of ignorance. However, whether in the ad or in real life, she has created an embarrassing situation for herself to be in, giving a chance for people to make fun of her.

The humor content of the remaining techniques is related to the visual images in the advertisements. Thus, they were only identified in less than two (2) commercials. The parody of Budweiser's famous "*Wassup?*" commercial becomes humorous when they imitated the original delivery of "*Wassup?*" but changed it to "*What are YOU doing?*" to poke fun at preppy, refined, import beer drinkers.

*Repartee* is under the Berger's major category, language. However, the use of this humor technique in the sample advertisements relies on its visual content. The exchange of witty one-liners between two cowboys in Budweiser's "Referee" ad takes place in a personified football game of horses where a zebra plays the role of a referee. A cowboy says, "*What a jackass*", a common expression that spectators say in reaction to a referee's bad call. The repartee takes place when the other cowboy says, "*I believe that's a zebra*", a line that totally misses the meaning of the idiom "*What a jackass*". The conversation could

be humorous on its own without mentioning the visual content of the ad, which actually comes in the form of *Anthropomorphism*, another humor technique.

### ***Visual Images, Facial Expressions and Texts***

American humor is described to be physical. Therefore, the visual components of the advertisements contain more prevalent humor techniques. Interestingly, their uses in the advertisements are also important to discuss. In visual images alone, thirty (30) out of forty (40) were identified in the advertisements. (See Table 8).

*Table 8. Humor Techniques in American Advertisements (Images)*

<b>Humor Technique</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Absurdity	8
Visual Surprise	8
Conceptual Surprise	7
Exaggeration	6
Grotesque Appearance	6
Sexual Allusion	6
Slapstick	6
Stereotype	6
Clownish Behavior	5
Anthropomorphism	4
Outwitting	4
Ridicule	4
Chase	3
Embarrassment	3
Irony	3
Malicious Pleasure	3
Speed	3
Ignorance	2
Impersonation	2
Irreverent Behavior-visual	2
Clumsiness	1
Coincidence	1
Disappointment	1
Misunderstanding	1
Parody	1
Pun	1
Sarcasm	1
Scale	1
Transformation	1

Being identified in eight (8) advertisements, two humor techniques appeared to be most prevalent style: *Absurdity* and *Visual Surprise*. These two categories coincide with contrasts provided by the incongruity-resolution structure. Things that are beyond



normal, unrealistic that could be defined as absurd and what is unexpected from the possible outcome such as visual surprise could contain the important humor content in the advertisements.

Absurd images in the advertisements include : a) throwing a rock at a friend to win a game of Rock, Paper and Scissors (Bud Light), b) throwing a wild party attended by sexy girls in the office (GoDaddy.com), c) giving a ride to a hitchhiker who carries an axe and a case of beer (Bud Light), d) being followed by a rock band on the way to work to keep you up and awake (Starbucks), e) imitating the dance moves of naked man who fell down from a broken ceiling (Axe), f) debating with a caveman on national television (Geico Insurance), g) ordering food in the library (Mercedes-Benz), and h) helping a



**Figure 5. Bud Light: Hitchhiker**



**Figure 6. Starbucks: Glen Goes to Work**

stranger lie to his wife by making noises that sound like from the television set (Captain Morgan).

These images are all absurd in different levels. However, reality is, whenever people would be given a situation where these things could actually take place, most probably they never would. The degree of deviance to the usual norm or to the predictable reaction builds the humor content in these advertisements.

*Visual Surprise* consists of twists to the storyline or unexpected reactions to given situations. When a kid busted out his cool dance moves during breakfast, like in a McDonald's ad, that in itself was a cute and funny image. However, a surprising thing in the ad was when the father began to bob his head along with the music, humor was heightened. Big surprises could also bring in humor in the ad. In a Centrum commercial,



two guys and two girls were playing strip poker. All the sexual fun was interrupted before one girl takes off her bra. A male nurse came in to the room and scolded the patients, who were, much to the surprise of the audience, were old grandpas and grandmas in a nursing home. The pattern in the prevalence of *Visual Surprise* in the



Figure 7. Centrum: Strip Poker

sample of American advertisements is that the surprise occurs in the middle of the commercial. The twists come to grab attention (e.g. couch potatoes being ejected up in the air in the FedEx ad that would make the audience wonder why) or to simply shock the audience (e.g. a naked man falls down from a broken ceiling to a dance studio in an Axe Deodorant commercial).

*Conceptual Surprise* could possibly be connected to *Visual Surprise* because the latter, being more dependent on visual images as the name suggests, can be a tool to convey a twist in the concept of the ad. Such is case of the Centrum commercial with stripping old patients. The first few scenes would deliver a very sexual impression, making the viewers assume that it is lingerie or a condom commercial. However, the quick pan of camera in a few seconds from one young and seductive group of people in their



Figure 8. Centrum: Strip Poker (*punch line*)

to the nurse standing at the door to a bunch of grandparents in a nursing home trying to feel young again changed the whole concept into a funny commercial for a health supplement like Centrum.

*Exaggeration* and *Grotesque Appearance* can come hand in hand as well. Physical deformities are emphasized to elicit laughter. A British guy with bucked teeth in the

AxeDuo Deodorant commercial appeared hilarious in a close-up shot. A grotesque picture of a man having irregular bowel movement was highlighted by representing human feces with big-sized construction materials such as long steel bars and mixed, liquid cement in an All-Bran cereal commercial. The over-the-top nature of these two techniques triggers humor in the ads.

An obvious humor technique that would rely on visual images is *Slapstick*. It is highly physical and oftentimes, too violent. A “diving” competition situated in the hot, deserted place in the Middle East where there was no swimming pool was the extreme example of *Slapstick* from the Fox Sports commercial. Of course, there were the common cases of falling flat on their face after hitting a car as a part of a domino effect of mishaps (Doritos), destroying the photocopy machine (Accuserv) and a series of painful antics incurred to one another (Toyota Rav4).



Figure 9. Fox Sports: Diving

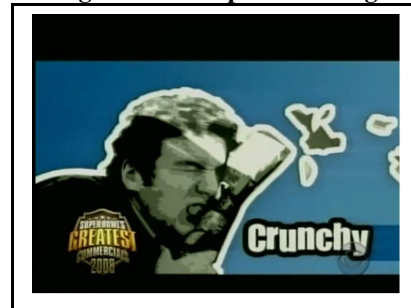


Figure 10. Doritos: Live the Flavor

From the sample of American advertisements, this humor technique did not appear passé because it was not overused and it was still able to bring the marketing message across.

As expected, *Stereotype* still appeared to be a prevalent humor technique in the images. Racial stereotyping is a common example of this category. One of Bud Light's commercials was about a group of clueless guys with different ethnicities learning how to start a conversation with a girl in a bar. The guys were portrayed as exotic (Indian), antisocial and nerdy (Japanese, which represents Asians in general) and backward (African guy holding a live chicken). The *Stereotype* humor technique is also used in showing the gender-sensitive characters, such as the “dumb blonde” (Mercedes-Benz E-Series) and the nagging wife (Budweiser) for women and the pretentious loser (Ford

Focus) for men.

The sample also showed a number of advertisements that used animals to project humor. *Anthropomorphism*, the humor technique where animals or inanimate objects take on human characteristics and actions, was used in five (5) advertisements. Memorable commercials include Budweiser's series of football games played by horses. Budweiser turned it up a notch in other commercials by adding characters such as the shaven sheep, which represents the loyal football fan that streak naked during football games and the zebra as a referee. The level of creativity is heightened not only in terms of technical visual effects, but also behind the concept of assigning the roles that would perfectly fit the animals. On the other hand, CareerBuilder.com's ad that featured monkeys in the workplace has a slightly different take on *Anthropomorphism*. The images showed monkeys as pranksters, which they normally are. However, even if the monkeys personified inefficient coworkers in the office, the humor content relies on the verbal elements of the ad, because it further explains what the monkeys are doing in a corporate setting. *Anthropomorphism* would not be an effective humor technique sans the frustrated verbal reactions from the only normal office worker in the ad. This time, the images do not stand alone to deliver humor.



