Literature Review

Globalization: An Overview

The occurrence of globalization seemed to be fast-paced and inevitable. Once a forecast by Theodore Levitt (1983), globalization resulted into "a new commercial reality --- the explosive emergence of global markets for globally standardized products, gigantic world-scale markets of previously unimagined magnitudes" (p.20). He argued that differences in national or regional preferences in business transactions and consumption patterns would disappear, thus, leading to the homogenization of products, manufacturing and the vital institutions of trade, including marketing.

Levitt coined the phrase, "globalization of markets" in his published work of the same title that explained: 1) the universality of tastes and preferences, 2) the standardization of products and services, and 3) the appropriateness of marketing designs (Usunier, 1996). Aside from integration of trade, investment, financial markets and other elements of commerce, globalization has also integrated consumer markets (UNDP, 1998).

Another school of thought thinks otherwise. As clearly discussed by Douglas and Wind (1987), globalization is merely a myth due to the over simplistic nature of Levitt's thesis of globalization of markets. To quote the two scholars:

> *"The adoption of a strategy of universal standardization appears naïve and over simplistic… such an approach as a universal strategy in relation to all markets may not be desirable, and may lead to major strategic blunders… The design of an effective global marketing strategy does not necessarily entail the marketing of standardized products and global brands worldwide". (p.24)*

The main point of the anti-globalization perspective is pegged on the presence of local variations in taste, both in individual and shared scales, which influence decision-making processes. Arnold (2004) shed light to this dilemma when he explained that the changes

in the trade and markets are "are not driven by the convergence of consumer taste as he [Levitt] forecast" (p.95). Instead, the phenomenon most evidently takes place in retail distribution and in media. Businesses reap benefits from resorting to global branding strategies, however, Arnold (2004) emphasized the major dilemma of international marketing, that is, the increasing global presence of companies and their brands and yet the retention of the consumers' local orientation in terms of tastes and demands. Even Levitt (1983) himself mentioned this point by saying that "a major problem in a world of increasing global commonality is how to organize and manage in the face of persistent differences in the context of a generalized drift toward and preference for standardization" (p. 41).

Due to this point of view in opposition to Levitt's argument, the infamous "Think Globally, Act Locally" paradigm emerges. Globalization is an issue that is under scrutiny, but this paradigm tries to locate the middle point between the opposing sides. Douglas Daft (2000) of Coca-Cola recognized that as "the next big evolutionary step of "going global" now has to be "going local", in response to the growing demand for "greater flexibility, responsiveness and local sensitivity, while we [the companies] were further centralizing decision-making and standardizing our practices". Indeed, at the end of the day, ruling out imminent factors from the local markets and obliterate individual recognition and taste, as Arnold (2004) puts it, "would be swimming against the tide of marketing and is likely to fail" (p.11).

The journey to global success for a brand does not happen overnight. The Internet and other products of technology have shortened and eased such a tedious process. Nevertheless, a brand does not breeze through the international marketing arena without the help of careful planning, effective execution and efficient troubleshooting along the way. Besides, a brand is more than a simple name. Kapferer (2000) specified that to the consumer, it is for identification, a promise of quality, a confirmation of his/her self-image and image to others and a link to its behavior in its relationship to the society. To the company, on the other hand, a brand is a representative, an image for their internal and external publics and a symbol that holds their core values together. Brands even carry

5

the national identity of their country of origin (Anholt, 2000), which influences the brand's image and credibility and facilitates in the consumer's recall and association.

During the process of either launching or maintaining a global brand, the mix of marketing and communication is vital to achieve the desired outcomes. In fact, it is the role of communication in global marketing to provide the needed information to make buying decisions at present or in the future. Given this task of being a messenger of the company with a global brand to different countries, communication posed a question as a response to the changing climate of globalization. Hollensen (2001) raised the issue of "whether to standardize worldwide or to adapt the promotion mix to the environment of each country" (p.515). It is an important strategic consideration, Hollensen added, because competition is globalizing (Porter, 1986). Standardization could happen in the product mix as a part of a marketing plan to cater to the needs of the "global consumer", who would prefer "standardized, low-priced, quality goods" (Usunier, 1996). The birth of the "global consumer" is brought about by the increasing number of people worldwide who identify with the concept of "global citizen" --- who has 1) extensive patterns of real and simulated (media) travel, 2) curiosity about different places, people and cultures, and even 3) skills that allows one to interpret tourist signs (Lash and Urry, 1994). Mobile consumers such as businessmen and travelers may be considered as "global consumers", who expect uniformity in product availability and brand visibility.