Figure 11. Budweiser: Streaker



Figure 12. Careerbuilder.com: Monkeys

*Chase* conveyed a sense of urgency more clearly than *Speed*. The former was used to highlight the advertised product as a must-have commodity. Much value is placed on the products such as beer in a wedding (Bud Light) and a car that could cause a violent fight between spouses (Toyota Rav4). *Speed*, on the other hand, is simply a display of quickness or lack thereof, without focusing on the end result of such behavior or action.

Therefore, the presence of a fast talking auctioneer leading the wedding ceremony in the Bud Light commercial delivers humor by showing his verbal prowess and putting emphasis on the level of boredom and anxiety people feel during weddings, not on the beer.

The three (3) advertisements that contained *Embarrassment* featured images (e.g. breaking glass beer bottles during an opera, facing a group of girls with no clothes on, getting caught in the act of taking off clothes, which caused embarrassment. The reactions to the embarrassing situations were more apparent on the facial expressions, which is another visual category.

*Irony* as a humor technique in the visual images is complimentary to the verbal elements of the advertisements. The visual images either impose or negate the content of the dialogue. For example, at GoDaddy.com, they said, “*We keep our operations focused and efficient from customer care, product development, down to marketing*”. Humor comes in when they showed a scene of a room filled with sexy girls, partying office workers in their suits and people spraying champagne. Indeed, the wild office party in the marketing department does not validate their serious claim in doing business.

In terms of facial expressions, the top prevalent humor techniques are as follows. (See Table 9).

Table 9. *Humor Techniques in American Advertisements (Facial)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Peculiar Face	10
Embarrassment	5
Disappointment	3
Malicious Pleasure	3
Clownish Behavior	3
Absurdity	2
Exaggeration	2

The technique, *Peculiar Face*, is an obvious observation. However, identifying what is peculiar may vary. Wide-eyed expressions to convey extreme delight were the most prevalent in this humor category. Other peculiar faces include grimaces to show frustration, grins to imply seduction or secret motives and sudden frowns to exaggerate a

change in mood.

As for the written texts in the advertisements, only a few humor techniques appeared prevalent. (See Table 10).

Table 10. *Humor Techniques in American Advertisements (Text)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Sarcasm	2
Disappointment	1
Embarrassment	1
Exaggeration	1
Ignorance	1
Malicious Pleasure	1
Pun	1
Repartee	1
Ridicule	1
Sexual Allusion	1

One advertisement that utilized most of these humor techniques is the FedEx commercial. The plot takes place in the Stone Age, when cavemen did not have a comprehensible language and delivery services were inefficient. Subtitles were used in the entire commercial to express *repartee*, *ignorance* and *disappointment*. The witty conversation revolved around a demanding boss who wants to an efficient delivery service from FedEx. His caveman employee blurts, “but FedEx does not exist yet” and eventually loses his job from being fired.

The other humor techniques were identified in the last part of the commercials, either as taglines or as last-minute punch lines. Taglines such as “Silence the Stain” (Tide-To-Go) to shut attention-grabbing stains and “Life Comes at You First” (Nationwide Insurance), give a perfect ending to the advertisement without failing to remind the viewer about the product and the desired marketing message of the commercial. However, last-minute punch lines have the last attempt to make the viewer laugh for better brand recall and positive retention about the commercial.

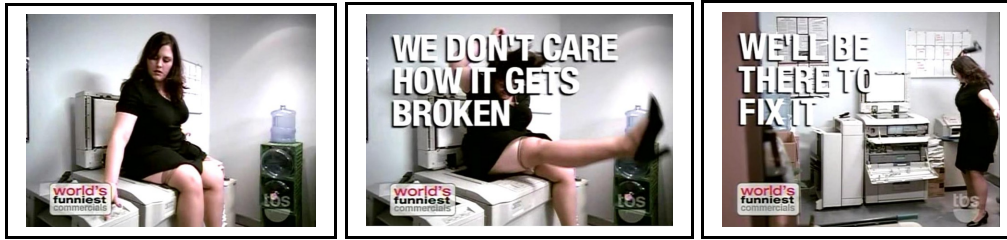


Figure 13. Accuserv: Fat Lady

Accuserv poked fun at an overweight lady who took a picture of her butt using the photocopier machine. The machine broke, as expected, so the advertisement ends with, *“We don’t care how it’s broken, we’ll be there to fix it”*. The broken machine is already a joke by itself, but to add further insult, ridicule and laughter, the text makes fun of the woman one last time.

## Filipino Advertisements

In this part of the research, the similarities and differences between American and Filipino advertisements will be more apparent. Aside from a descriptive analysis of the humor techniques in the Filipino advertisements, comparisons are brought up to provide further explanation of how humor is used in advertising.

### Audio and Verbal Elements

The humor techniques that were identified in the sample of Filipino advertisements were more than the ones from the American ads. Six (6) were prevalent in the sample. (See Table 11).

Table 11. Humor Techniques in Filipino Advertisements (Audio)

<b>Humor Technique</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Peculiar Music	8
Peculiar Sound	7
Chase	3
Infantilism	2
Peculiar Voice	1
Speed	1

The humor content of the *Peculiar Music* can be found in the lively rhythm that brings a certain kind of light and happy atmosphere in the advertisement. It sets up the mood in the setting like in Touch Mobile’s ad where an intense feeling is heightened in cue of the



music, even if it was an action scene. Also, *Peculiar Music* pushes the element of surprise further. In Chippy’s “Rehearsal”, a group of guys was practicing for a dance performance. The moves alone were funny, but when the music played and the ad revealed that the boys were doing a traditional Philippine folk dance, the ad became more hilarious. *Peculiar Music* is also present in commercial jingles, which are generally used in Filipino advertisements.

*Peculiar Sound* was not identified in the sample of American advertisements. This humor technique was used through sound effects such as stomach grumbling and passing of gas because of diarrhea (Motilium; Diatabs; Imodium) and animated sounds of explosion (Nagaraya Peanuts).

The playful and creative use of sounds in *Infantilism* solely handled the humor content of the Filipino ads. Touch Mobile played with the word, “text” as a sound effect for many consecutive gunshots. Nagaraya Peanuts, on the other hand, used the sound of cracking peanuts for pulling a tooth out during a visit to a dentist to highlight the fear that people have towards dentists.

In the verbal element, more humor techniques were found. Thirty (30) out of forty (40) humor categories were identified in the commercials. Surprisingly, *Sarcasm* is also the most prevalent category in the Filipino sample. (See Table 12).

Table 12. *Humor Techniques in Filipino Advertisements (Verbal)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Sarcasm	6
Bombast	5
Exaggeration	5
Peculiar Sound	5
Peculiar Voice	5
Outwitting	4
Pun	4
Stereotype	4
Coincidence	3
Conceptual Surprise	3
Absurdity	2
Embarrassment	2
Imitation	2
Rigidity	2
Speed	2

Transformation	2
Visual Surprise	2
Anthropomorphism	1
Chase	1
Disappointment	1
Eccentricity	1
Ignorance	1
Infantilism	1
Irony	1
Malicious Pleasure	1
Parody	1
Repetition	1
Ridicule	1
Sexual Allusion	1
Slapstick	1

As the most prevalent humor technique, *Sarcasm* in the Filipino ads is also a letdown remark or uncertainty. The typical example is from Neozep's commercial that captures the often riotous relationship between in-laws. The parents-in-law pays a surprise visit only find out that their daughter-in-law is sick. From a condescending mood to a caring one, the mother-in-law showed a *balimbing* (two-faced) trait that her husband made fun of. However, upon saying it under his breath to his son, the mother heard it and he suddenly changed it into *magaling* (excellent) only to prove that he himself is scared of his own wife.



Figure 14. Neozep: Andres

*Sarcasm* is also used to convey a goofy kind of humor in the Filipino ads. Ironically, *sarcasm* is usually associated with deadpan jokes. One Filipino ad used it differently. In the Chippy commercial, a group of male friends were watching a horror movie when they realized that they already finished their bag of chips. While in the state of fear, none of them wanted to stand and get the new bag of chips on top of the television set. An innocent, little girl, perhaps a younger sister of one of the guys, passed by, took the bag of chips and walked away. Disapprovingly, the boys stood from the couch and chased the girl. One of them said, “*Aaaay, hindi yan pwede, Chippy namin yan.*” (“That can’t be.