However, the same may not immediately be applied in marketing communications. The consumption of a standardized product could be similar across countries, but the persuasion to consume such products could appear differently. Aside from the apparent geographical distance of one country to another, several factors such as the political, legal, economic, social and cultural environments separate countries from one another. It is a challenge to surpass national laws and regulations and economic considerations, but it is more daunting of a task to address and attract the market of different backgrounds, with the right message at the right time to reach targeted objectives and attain desired outcomes.

International Advertising Standardization

At hand, the primary issue faced by international advertising is standardization versus adaptation. This is a possible offshoot from the globalization of markets and the penetration of global brands in various countries. On this note, advertising, as an element of a brand's integrated marketing communication plan, becomes a fundamental factor in the communication of the brand's core values and its positioning in the market. The use of internationalized campaigns covers concerns in language, the range of international market segments, the competition between local and international agencies and the degree of decentralization in the firm (Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000).

Taylor, Miracle and Chang (1994) raised a relevant point regarding this issue because they saw the need for a clear definition of the term "standardization". A broad area such as advertising could definitely use a working framework for further research and analysis. This way, even the particular conditions under which these dimensions are covered can be included. However, a number of researches (Duncan & Ramapasad, 1995; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997) utilized, if not provided, definitions for the term in relation to their respective research objectives. Standardization is referred to as the use of a common approach (e.g. advertising message) and/or elements and appeals (e.g. strategy, execution and language) in an advertising campaign across national boundaries.

Miracle (1990) provided four primary dimensions of advertising between nations that may be involved in standardization: 1) objectives, 2) message strategies, 3) media strategies, and 4) budgets. These elements are also the factors to consider in standardizing advertising campaigns, plus other concerns such as national regulations, consumption patterns, education, language and culture. Studies (Buzzell, 1968; Peebles, 1989; Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997) explained the benefits of standardization such as cost savings, presence of universal appeal, brand image consistency, stronger brand recall to the consumers, mobile and otherwise; and effective planning and control. Conversely, such benefits do not work all the time. Melawar, Turnbull & Balabanis (2000) cited a case of Toys R' Us that opted to resort to television because it was a more cost-efficient alternative as an advertising medium in the Middle East. This was a break off from its

standardized approach of using press inserts to advertise.

Although standardization implies the conceptualization and the execution of a single advertising campaign for different countries, Sriram & Gopalakrishna (1991) stated otherwise:

> *"Standardization should not be understood as the transferability of an entire campaign across countries, but as a strategy that makes unified themes, images and brand names, possible. Specific executions… still need to be decided at the local subsidiary level"* (p.146).

This has also made an impact to the organizational structure and business relations of advertising agencies. International advertising agencies are challenged to manage a brand's images across several countries (Usunier, 1996). According to Duncan and Ramaprasad (1995), in their research conclusion, standardization is more than a choice between retaining a single ad and making a new one. It is a complex process that involves various factors such as client pressure, knowledge of local markets (local agencies know their own people) and consumer and product similarity.

Walsh (1993) recognized that "complete standardization of all aspects of a campaign over several different countries is rarely practicable because language difficulties alone would often make such an approach impossible"(p.149). Therefore, a multi-local marketing strategy usually resorts to the specialization of advertising campaigns, either by country or by region. In a multi-local approach, where particular trends in each country's market are often being followed, the brand is supported by varying positioning and pricing strategies and specific advertising campaigns (Kapferer, 2000).