That's our Chippy) in a loud, goofy yet seemingly serious tone. This kind of *sarcasm* is different from the *sarcasm* that is identified in the American sample. *Sarcasm* as a humor technique in American ads has more apparent, condescending tone than the sarcastic humor style in Filipino ads, where it is often used to project goofy or crazy settings.

*Bombast* is the second prevalent humor technique with five (5) advertisements. The incomprehensible characteristic of *bombast* heavily relies on the speed of delivery of the dialogue, like from a nagging wife (Boysen) and a hysterical victim of a robbery (Magicflakes crackers). However, it is also identified with out-of-the-context dialogue.

Such is the case in the Ligo Carne Norte commercial, where a driver takes a lunch break in the middle of a dusty, noisy hole-in-the-wall restaurant. The assumption is that the driver is from the lower social class, a member of the labor force, who is not as well-versed and educated as a bank manager. After his first bite of a spoonful of Ligo Carne Norte corned beef, the average driver became fluent in English, which he spoke like a native British gentleman. The presence of such character would fit in the ordinary, Philippine setting. It would indeed be humorous to see such deviant yet high-browed persona; thus, this was identified as *Bombast*.



Figure 15. Boysen: Home Sweet Home

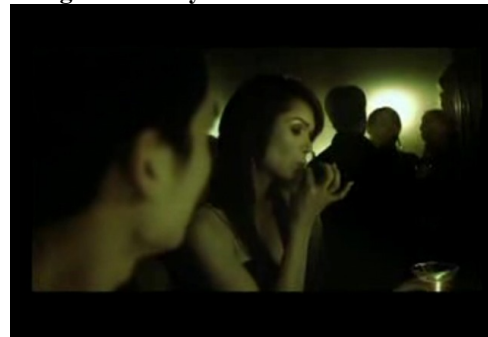


Figure 16. SkyCable: One Night Stand

not

*Peculiar Sound* and *Peculiar Voice* both were noted from five (5) advertisements correspondingly. Although both were expected to be more obvious in the audio element of the ads, these two were more often used through the funny sounds made by the characters in the ads themselves. An example, in the verbal element, is the sudden change from female voice of a homosexual man to his natural, male voice (SkyCable). The loud

sound of quenched thirst after pretending to drink from a 5-peso coin (Coke) and the imaginary swish of the basketball after shooting it (Milo) from a kid who dreams to become a basketball player someday. This shows an element of physicality in the humor that Filipino advertisements have. Oftentimes, it is not in the jokes and/or the punch lines that are exchanged through the dialogue, but it is simply in the natural sounds that the people make. This also contributes to the physical humor that is more observable in actions, or in this case, in the visual elements.

*Outwitting* as a humor technique in the four (4) Filipino advertisements has one similar pattern: it has the premise of false assumption that the given problem has already been settled by wrong but funny solutions. The memorable Fita commercial of a boy asking for a sports car from a magical fairy after sharing his last half of Fita biscuit has very evident *Outwitting* humor style. Grabbing the once-in-a-lifetime chance to own an expensive sports car, he wished for it only to find out in the end that he would only literally receive half of the car because he only gave the fairy half of his biscuit.



Another example is the “Wrong Spelling” ad by Smart Telecommunications, where a guy mistakenly assumed that he won a Scrabble game by misspelling a difficult word while using the letter Z, which has the highest point in the roster. This is actually categorized under the visual images element of the ad, but the boastful reaction of the guy, thinking that he had outsmarted his friends, contained the core of the humor content in the ad.

*Outwitting* in American ads focuses more on the nature of the solution, which is usually presented in a witty, unexpected manner. In Filipino ads, on the other hand, *Outwitting*



**Figure 18. Smart Telecommunications: Wrong Spelling**

has something more to do with false assumptions that the problem has been solved.

The *Stereotype* in Filipino ads is not pegged on ethnic differences, unlike in American ads, but on gender and social class. In terms of gender, the nagging wife/mother-in-law is a recurring character. Two commercials featured these characters and both had been the center of humor in the ads. Males, on the other hand, are portrayed to be real homosexuals or acting like one by crying or showing feminine behavior. In terms of social status, the language used, like the British English in Ligo Carne Norte commercial, highlights the almost impossible knowledge or mastery of workers of this skill.

Only two (2) Filipino ads showed *Absurdity* as a humor technique. However, they were not portrayed in totally impossible situations, as opposed to those in the American ads. They were only placed in exaggeration that could still be somewhat normal and not completely nonsense. One features a family who was blown away by the delicious smell of CDO Corned Beef. They were delighted by the smell that they were all put in a good mood to agree to whatever each member wants to do (e.g. a raise in allowance, getting a boyfriend, etc.) *Absurdity* took place when the grandmother also asked for permission to have a boyfriend at the end of the commercial. The statement still has a cuteness factor and yet it seems ridiculous, considering that the grandmother is already old.

The only advertisement that used *Anthropomorphism* as a humor technique was the Nation Paint commercial, where a newly painted wall talked to a man who was about to take a leak facing the wall. The dialogue goes:

**Wall:** “*Ang gwapo ng pader. Bagong Pintura. Ihian mo lang? Ikaw,*

*gwapo ka rin ha. Gusto mong maihian?”* (What a good-looking wall. So nicely painted. And you’ll just pee on it. You’re good-looking too. Would you like to get peed on?)

The commercial also functions as a public service announcement to maintain clean, non-pungent surroundings. In a country where it is convenient and tolerable for men to pee anywhere, this ad both has a sharp marketing recall and a social responsibility value. *Anthropomorphism* in American ads is present in animal characters may be because of higher budget for production and post-production, which is not the case in Philippine advertising.

*Repetition* is used to establish pattern that would be either broken or tweaked after dropping the unexpected punch line in the advertisement. Such is the example in Vaseline’s ad where all the members of the family were missing in action because they all loved to take long showers. Whenever someone would look for them, the mother would say. “*Naliligo*” (“Taking a shower”). After giving the details of the product, the commercial ended with the entire family leaving the house without the mother. It turns out that she is also *naliligo* (“taking a shower”).

*Sexual Allusion* was identified in only one (1) advertisement, which happens to be a gin commercial. It has a less straightforward sexual content than the American ads because it has a subtle daydreaming scene of guys about hot, sexy girls in the beach.

Lastly, the humor technique, *Ignorance*, has a more apparent trait of stupidity. It pokes fun at not knowing or being clueless not only of the outcome but also of the ridiculous action itself. Being pushed by friends off a cliff (Pepsi Max) and still asking if it is safe has a different label of *Ignorance* as opposed to the *Ignorance* that the American ads have. In this Pepsi Max ad, *Ignorance* has a goofier, more physical facet.

### ***Visual Images, Facial Expressions and Texts***

Twenty-three (23) humor categories were identified in the sample of Filipino



advertisements. (See Table 13).

Table 13. Humor Techniques in Filipino Advertisements (Images)

<b>Humor Technique</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Visual Surprise	11
Exaggeration	10
Embarrassment	9
Chase	8
Conceptual Surprise	7
Outwitting	7
Slapstick	7
Clownish Behavior	6
Coincidence	6
Absurdity	4
Speed	4
Stereotype	4
Transformation	4
Disappointment	3
Grotesque Appearance	3
Malicious Pleasure	3
Misunderstanding	3
Parody	3
Clumsiness	2
Imitation	2
Repetition	2
Sexual Allusion	2
Impersonation	1

The list is topped by *Visual Surprise* as the most prevalent humor technique as identified in eleven (11) advertisements. It basically contains the main joke of the ad.

Unpredictability triggers the humor in the ad. Examples of this include: 1) half of a sports car falling from the sky after giving half of the biscuit to a beggar/fairy godmother (Fita Biscuits), 2) a man with long, shiny black hair at the end of a roster of female models (VCO Biolink), and 3) an

offensive text message about the company manager that was sent to him by accident (Smart Telecommunications). *Visual Surprise* is also found in the end of the commercial.