Early researches (Weissman, 1967; Ricks, Arpan & Fu, 1974; Hornik, 1980; Harris, 1984) had studied specialization, in connection to the existing differences among the countries and across cultures. Their main point is the presence of cultural influence in consumer tastes and preferences and the need for advertisers to know the cultures and the

differences between them. Hornik (1980), in particular, noted that in general, localized themes are preferred except when the ad was: 1) geared toward an international appeal, 2) a worldwide corporate image, and/or 3) a common international connotation.

A neutral stand was also taken to address the issue. Conceptually, the perceived answer is to view standardization as a continuum with degrees of adaptation to the standardized campaign (Papavassiliou & Stathakopoulos, 1997). Rather than being a dichotomy of two conflicting views, the continuum provides two polar ends that suggest that standardizing decisions must be either standardized or not standardized. If a campaign is not standardized, then it must be adapted. This gives room for further modifications depending on the given needs and situations. Another recommendation is the launch of a prototype campaign (Walsh, 1993). Based on common denominators from market research, campaigns are prepared by corporate headquarters and then suitably modified by local subsidiaries.

Past researches from more than decades ago (Miracle, 1968; Dunn, 1976) proposed process standardization in studying an international market. This involves understanding several features of a country's environment before deciding. It could also include determining the degree to which the advertising campaign can be standardized (Quelch & Hoff, 1986; Kreutzer, 1988; Jain, 1989).

The literature has shown that international advertising standardization comes across the cultural concerns that shape the markets. To single out such concerns would be eliminating the vital influences and innate and shared meanings brought about by culture in a society. Even if the objectives do not include globalizing a brand, researches (Gregory & Munch, 1997; Han & Shavitt, 1994; Taylor, et.al., 1997) have shown that the reflection of local cultural values in advertisements help in persuading the target market.

Advertising across Cultures

The broad nature of culture that encompasses various dimensions (Hofstede, 1997) and layers (Hollensen, 1997) shape the members of society, from their lifestyles to their

purchasing patterns. Advertising has maintained a two-way relationship with the society and the cultural values that are incorporated in it. Frith and Mueller (2003) elaborated on this kind of relationship:

"Advertising messages can indeed be responsible for shaping or influencing various aspects of societies… Advertising agencies transmit values, influence behavior of both individuals and value-forming institutions, and even sway national development societies… One's style of living dictates the manner in which one consumes, the priority of one's needs and wants, and the advertising messages one perceives as effective. Cultural values are the core of advertising messages." (p. 12).

As it has been given a mirroring function, advertising has also been criticized as giving a distorted reflection of the society. Boorstin (1963) argued that advertisements raise high expectations because they are filled with vivid images that are more dramatic than reality. Thus, the society is mystified by illusions, which are oftentimes not met. Dyer (1990) attributed this distortion to the growth of technology that has taken place. "We now live in a world of spectacular and exciting images. And the word "image" now also refers to a fabricated or shaped public impression created with the help of visual techniques" (p.82). This resulted to "a consumer culture" that took off from advertising's connection to business and capitalism that choose to reflect values to sell products (Pollay, 1987; Ewen, 2001)

Sivulka (1998) clearly noted that the need to understand and appreciate cultural differences, particularly when developing international campaigns is a challenge to the advertisers. Not only to consider the content and the "Big Idea" in an advertisement, but also the minute details such as colors, shapes, sizes and placements of these elements would matter.

As described by McCarty (1994) in his research, culture has received numerous definitions from different fields of the social sciences. However, he found these

definitions to be sharing common themes: culture is adaptive, shared and learned. Such themes are collective, if not universal, by definition. However, Hofstede (1984) provided an individual level, which could also pertain to what is called "the subjective culture" (Triandis, et.al, 1972). In the individual level, a person's personality is given high regard in terms of his own set of traits, beliefs and dispositions. Although there will be similarities across individuals, they are not a function of group membership. The universal level is not based on learning, but on instinctual dimensions such as emotions; whereas the collective level is shared among members of a group (e.g. language).

In the case of marketing across cultures, McCarty (1994) explained that the value orientations within a culture "may affect the way a product is packaged, positioned, promoted and distributed…The understanding of the core beliefs is particularly important with regard to the positioning and promotion of a product" (p.42). Core values may also pertain to the brand's values, in relation to a society's own set of values because "advertising may reflect value orientations that are consistent with the nature of the product, regardless of the orientations of the culture" (Ibid.).

Bradley, Hitchon and Thorson (1994) stated that knowing the variables that culture covers such as value systems, attitudes and perception processes, "it seems likely that advertising style would be within its scope". This also provides the link in the context of the communication process between the message form and message perception, which both contain the cultural backgrounds of the sender and the receiver respectively (Elbashier and Nichols, 1983).

Literature that compared advertisements across cultures (Moon and Chan, 2003; Milner and Collins, 2000; Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996; De Mooij, 1998; Frith and Sengupta, 1991) used Hoftstede's cultural dimensions as a framework of comparison of advertisements. However, the cultural values of a society do not solely determine the appeals and the content in advertisements because product categories moderate the portrayal of cultural values themselves (Moon and Chan, 2003).

The Appeal of Humor

Advertising content is divided into two general categories in terms of its appeal to the consumers: 1) Informational/Rational appeal, and 2) Emotional appeal. A rational appeal focuses on the practical and utilitarian need of the consumer; therefore, advertisements emphasize on the content that provide facts, encourage learning and persuade purchasing (Belch & Belch, 2007). On the other hand, the emotional appeal caters to the consumer's motives that are triggered by social and/or psychological needs such as improvement of self-image, pleasure, excitement, status and recognition.

> *"Ads using humor, sex, and other appeal that are very entertaining, arousing, upbeat and/or exciting can affect the emotions of the consumers and put them in a favorable frame of mind… Marketers use emotional appeals in hopes that the positive feeling they evoke will transfer to the brand and/or company."* (Ibid.)

Stroh (http://www.ad-mkt-review.com/public_html/docs/fs060.html) explained this further by stating that humor elicits emotional responses from people, not through reason, "so as a marketer, you can slip past their left-brained defenses and launch a guerilla assault on where they really live and experience life". It makes advertising more human, "allowing the communicator to speak to the members of its audience on their own level" (J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency, 1969; as cited in Sternthal and Craig, 1973, p.12).

Advertiser David Ogilvy (1964), in his book, once expressed his disapproval of the use of humor by saying that humorous copy is only used by amateur copywriters, because it sells poorly. Later in 1985, he recanted his statement upon his conclusion that the public's tastes, attitudes and values had changed to accept humorous advertisements.

Stan Freberg, who was called "The Father of Funny Advertising", thought otherwise. In an interview for *Advertising Age* (1992), Freberg said that, "boredom to me is the greatest sin of all… what I like doing is not only creating commercials that don't bore you to death, but commercials that can solve some problem that exists at the client's level"

(p.52); with client's level pertaining to the client's primary objective to sell products, not to simply entertain or amuse the audience with funny advertisements. The use of humor has changed over time; in fact, a research was done to historically analyze the trends and changes in the use of humor in American advertising.

In this study entitled, "One Hundred Years of Humor in American advertising", Beard (2005) concluded that the inclusion of humor evolved with 1) the more frequent use of emotional appeal of all kinds (fear, guilt,etc.), 2) changing perspectives of audiences and their characteristics, 3) the recognition that advertising might help achieve marketing objectives other than sell products directly, 4) the rediscovery that advertising should, in certain situations, entertain. 5) change in the content and tone of the entertainment media, 6) the emergence of the broadcast media, and 7) the slowly evolving belief that humor and novelty need not necessarily be distracting if they are relevant.

Anholt (2000) hypothesized that it is natural for advertising and humor to go together because humor acts as a reward to the audience for paying attention and selling to them without begging for their money and as an ideal icebreaker, just like in an ordinary interpersonal conversation.