This surprise seems unexpected and random that it becomes the last attempt of the ad to deliver humor. This coincides with the concept of *hirit* in Filipino, wherein a short, funny, sometimes unexpected, remark is given out of quick wit.

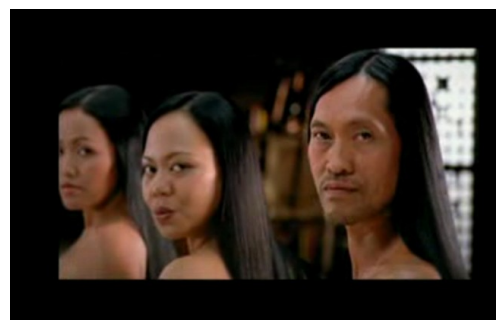


Figure 19. VCO Biolink: Vogue

*Exaggeration* was found in ten (10) advertisements. The ways of exaggerating were not only to emphasize the normal, but also to grab attention and to project loudness and intense emotions. Fast, speedy scenes appear comical on screen. Fast talkers beyond comprehension like a nagging wife that gets painted on by her husband (Boysen Paint), Prince Charming violently jumping and running around Sleeping Beauty to wake her up (Rebisco Cookies) and uncontrollable, fast scratching of fungus infected areas in public (Nizoral) were exaggerations of the normal. Physical appearances were not exaggerated, unlike in the American advertisements, but in Filipino advertisements, the actions and behaviors were.

The humor in *Embarrassment* in visual images and facial expressions are very much related this time. The images show the created embarrassing situations and the funny facial expressions always come after it. Oftentimes, the solution to the sticky situation is provided by the product in the advertisement. *Embarrassment* as a humor category was identified in uncomfortable situations such as having diarrhea (Diatabs), having an oily face (Eskinol Master), getting caught peeing in public (Nation Paint) and forgetting to wear pants in public (Drypers diapers). Indeed, there seems to be a touch of toilet humor in this technique.

In comparison to American advertisements, there are more Filipino ads that used *Chase* as a humor technique. Eight (8) commercials not only showed a sense of urgency like how *Chase* was used in the American sample, but also they expressed *Chase* in competitive and scary settings. Such situations include eating and chewing quickly to get the last bite of a string of noodle (Lucky Me Instant Noodles), stealing a newspaper from a by-stander in a rush to go to the bathroom (Imodium Anti-Diarrhea) and running fast due to fear of a pale, white lady, mistaken as a ghost in the office (Pond's).

*Conceptual Surprise*, *Outwitting* and *Slapstick* were all found in seven (7) advertisements respectively. The first one, *Conceptual Surprise*, creates a false assumption to the viewers that would completely change, either in the middle of the ad or a quick twist in the end. It

has a less obvious message, which makes the viewer sit, wait and pay attention. The advertisements usually start with a shock element to capture attention. The joke immediately presents the real story is revealed for the viewer to understand. In Vulcaseal's commercial, a man snatches the bag of an innocent lady and runs as fast as he can in the middle of a busy street. He realizes that he was not moving forward and found out that a huge fat guy was blocking his way. As the no.1 sealant in the country, the product stops leaks in plumbing pipes and roofs. The concept of robbery is far out from the concept of sealing pipes. However, in the end, the ad shows that nothing gets past from the efficient *Tapal* (sealing) skills of Vulcaseal.

The best example of *Conceptual Surprise* was from the anti-diarrhea medicine, Imodium. It was a single scene of a toilet paper being rolled out and wasted away from the paper dispenser in the bathroom. As the paper was continued to be pulled out, the sound of a motorcycle running was playing in the background. Through this one scene alone, the viewer already knew that this is an anti-diarrhea commercial because of the consumption of toilet paper. However, the commercial ends with a short message: "Save Trees". More than simply selling the product, it was an environment protection public service announcement.

*Outwitting* in the image element is similar to *Outwitting* in the verbal element of the advertisements. The bad solutions that were provided, happened to be more noticeable; thus, they are more visual. The Bingo cookie commercial features a guy who would meet his online friend in the park. He promised to bring a pack of Bingo cookies to let her easily find him in a sea of strangers. She also promised to wear a pink dress for him to find her. While waiting for her with his friend, he suddenly saw a fat girl in a pink dress coming their way. Thinking that it was his online friend, he immediately gave the pack of cookies to his friend sat next to him. In this part, he thought he had escaped in the bad situation by outsmarting the girl. It turns out that there was another beautiful girl behind the fat girl walking towards their way. She noticed the pack of Bingo cookies in his friend's hand, so she supposed that his friend was him. It was a bad way to escape from a bad situation because oftentimes, this humor technique shows that the solution backfires.

*Slapstick*, as mentioned, was also identified in seven (7) advertisements. In the American sample, it appeared in eight (8) advertisements. In both samples, the humor technique validated the physical value of slapstick antics. However, in terms of degree of physicality and violence, the American advertisements have it more apparent. In the Filipino sample, on the other hand, only one was highly violent (falling off from the high point of Banaue Rice Terraces in Pepsi Max commercial), while the rest were seemingly “harmless”, to use the term loosely. A husband painting on the wife’s face to make her shut up (Boysen Paint), a kid playing with the elevator buttons when a man desperately needs to go to the bathroom (Diatabs) and a man’s face slams on a glass wall by accident (Eskinol Master) are the subtle slapstick antics that were found in Filipino ads. Pain incurred to others seems to be a reason for laughter. This could also be *Malicious Pleasure*; however, the images did not show the enjoyment of such a painful sight. Therefore, they were coded under *Slapstick*.

*Absurdity* did not seem as prevalent in the Filipino ads as it was in the American ads. It was only present in four (4) advertisements. Aside from the cited example of *Slapstick* of pushing a friend off the cliff in the Pepsi Max commercial, another good example of *Absurdity* is slapping and talking to oneself to express

regret of making a girl wait for a long time (Fita Biscuits). The guy knew that the girl would shout at him for being late. So, upon arriving at their meeting place, he suddenly blamed himself by saying all the predictable sentences that the girl was supposed to say to him. It appears to be somehow corny and not completely funny, and yet, it could elicit a chuckle because of the quick yet absurd wit to save himself from being in trouble.

The images that show *Stereotype* in Filipino advertisements are different from the images in the American ads. Out of the four (4) Filipino advertisements, three of them showed



**Figure 20. Pepsi Max: Terraces**

It

gender stereotyping. Where the stereotypes in American ads are about ethnicities, in Filipino advertisements, the images portray a play on gender differences. Women as a wife is a non-stop nagger (Boysen Paint), while as a mother, they are proud stage moms who push their kids to show off their talents (Bibbo Cheesedog). For men, one ad showed an antithesis of the idea that boys do not cry. In this Sprite commercial, a guy gets carried away with his emotions while watching a soap opera. His friends suddenly came and he was scared that they would laugh at him for watching a drama and crying. He quickly pretends that he does not care about the show, but his friends actually joined him in watching the show, which reveals that they follow the show religiously.

The behavior and set of tastes determine the gender stereotypes. However, it should be pointed out that the *Stereotype* as a humor technique could act as a way of representing the target market. The portrayals of the typical housewife, the proud mother and the cool, friendly guy allow the viewer to see himself/herself in the ad so that it would send the message that the product surely caters to them.

*Disappointment*, *Grotesque Appearance*, *Malicious Pleasure*, *Misunderstanding* and *Parody* were all presented in three (3) advertisements correspondingly. *Disappointment* and *Grotesque Appearance* had straightforward humor styles in terms of showing images that deliver humor. There was no need to figure out because the jokes were most definitely obvious. In *Grotesque Appearance*, the physical features were played up to show the need for using the endorsed product. However, in one commercial for VCO Biolink, *Grotesque Appearance* delivered a more shock value than simply selling a product. In a roster of average looking Filipinas with long, shiny black hair, the unexpected turn in this pattern came from a man with strong facial features but also with long, shiny black hair.