Several reasons were cited to justify the use of humor in advertisements. Levit says that it is a form of entertainment that attracts customers to the product and to the advertisement, which opens the customers to be influenced (http://www.marketingsource.com/articles/view/2190). The influence to the customers is usually in a positive form that comes along with a persuasive message (Gelb & Zinkhan. 1986) and a liking toward the brand and purchase decision (Biel & Bridgewater, 1990; Sternthal & Craig, 1973). Empirical studies even supported humor's power to catch attention (Madden & Weinberger, 1982; Stewart & Furse, 1986; Weinberger & Campbell, 1991) and enhance ad likability, making humorous ads better than non-humorous ones (Furnham, Gunter & Walsh, 1998; Wu, Crocker & Rogers, 1989). Nevertheless, the use of humor also has drawbacks. It is not a guarantee for more effective ads (Weinberger, et.al., 1995) and it does not assure comprehension of the ad (Gelb and Zinkhan, 1986).

Also, humor both steals the attention from the brand and product and undermines the brand (Fugate, 1998).

As another limitation, humor is to be only useful to certain types of products to be advertised, giving humor a product-specific characteristic. Shimp (2000) best explained this by stating that the nature of humor dictates the appropriate time and situation when to use it.

> *"Specifically, humor is more successfully used with established rather than new products. Humor also is more appropriate for products that are more feeling-oriented, or experiential, and those that are not very involving."* (p.344)

To briefly put it, humor is fit for low-involvement products such as inexpensive consumer-packaged goods or commonly purchased products. This category does not evidently cover cars, high-cost digital equipment, financial services (http://www.humorpower.com) and expensive or sensitive products, even corporate images (http://www.myprofessionaladvertising.com). High- and low-involvement products elicit different responses, either cognitive or affective, from the audience. According to Vakratsas and Ambler (1999), "cognitive aspects of ads were more important than their affective dimensions for high-involvement products, but that the affective aspects were more important for low-involvement products." Thus, it supports the aforementioned claim about low-involvement products because humor's emotional appeal acquires affective responses.

Speck (1991) identified the types of humor that are used in advertisements: 1) **arousal-safety**, which relieves the audience from strain or from the need to suppress feelings; 2) **incongruity-resolution**, which happens when the outcome of the plot is unexpected that usually come in the form of puns, punch lines, comic reversals, understatements and exaggeration; and 3) **humorous disparagement**, which refers to censure and detraction wherein much hostile and aggressive humor is involved.

Bujizen and Valkenburg (2004) developed a typology of humor in audiovisual media that the researcher deems useful for the objectives of this study. They clustered together 29 of the 45 humor techniques *(see Table 1).* provided by Berger (1976, 1993) in his past researches into seven categories: 1) slapstick, 2) clownish behavior, 3) surprise, 4) misunderstanding, 5) irony, 6) satire, and 7) parody. The scholars also added new techniques that they had observed during their research namely: 1) anthropomorphism, 2) clumsiness, 3) conceptual surprise, 4) irreverent behavior, 5) malicious pleasure, 6) outwitting, 7) peculiar face, 8) peculiar music, 9) peculiar sound, 10) peculiar voice, 11) sexual allusion, and 12) visual surprise.

Table 1. List of Humor Techniques and their Descriptions

Humor Technique	Short Description
Absurdity*	Nonsense, a situation that goes against all logical rules
Anthropomorphism	Objects or animals with human features
Bombast*	Talking in a high-town, grandiloquent, or rhetorical manner
Chase*	A pursuit or chase of someone or something
Clownish Behavior*	Making vigorous arm and leg movements or demonstrating exaggerated irregular physical behavior
Clumsiness	Lacking dexterity or grace
Coincidence*	A coincidental and unexpected occurrence
Conceptual Surprise	Misleading the audience by means of a sudden unexpected change of concept
Disappointment*	A situation that lead to (minor) disappointment
Eccentricity*	Someone who deviates from the norms; an odd character
Embarrassment*	An awkward situation in which someone gets a sense of discomfort, uneasiness of shame
Exaggeration*	Making an exaggeration or overstatement; reacting in an exaggerated way; exaggerating the qualities of a person or product
Grotesque Appearance*	Someone who has a bizarre or monstrous appearance with striking features
Ignorance*	Someone acts or behaves in a foolish, naïve, gullible or childish manner
Imitation*	Mimicking or copying someone's appearance or movements while keeping one's own identity at the same time
Impersonation*	Taking on the identity of another person, intentionally or unintentionally
Infantilism*	Playing with the sound of words
Irony*	Saying one thing and meaning something else or exactly the opposite of what you're saying

15

Irreverent Behavior	Lacking proper respect for authority or the prevailing standards
Malicious Pleasure	Taking pleasure in other people's misfortune; victim humor
Misunderstanding*	Misinterpreting a situation
Outwitting	Outsmarting someone or the establishment by retort, response, or comeback
Parody*	Imitating a style or genre of literature or other media
Peculiar face	Making a funny face, grimace
Peculiar music	Funny, unusual music
Peculiar sound	Funny sound, unexpected sound, as in cartoons
Peculiar voice	Funny, unusual voice
Pun*	Playing with the meaning of words
Repartee*	Verbal banter, usually in a witty dialogue
Repetition*	Repetition or replay of the same situation
Ridicule*	Making a fool of someone, verbally or nonverbally
Rigidity*	Someone who thinks along straight lines, who is conservative and flexible
Sarcasm*	Biting remark made with a hostile tone; sarcasm is always a verbal put-down
Satire*	Making a fool or poking fun at well-known things, situations or public figures
Scale*	Very large or small sizes of objects that surpass people's logical expectations
Sexual Allusion*	Making a reference or insinuation to sexual or naughty matters
Slapstick*	Physical pie-in-the-face humor often involving degradation of someone's status
Speed*	Talking or moving in very fast or slow motion
Stereotype*	Stereotyped or generalized way of depicting members of a certain nation, gender, or other group
Transformation*	Someone or something takes on another form or undergoes a metamorphosis; before/after
Visual Surprise	A sudden unexpected visual/physical change

*Humor Techniques adopted from Berger (1976, 1993),
as cited in Bujizen and Valkenburg (2004)*

However, Berger (2006) classified his 45 humor techniques into four categories: 1) identity, 2) logic, 3) language (and word play), and 4) actions *(See Table 2)*.

Table 2. Berger's 45 Humor Techniques by Category

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalogue	Eccentricity	
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarassment	
Insults	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Grotesque	

Irony	Ignorance	Imitation
Misunderstanding	Mistakes	Impersonation
Overliteralness	Repetition	Mimicry
Puns/Wordplay	Reversal	Parody
Repartee	Rigidity	Scale
Ridicule	Theme & Variation	Stereotype
Sarcasm	Satire	Unmasking

Given that there are different kinds of humor in advertising and generally, in the media (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2004) and humor appears in different forms for social interaction, awareness of the social and moral framework in each culture and how it affects the expression of basic human instincts is important (Anholt, 2000). He further explained that:

"Culture --- the stuff we learn as we grow up --- is basically what prevents audiences around the world from laughing at the same jokes. As education takes away our innocence, our sense of humor becomes more cerebral, less physical, more intimately linked to our immediate cultural environment, less international. It gets interested in playing with words and the meanings of the words." (p.148).

The exchange of jokes, as a manifestation of humor, springs out from group activity. Interaction shapes a "joking culture" in which humorous themes develop (Fine & De Soucey, 2005). Thus, being referred to as a culture, joking has to occur in an on-going relationship between the parties that interact with each other. It also has to be referential wherein there should be a set of shared references to achieve understanding. Douglas (1968) considered this as an act of decoding the humorous metaphor to reveal the meaning of the text in relation to the social system where it came from.