As for *Malicious Pleasure*, the enjoyment of one's misfortune is identified through mischief by intention. The discomfort of diarrhea is used in this humor category and one's urgent need to reach the toilet is the major content to trigger *Malicious Pleasure*. The humor in *Parody* was shown by borrowing from popular fairy tales. For the purposes

of delivering humor and the marketing message, twists in the normal story were added.

Only two (2) advertisements used *Sexual Allusion* as a humor technique in Filipino ads. This is definitely little compared to the six (6) advertisements from the American sample. There is also the subtle use of this humor in the content of the ads. In the SkyCable commercial, the scene in the club with one man and one girl talking conveyed *Sexual Allusion*. However, combined with *Visual Surprise*, the next scene in the ad pushes the humor further when the girl said, “*Pare, nice car*” (“Dude, nice car”) in a deep, manly voice. The ad completes the joke upon the revelation that the guy unfortunately picked up a homosexual in the club. In comparison to the kind of *Sexual Allusion* in the American advertisements, the degree of sexual content in Filipino ads is not as strong.

From the element of facial expressions, seventeen (17) humor techniques were identified. (See Table 14).

Table 14. *Humor Techniques in Filipino Advertisements (Facial)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Peculiar Face	21
Embarrassment	7
Exaggeration	7
Clownish Behavior	3
Disappointment	3
Malicious Pleasure	3
Visual Surprise	3
Conceptual Surprise	2
Imitation	2
Outwitting	2
Absurdity	1
Chase	1
Misunderstanding	1
Parody	1
Ridicule	1
Slapstick	1
Stereotype	1

The most prevalent humor technique is *Peculiar Face*, as identified in twenty-one (21) advertisements. The identification of this humor style is obvious, as the name suggests; however, there are different kinds of facial expressions that are considered to be peculiar yet funny. Common examples include: a) a squirm during the time of discomfort (Diatabs, Imodium), b) wide-eyed delight from an extreme good news (Rogin-E), c) a



frown of disbelief from seeing a mother and her baby with questionable difference in skin color (Biolink Whitening Soap), d) an awkward exchange of stares between two male friends who are too close to each other, almost kissing, while eating one string of noodle (Lucky Me Instant Noodles), and e) a proud smile from a fake victory due to misspelling in the game of Scrabble (Smart Telecommunications). This is another manifestation of the physicality of humor that is obvious in Filipino ads.

Lastly, in terms of written texts, there are eleven (11) humor techniques that were identified from the sample. (See Table 15).

Table 15. *Humor Techniques in Filipino Advertisements (Text)*

Humor Technique	Frequency
Pun	2
Coincidence	1
Conceptual Surprise	1
Exaggeration	1
Grotesque Appearance	1
Irreverent Behavior (visual)	1
Malicious Pleasure	1
Outwitting	1
Ridicule	1
Slapstick	1
Stereotype	1

*Pun* came out to be the most prevalent humor technique in the texts of Filipino ads. Alongside the images and the facial expressions, the play in the meaning of the written texts delivers humor. After the *Visual Surprise* of receiving triple babies from the delivery room and the *Peculiar Face* of disbelief from the proud father, the Rogin-E Vitamins commercial ends with the line, “*Stay strong enough to enjoy life’s surprises*”. It does not only function as tagline, but it adds up to the overwhelming joy of a good, pleasant and humorous surprise of having three babies in one delivery.

Statements with double meaning may also be identified as *Pun*. This would usually apply to *Sexual Allusion*, wherein sexual intent is often implied. However, the second meaning of a statement, of course, may not necessarily be of sexual nature. Example is the line in the Pepsi Max commercial that endorses a soda with no sugar. In the ad, where a group of adrenaline junkies were about to push their friend off the cliff, their friend shows a great deal of fear and worry. So, the ad flashes the text, “*Don’t worry, there’s no sugar.*” The

*Pun*, combined with a minor touch of *Misunderstanding*, lies on the wrong assumption that the friend is worried about drinking too much sugar in the soda, not in the ridiculously dangerous act.

The remaining humor techniques were each identified in one (1) advertisement. However, one advertisement contained two (2) humor techniques in its text: *Coincidence* and *Stereotype*, both humor styles pertaining to only one written text in the ad. In the Tivoli Chocolate commercial, one cute, ditsy, happy girl was watching a TV show while fantasizing about the actor on TV. The actor talks about his ideal girl, which coincidentally, matches all the characteristics of this girl. However, when the actor shares that he likes a girl whose name is Bong, a common Filipino man's name, she lights up. On her shirt, it was written, *Bong*, her name, which does not match her cute, girly appearance and disposition. *Coincidence* as a humor style was evident, but *Stereotype* was not. *Bong* seems to be just an ordinary name but unless the viewer is aware that it is a hyper-masculine name, the joke would be lost.

The similar case applies in the Smart Telecommunications commercial, where a bored employee in an office meeting sends the wrong message to the wrong person, his boss. This commercial also displays two (2) humor techniques: *Grotesque Appearance* and *Irreverent Behavior-visual*. An employee was writing a message about his boss intended for his coworker: “*Kalbong ‘to. Gabi na! Wala ng FX!*” (“This bald guy is too much! It’s already late! I won’t be able to get a ride home!”). He accidentally sends it to his boss, who gave him a stern look after reading it. The direct comment about the manager’s physical appearance (*Grotesque Appearance*) was also the manifestation of *Irreverent Behavior*, of disrespect to authority.

The text, “Save Trees” that manifested *Conceptual Surprise* was mentioned earlier in Imodium Anti-Diarrhea commercial as a compliment to the image of the ad. The text was the core punch line in the advertisement. Although it does not elicit a full laugh from the viewer, it simply earns a pleasant smile for its creativity and its environmental concern.

The humor style of *Outwitting* in the written text carries the whole joke in the Smart Telecommunications ad. In the game of Scrabble, a guy plays the letter Z, the 10-point letter, and places it in the Triple Letter Score by spelling, “*Sumtymz*”, which in text lingo means, “Sometimes”. Out of nervousness and anticipation, he boastfully assumed that he got a high score. *Outwitting* in this ad as a humor style manifested mere stupidity of the guy who was clueless of the mistake he made.

The last humor technique that was identified in the written text is *Ridicule*, which was a direct attack on something or someone to elicit laughter. After a false scare from a pale, white girl that was mistaken to be a ghost in the office, the Pond’s commercial ends with the line, “*Need more color?*” Aside from being the marketing pitch of an ad for a pink face powder, it becomes an insult to the girls with very fair complexion.

### Significant Differences

The frequencies showed what humor categories were prevalent in the American and Filipino advertisements. However, because they were purely descriptive, results of the Chi-square test were generated to determine which humor categories show significant differences between the advertisements from the two countries.

Where  $p > 0.05$  to determine whether there exists a significant difference between a certain kind of humor category in American and Filipino advertisements, the following results were generated from the Chi-square test (See Table 16).

Table 16. Chi-Square Test Statistics (Audio)

<b>Humor Technique</b>	<b>Test Statistic (<i>p</i>)</b>
Absurdity	0.292
Anthropomorphism	0.169
Bombast	1.00
Chase	0.503
Clownish Behavior	0.315
Clumsiness	0.315
Coincidence	0.307
Conceptual Surprise	0.646
Disappointment	0.315
Eccentricity	0.315
Embarrassment	0.646
Exaggeration	0.479

Grotesque Appearance	0.153
Imitation	0.646
Impersonation	0.315
Infantilism	0.603
Irony	0.169
<b>Irreverent Behavior</b>	<b>0.006</b>
Malicious Pleasure	0.315
<b>Misunderstanding</b>	<b>0.041</b>
Outwitting	0.505
Parody	0.315
Peculiar Music	0.372
<b>Peculiar Sound</b>	<b>0.042</b>
Peculiar Voice	0.749
Pun	0.338
Repartee	0.315
Repetition	0.307
Ridicule	0.092
Rigidity	0.153
Sarcasm	0.401
<b>Sexual Allusion</b>	<b>0.014</b>
Slapstick	0.315
Speed	0.695
Stereotype	0.505
Transformation	0.468
Visual Surprise	0.558

In the audio element, four (4) humor categories showed significant differences between the American and Filipino advertisements. Those categories are: 1) *Irreverent Behavior*, 2) *Misunderstanding*, 3) *Peculiar Sound*, and 4) *Sexual Allusion*.