On the contrary, claims (Mintz, 1983; Ziv, 1988) that humor has a universal nature explain that it allows itself to travel from one culture to another, with jokes being shared among cultures. Humor seems to be a cultural element that exposes differences among markets, cultures and societies, and in the marketing communication strategies of global brands. Alden, Hoyer and Lee (1993) founded that the expression of humor from

different cultures "share certain universal cognitive structures underlying the message" (p.64). The specific content, on the other hand, varies across cultures along major normative dimensions. Past researches (Fry, 1987; Berger, 1987; Suls, 1983) elaborated about humor's universality in terms of its **incongruity-resolution structure**, wherein the element of humor lies in a contrasting script, an unexpected outcome or a deviance from the norm. Such contrasts and deviant situations in advertisements may well be considered as the jokes that are placed in a humorous context. As Raskin (1985) defined it in his script-based semantic theory, a joke is a text that "is compatible fully with two distinct scripts and the two scripts are opposite in certain definite ways such as good-bad, sex-no sex, or real-unreal" (p.34-35). He specified these contrasts in three forms that could be observed in advertisements: 1) **actual/non-actual or existing/non-existing**, 2) **normal-abnormal or expected-unexpected**, and 3) **possible-fully or partially impossible**. Upon the delivery of the punch line, the opposing script is then presented to the audience to trigger humor.

At the same time, the understanding and appreciation of humor relies on the individual's demographics (e.g. age, sex), and personal tastes. Levit pointed out, "a commercial that may leave one person gripping their sides from laughter may leave a bad taste in another's mouth." (http://www.marketingsource.com/articles/view/2190).

In general, effective marketing and advertising programs are achieved when the consumers receive a certain appeal to make them feel that the communicator understands him, respects his individuality and reflects his lifestyle and personality (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2001).

Cross-cultural studies (Weinberg & Spotts, 1989; Alden, et.al., 1993; Bradley, et.al., 1994) explored the use of humor in advertising by making comparisons in the advertising content, humor's effectiveness in persuasion, its relationship to the advertised product (level of involvement) and audience's cognitive and affective responses toward the product and . Nevertheless, Alden, et.al. (1993) ended their research with a recommendation to continue the search for global and culture-specific principles in

international marketing communications to provide a guide to the development of globally standardized campaigns. Through this, any possible areas of both standardization and specialization in international advertising campaigns can be identified to maximize positive outcomes from the targeted national culture.

Humor and Culture

In the pursuit to understand humor and all the concepts and practices under it, scholars have studied humor with the aid of the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and the like. Zijderveld (1995) claimed that humor is a phenomenon that is strongly connected in culture. Giving a sociological perspective in understanding humor, Davis (1993) illustrated that humor and laughter explains the workings in the society and culture. It is not a mere social action that shows one facet of human interaction. Discussions are divided by social structure, kinship, age, ethnicity, sex, religion and language (Apte, 1985).

Sharing the culture in the society recognizes the practices, values and the rules that exist in it. Kuipers (2006) viewed jokes as what Durkheim called, "social facts" that belong to everyone, since it is not thought up by any one person.

Joking, as an expression of humor temporarily delays the rules to indicate the need for humor release (Perlmutter, 2000). Kane, Suls and Tedeschi (1977) further explained:

> *"The source's use of humour serves as a rather safe way of self-disclosing taboo interests or values and to probe the values, intentions and/or motives of others; is a decommitment tactic allowing the source to dissociate himself from responsibility for performing a prior action; is a face-saving device that helps preserve a person's identity after an embarrassing incident; is an unmasking tactic that reveals the hypocrisy and pretensions of persons, groups, institutions, and nations, provides a basis for forming positive and long-standing relationships with others, and allows for safe practice of ingratiation of powerful others"* (as quoted

in McGhee, 1979, pp. 30-31).

The implied and spoken cultural values and rules in the society act as social and moral boundaries. Often dealing with taboos or sensitive topics such as sex, gender relations, religion and ethnicity, humor, by means of creativity and novelty, allows people to violate expectations (Miller, 2000) and at times, solve problems (Storey, 2003). Humor is a tool for the members of a social group or the society to release tensions and pressures by attacking their sources, discretely or otherwise. It also reveals the important issues of specific social settings where the humor is created and shared. According to Koller (1988), "the humor of any social category, institution or nation can reveal the particular social forces that clash within it" (p.332). Different perspectives have provided explanations about humor: from political (e.g. social oppression, discrimination, ridicule of authorities), economic (e.g. class system, hierarchy, bourgeois vis-à-vis proletariats), psychological (e.g. identity, perceptions and reactions to jokes) to cultural (e.g. racial stereotypes, religion).