*Sarcasm*, the most prevalent humor technique in the audio elements of both the American and Filipino advertisements, did not support the significant difference between the two samples. Although it was the most prevalent and the advertisements appeared to have used it in different ways, the difference was not completely significant to be translated into this statistic.

However, other humor categories that were not prevalent appeared to show significant differences. *Irreverent Behavior* and *Sexual Allusion* were evidently expressed in the humor content of the advertisements and this content was identified and interpreted clearly. These findings could support the premise behind the differences of humor vis-à-vis culture. As we shall later see in the textual analysis, these two are some of the manifestations of cultural values of American and Filipino societies.

The two other humor categories that revealed significant differences between American and Filipino advertisements were: 1) *Misunderstanding*, and 2) *Peculiar Sound*. The difference in using *Misunderstanding* is evident due to the absence of this technique in the sample of Filipino advertisements. Not to conclude that this technique is not often used in Filipino advertisements in general, but based on the humor content of the sample, *Misunderstanding* was not identified, and therefore, not a prevalent category. On the other hand, *Misunderstanding* in the American sample was manifested in the play of words and meaning (“Yo!” to “Yao!” in the Visa commercial) and in the ridicule of intellect (ordering food with a low, soft voice in the library in the Mercedes Benz commercial).

As an obvious audio element, the use of *Peculiar Sound* manifested a significant difference between American and Filipino advertisements. Once again, this is an observation based on the absence of this category in one of the samples. This time, American advertisements did not feature any indicators of *Peculiar Sound*. Compared to the Filipino sample, which contained seven (7) advertisements where this humor technique was used, this explains the common use of sound effects that add to the humor content in the ads.

In the visual element of the advertisement, which is composed of images, facial expressions and written texts, only one humor technique showed a significant difference between the samples. The result of the Chi-square test is as follows (See Table 17).

Table 17. Chi-Square Test Statistics (Visual)

<b>Humor Technique</b>	<b>Test Statistic (<i>p</i>)</b>
Absurdity	0.075
Anthropomorphism	0.125
Chase	0.065
Clownish Behavior	0.809
Clumsiness	1.00
Coincidence	0.140
Conceptual Surprise	0.114
Disappointment	0.337
Embarrassment	0.330
Exaggeration	0.511
Grotesque Appearance	0.338
Imitation	0.503
Impersonation	0.603

Irony	0.079
Irreverent Behavior	0.558
Malicious Pleasure	0.546
Misunderstanding	0.503
Outwitting	0.368
Parody	0.360
<b>Peculiar Face</b>	<b>0.041</b>
Pun	0.222
Repartee	0.315
Repetition	0.646
Ridicule	0.414
Sarcasm	0.213
Scale	0.315
Sexual Allusion	0.169
Slapstick	0.570
Speed	0.695
Stereotype	0.941
Transformation	0.078
Visual Surprise	0.555

*Peculiar Face* is the only humor category that showed a significant difference between American and Filipino advertisements. The definition of peculiarity and its manifestations may differ between the two. A simple frown could appear to be a funny, exaggerated expression to another. This may also explain the quantifiable difference in frequency, wherein this humor category was more prevalent in Filipino ads (21) than in American ads (10).

It is noteworthy that the humor categories that were identified to be prevalent did not show the significant differences between American and Filipino advertisements. Like *Sarcasm*, which is prevalent in the audio element of both American and Filipino ads, *Visual Surprise* in the visual element, did not support the difference between the two. Other prevalent humor categories were: 1) *Absurdity*, 2) *Outwitting*, 3) *Stereotype*, 4) *Embarrassment*, 5) *Anthropomorphism*, 6) *Slapstick*, among others. Prevalence through the number of advertisements and the manifestations of these categories may differ; however, they are not significantly different from each other. Aside from humor tastes, national culture and social values, the results are possibly influenced by other factors.

## Synthesis

The results of the content analysis have provided descriptive statistical report of the



prevalence of the humor techniques in both American and Filipino advertisements. These figures are not discussed to generalize nor represent for the recent and current commercials from both countries. Because as the results have shown, the use of humor techniques varies from one product type to another, from a simple advertising tagline to sell to the viewer to an unexpected appeal of environmental concern. Combinations of humor techniques in one advertisement are also a manifestation of how the advertisements would create a way to deliver its message effectively to its market. Most importantly, the results showed that although American and Filipino advertisements contain the same humor techniques in their audio and visual elements, the applications of such techniques are different in terms of the degree of subtlety, physicality, implied and latent intentions, representations and their nature of definitions. However, the results of the Chi-Square test showed that only a few humor techniques showed significant differences between American and Filipino advertisements. They did not significantly differ in terms of the humor techniques that were identified to be prevalent. Categories such as *Sarcasm*, *Outwitting*, *Embarrassment*, *Absurdity* and *Visual Surprise* among others were prevalent, as shown in the descriptive statistics, but they did not show significant differences through the Chi-Square test. These differences may be attributed to each country's society and the many factors, particularly its culture, that shape their preferences and understanding of humor.

## Textual Analysis

The premise of this research is that culture is a major factor in the quest to standardize an international advertising campaign as an offshoot of the globalization of markets. Humor, as the literature review showed, is a culture-laden idea, aside from being related to one's personal tastes. In this analysis, the humor techniques would be juxtaposed to American and Filipino humor and cultures. This is to show the possible reasons behind the use of these humor styles. Without generalizing the results to apply in all advertisements, the analysis sought to understand why the local markets find these humor categories funny. This is a comparative analysis between American and Filipino humor and culture in relation to the prevalent humor techniques that were identified earlier through quantitative content analysis. This discussion includes the humor categories that significantly differed based on the Chi-square test results and the prevalent humor categories that were identified through descriptive statistics.

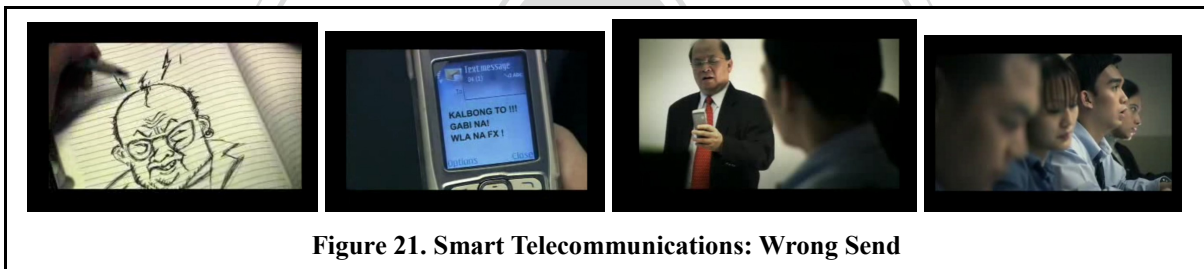
## Discussion

### *Irreverent Behavior*

This humor technique manifests “power distance”, one of the culture-specific dimensions that Hofstede (1983; 1997) provided in his known researches. As a humor technique that pokes fun at disrespect to authority, this shows how relevant power distance is to both American and Filipino cultures. As a management trait, power distance is characterized by the relationship between the employer/boss and his subordinate. A high Power Distance Index score would mean that employers have dominant roles, gaining power to tell subordinates what to do. A low Power Distance Index score, on the other hand, shows a potentially free flow of communication between employer and subordinate where the opinions of the subordinate is given importance.

To compare the index scores, the Philippines received 94 out of the possible 100, which is evidently higher than the score of 40 for the United States. The scores show that authority is more openly demonstrated and valued in the Philippines as compared to the US.

Translating these scores to the presence of irreverent behavior, this humor technique appeared to be rarely used in Filipino ads from the sample. Aside from the small frequency of this category in the content analysis, the images and texts in the sole advertisement containing irreverent behavior also speaks of how this is valued in the Philippine society. In the commercial, the secretive act of disrespecting the boss during an office meeting already shows the violation of a social norm. Through a text message, an employee makes fun of his boss but he then sends this offensive message to his boss by mistake. Based on the boss's and the employee's reactions upon the revelation of this mortal mistake, irreverent behavior becomes a funny situation. The Filipino viewer would know that such act means trouble. However, given such a constrained cultural situation, other Filipino advertisements could also use this to find humor as a release of tension, following the relief theory of humor.



On the other hand, the American advertisements have a direct approach to show irreverent behavior. Not to connote complete disrespect to authority, such behavior appears to have a more lenient take on its possible consequences. Calling names blatantly (e.g. Mr. Turkeyneck, Jackasses) is common practice to show irreverent



**Figure 22. FedEx: Mr. Turkey Neck**

a

behavior. Deliberate insults or violation of rules remain funny to the American viewer because the low level of power hierarchy gives them the freedom to appreciate such humor.

### ***Sexual Allusion***

The American and Filipino cultures contain apparent differences in handling topics that are sexual by nature. Their applications in a humorous context also differ in terms of the degree of subtlety. Sexual allusion is more openly expressed verbally in the American

advertisements. The straightforward attempts of men, and even of a monkey (Bud Light), to befriend, impress and date girls with hopes of taking them home are manifestations of their

openness and seemingly casual attitude towards sex. Lines of sexual allusion

such as *“Picture me naked”*, *“Baby, I can do more than just talk”*, *“Why don’t we just cut the chase, head upstairs so we can you know...”* and *“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”* are direct verbal come-ons that are thrown to seduce and attract the women. In terms of imagery, scantily clad women are present in the advertisements without unease or offensiveness.



**Figure 23. Bud Light: Monkey**

On the other hand, the sexual allusion in Filipino humor follows the lines of conservative Filipino culture. With careful discretion, sexual allusion is implied, not even through words but through images or actions. If words are used to express sexual allusion, words with double meanings are used to safely send sexual messages.

Sexy dancing and harmless touching or simple whispering are the images that show sexual connotations in Filipino ads. The meanings are understood, as they are supported by: 1) setting of the plot (e.g. beach where sexy bikinis are acceptable, club where social interaction through dancing and intimate chats are normal), and 2) product endorsed (e.g. sexual allusion is associated with alcoholic drinks to reach the male audience), but they often possess subtlety. This is due to the society’s reservation to a perceived sensitive topic such as sex. A major factor of this cultural value is the active role of religion in the society. Rooted in history and observed in the daily affairs as an individual or as a

society, religion in the Philippines has a great influence in the media content, consumption habits and generally in the lifestyle of the people. Christian doctrines are practiced and therefore, anything raunchy that would seem to be tolerable to the American media, would surely receive criticisms if shown to the Filipino audience.

### ***Sarcasm***

This humor category was identified to be the most prevalent in the verbal element of both American and Filipino advertisements. However, they differ in delivering sarcasm as a humor technique. Sarcasm in American humor is a polite, dry insult. It may not be as dry and as difficult to understand as British sarcasm, but the delivery is also usually in a cold tone or a deadpan expression. Due to its too honest characteristic, sarcasm, when taken literally, could be highly offensive. From the insult to one's sexual prowess (Domino's Pizza Delivery), physical appearance (Kmart; Bud Light; Centrum) and intellect (Mercedes Benz E-series), the face value of sarcastic remarks is not suitable for the sensitive and for the clueless.



**Figure 24. Domino's: 30-Minute Delivery**

This kind of sarcasm is not found in Filipino humor. Because of the non-confrontational, soft core values of its culture, an insult would normally be taken as it is, without reading between the lines where the humor of sarcasm lies. Sarcasm in Filipino humor is not a direct hit to the butt of joke. It plays along the lines of dropping hints or of shrewd tone of voice, whether to express judgment or disapproval. The viewer may identify sarcasm from the delivery and the images, and not merely from the remark itself.

### ***Stereotype***

American humor has derived its funny material from the melting pot of ethnicities in the United States. People from different parts of the world come together, whether as

immigrants, naturalized citizens, workers, or tourists. Their culture sets them apart from the American majority and the other ethnicities. The portrayals of each culture in films, television shows and advertisements become a representation of the whole, which could appear as racial profiling. The humor content in the American advertisements plays with racial stereotypes in terms of physical appearance and English accents. In Budweiser's commercial, three men of different ethnicities had trouble finding girls to hit on in the bar. The ad highlighted each man's cultural identity in each scene when they failed to impress girls because their cultural characteristics were too strong and different for the women. An Asian nerd, an African holding up a chicken and an Indian giving the wrong compliment were all turned down by the girls.

The British man, in the Axe deodorant exuded sex appeal because of his English accent. Girls swoon upon hearing a British guy speak; thus, making American guys jealous. However, in the ad, instead of a regular Caucasian man to play as the jealous boyfriend of the girl, the character was played by an African-American actor. Without delivering lines in the ad, the image of this character adds to the humor content because of the loose, informal American English that African-Americans use, in reference to the black and hip-hop culture, which is another subculture in the American society.

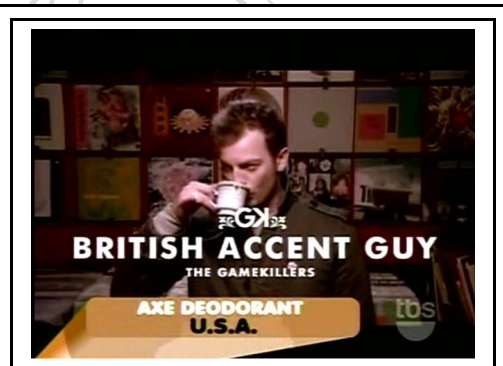


Figure 25. Axe Deo: Gamekiller

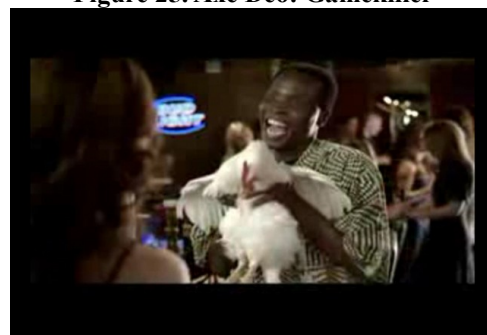


Figure 26. Bud Light: Language of Love

Another prevalent stereotype in American humor is the gender-related punch lines. Female roles would include a pretty but dumb, blonde girl and a nagging wife. Both roles feed different social standards of gender. A beautiful but dumb girl complements the concept of machismo, although such is not a predominant social value in American



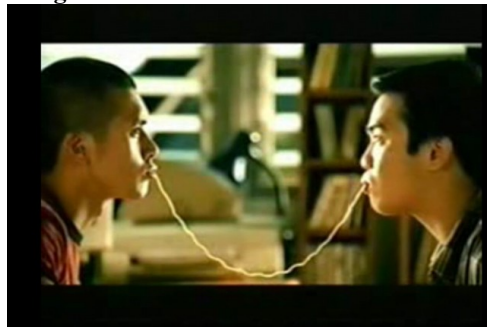
society because of the rebuttal of gender equality and women's rights. It is still based on physical appearance, in connection to American humor's physical value, but it plays with women as people having inferior intellect.

On the other hand, a nagging wife places a female in a powerful position. A commanding presence of dictating her husband what to do and when to do it appears funny, especially when it is exaggerated. Such women behave like this as wives in reality, but the humor comes in when the situation is uncalled for. For example, the ability of a football referee to ignore and shut his ears from the loud complaints of fans and coaches after a bad call is attributed to his daily training at home from his loudmouthed wife, as seen in the Budweiser commercial.

Male roles, on the other hand, are humorous when their sexuality is put into question. Homosexuality or a reference to it through personal tastes and the use of icons that are considered to be "gay" or unmanly is considered funny. It is usually implied than expressed in images through dressing up and flamboyant behavior. A good example of this is the Ford Focus commercial where a man brags about the latest voice activation feature of his car stereo. He mentions the names of rock bands to play cool songs and to impress his friend. His friend showed a doubtful face



**Figure 27. Ford Focus: Michael Bolton**



**Figure 28. Lucky Me: Chili**

so he took a wild guess and activated, "Michael Bolton", a ballad artist that is not a common choice of guys with a cool image. Losing all of his masculinity and coolness, the driver immediately activated another song of a rock band.

Stereotypes in Filipino humor are somehow portrayed differently. As mentioned in the

content analysis, rather than featuring unique characteristics and behavior of ethnic minorities, humor in Filipino advertisements derives its content from gender portrayals and social status differences. The Philippine society surely has its wide range of cultural diversities: from the traditional and conservative Spanish heritage, the modern and free American ideals to the rich Chinese and Muslim customs. Although they can be well-defined by categories, these groups are combined in the society as explained in years of history and the current affairs in the Philippines.

The common denominator between American and Filipino humor is the presence of gender portrayals and/or the creative tweaks of gender differences to inject humor in the advertisements. The nagging wife is a recurring and iconic character to express humor that is used in the ads of both countries. Where there is a loudmouthed wife, there is a submissive husband who appears to be the antithesis to the patriarchal inclination of both American and Filipino societies. Possibly considered to be a strong manifestation of patriarchy, machismo appears to be more evident in the Filipino culture due to the expected domestic lifestyle of a housewife/mother. As a pun to the Filipino term, “*ander de saya*” (under the skirt), the name, *Andres*, was given to a compliant husband in a commercial. This kind of humor also ridicules men for not being the king of the house and being dominated upon by his own wife.

There is also the stereotype of the lower, working class in Filipino humor. The Ligo Carne Norte Corned Beef commercial played with the assumption that the members of this social class are not familiar with etiquette and proper, high-end English vocabulary. This humor carries a condescending tone that somehow mocks their capabilities and knowledge. The surprise of a fluent British English monologue of a Filipino public transportation driver brought the unexpected, humorous content in the advertisement. In reference to the incongruity theory of humor, the common perception towards these workers became the incongruent element that happened to break the norm or the expectation of the viewer.

### ***Absurdity***

The nonsensical value of an idea, act or a situation relies on what the society sees as normal or congruent with its values. The rarity of a situation to happen takes up most of the humor element of the content. Sometimes, what is absurd is even difficult for the viewer to explain, and yet, he/she understands the humor in it. This perhaps shows what a society perceives to be corny, hilarious or even sick kinds of humor and how much absurdity they could tolerate. What is amusingly absurd to one culture may actually be sick and unethical to another.

Absurdity in Filipino humor may be associated with the concept of “*makulit*”. Literally, the term means annoying by repetition. However, the idea behind “*makulit*” as a slang term is difficult to translate in English. It could be described as a behavior, an act or a situation that appears goofy and cute but crazy and ridiculous. Slapping one’s face is absurd in general, and yet, like in one of the commercials, saying “*I hate me [sic]*” to blame and punish one’s self is *makulit*. It remains totally ridiculous and nonsense but it does contain a certain level of humor.

In American humor, absurdity may cover situations that would cause disbelief. An out-of-this-world behavior or situation that could make the viewer say, “What?!” although not necessarily in major bewilderment, may appear to be absurd, such as a talking, attention-grabbing stain in the Tide commercial or a father wearing a tight, red pair of gym shorts. However, absurdity in the American context also pushes the limits of creativity in advertising. An unexpected wake-up call from a marching rock band on the way to work or a conniving effort from the drunkards at the local pub to persuade a doubtful wife is high on creativity but is borderline ridiculous, impossible and obviously, absurd. Meanwhile, in Filipino humor, absurdity would leave an impression of oddity. With less disbelief and more pleasant chuckles, absurdity would somehow appear stupid and yet still funny.

### ***Embarrassment***

This humor category directly addresses another noticeable difference between the American (Western) and Filipino (Asian) cultures. The concept of saving face explains

the value of one's reputation in the society. It covers the importance of honor, even in times of humiliation. To understand this concept, the society should be placed under the low- and high-context spectrum. The American society is classified as a low-context culture, wherein verbal communication is direct and nonverbal cues are not of major concern to reach common understanding. Such societies are described as "individualistic". The other end of the spectrum illustrates high-context cultures, where the dynamics of group affiliation is important. Filipino culture, which is a mix of Asian and Spanish traditions, is categorized as a high-context culture, but not as high as the level of countries such as Japan, Korea, China, Egypt and countries in South America. Cohen (1997) explains that high-context cultures observe hierarchy and tradition wherein shame and honor receive much importance.

In both cultures, embarrassment as a humor technique immediately causes fear and discomfort as seen in the situation presented and the reactions of the characters in the advertisements. Embarrassment in the American advertisements includes a redeeming factor that would somehow send the message that the embarrassing situation is not a big problem after all. American humor enjoys the awkwardness of it all and the quick comeback to save face. In advertising history, this was marked by the series of Mentos commercials in the late 90s. From the sample, the embarrassment in American humor presents a revelation of secret (e.g. bad taste in music in Ford Focus) or the fear of an anticipated embarrassment (e.g. public speaking jitters in the Clearasil ad). This, in fact, coincides with the direct approach of low-context cultures to simply solve the problem and move on.



**Figure 29. Clearasil: Picture me Naked**



**Figure 30. Nation Paint: Wall**

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On the other hand, Filipino humor gives a heavier emphasis on embarrassment. In fact, the advertisements feature situations that would definitely put someone in the most dishonorable moments (e.g. diarrhea runs, dandruff flakes). The treatment of an embarrassing situation in Filipino humor shows a noteworthy reaction: escapism. Instead of an instant redemption to save face, the storylines in the advertisements would resort to escapism to shun away from further embarrassment. This is an admission of losing face, but it raises the difference that the Filipino humor and culture needs time to redeem oneself; thus, dwelling on the humiliating moment before coming back to the normalcy. The focus of high-context cultures shows a tedious process of building the relationship once again, or in this case, regaining the good reputation after humiliation, no matter how big or small the incident is.

### ***Physical Humor***

Several prevalent humor techniques prevailed from the advertisements to support the characterizations of American and Filipino humor. The literature explained the physical characteristic of both American and Filipino humor. Both are identified through slapstick antics. However, based on comedic films, Filipino humor is described to be “vulgar with little room for subtlety and nuance”. Subtlety in this sense is different from what was described in sexual allusion as a humor technique in advertisements. The level of vulgarity refers to the degree of exaggeration of the content, setting and even delivery of jokes in Filipino humor. It projects some form of faggotry due to its loud, flamboyant and gay nature and delivery, such is somehow missing in the sample of Filipino advertisements for this research.

Imagery supports the physical nature of both American and Filipino humor. Prevalent humor techniques that were revealed are: 1) *Visual Surprise*, 2) *Grotesque Appearance*, 3) *Slapstick*, 4) *Exaggeration*, 5) *Clumsiness*, and 6) *Peculiar Face*. Evidently, these categories are physical by nature, such as those who fall under Berger’s major humor category of *Action*, or they are expressed through imagery with both implied and latent meanings, such as the major humor category of *Identity. Language* as a major humor

category did not only stand alone by itself to deliver humor; in fact, it supported the claim of physicality of American and Filipino humor by providing references that lead to humor content that still pertain to physical, observable characteristics. The appeal to *Logic* is not as prevalent as the other humor categories, which could describe that the humor content in these advertisements from the US and the Philippines are simple, easy to understand and somehow straightforward.

## **Synthesis**

The qualitative comparison of American and Filipino advertisements explained the possible cultural factors behind the prevalence of certain humor techniques in their content. As a validation to the claims of the literature that both cultures have an open, obvious and physical sense of humor, the analysis also showed that the similarities contain differences within them in terms of how they are delivered and used to trigger humor. A good example is *Stereotype*, which is prevalent in both, but American humor plays with its own cultural and social stereotypes based on the various ethnicities in the American society. The Philippine society is not as diverse as the former, therefore, the stereotypes are derived from social classes and gender portrayals.

The humor techniques both reflect and challenge the cultural values in the US and the Philippines. The reflection of what is being observed and practiced in the society becomes funny when people see themselves in these real situations. On the other hand, challenging cultural values that define their lifestyles and beliefs seem to be more prevalent because it provides freedom, relief and room for creativity and imagination to entertain the impossible, the illegal and the irrational.