From a cross-cultural point of view, Lamont (1992) saw humor as a marker of "symbolic boundaries", both within and between various national cultures. However, it is somehow problematic to completely generalize a culture's humor style in one category. Kohut (2006) pointed out that people of different countries will find different situations funny. Using American culture as an example, he explained such differences could be an influence on how American humor would be translated and appreciated in other countries.

American humor is often defined in comparison to the humor of another country – for example, how it is different from British or Canadian humor. Rourke (1959) described that American humor could be identified through slapstick and physical comedy. The jokes and punch lines are more open and obvious; rather than exaggerating the conditions of the society, it uses more observational techniques. The wide range of cultures and ethnicities in the United States becomes a source of humorous materials. This explains the emergence of Jewish, African-American and Asian humor just to name a few; thus, showing humor depends on the historical and current development of a country's culture

and society.

Kuipers (2006), comparing American and Dutch humor, revealed that American humor showed a highbrow-lowbrow division in humor styles and contained a more pronounced treatment on gender differences (moral sensitivity and the tolerance of transgression) than Dutch humor. American highbrow humor is described to be political, intellectual and meaningful. This observation may be slightly different from the physical American humor that Rourke described. It is important to note that humor is dependent on changes over time.

On the other hand, understanding the Filipino psyche and culture involves looking back to its colonial past under Spain and the United States. Historically, the Philippines was a Spanish colony for over three hundred (300) years; then placed under the American occupation for forty (40) years. The Spanish influence, founded in the teachings of Christianity, is deeply rooted in the Philippine culture. However, the people are receptive to American culture, thanks to English being a predominantly spoken language in the country.

The role of humor in Philippine culture has been tagged as a coping mechanism whether for socio-political problems (Coronel, 2005) or personal, psychological issues such as parental verbal abuse (Esteban, 2006). In fact, Coronel (2005) perceived cracking political jokes as a form of political participation that empowers the people, particularly the weak, to resist oppression. Also, Filipino humor appears to have a mirroring function. In her analysis of the comic strip, *Pugad Baboy,* Ancheta (2000) described the comic strip's humor to be a medium to examine poverty, pain and exploitation that exists in the Philippine society. Its humor presents juxtapositions to Filipino customs, both political and economic concerns, cultural practices including pastimes and language, together with important connotations.

Humor content in the Philippine media, specifically in films, is said to be grounded in slapstick or physical humor (Kenny, 1995) that carries a vulgar tone. He elaborated:

> *"Generally speaking, comedy in the Philippines is very broad, physical and vulgar with little room for subtlety or nuance… It should also be noted that comic characters often embody the exact opposite of Filipino standards of beauty…The resulting liberation of laughter then provides Filipinos with yet another opportunity to take control of the system as well as the images of the self that it generates."*

Reversals of gender roles and behavior are also present in Filipino humor. Kenny explained this humor content as a parody of the Filipino macho male ideal and as an exaggeration of the Filipino female's weak, submissive character by portraying her as someone tougher than males.

In sum, Nowell Smith (1993) pointed out that the interplay among culture's signifying elements shapes humor in general. This holds true without disregarding one's personal taste and preference of humor styles. "Several forms of humorous conduct, such as intellectually playful humor, aloof and sarcastic forms of humor and bawdy and irreverent humor seem to be only minimally related to one's overall sense of humor" (Craik, Lampert and Nelson, 1996, pp. 293).

Synthesis

Talking about humor and its sociological and psychological connections with communication, Lynch (2002) made an important point: "At its most basic level, humor is an intended or unintended message interpreted as funny". The sender and receiver do meet on the same track of thinking as soon as they have mutually understood what makes a certain message funny, which could lead to a common level of humor appreciation.

As the literature has shown, humor is a part of culture in which advertising constantly deals with, in conceptualizing and executing campaigns whether for local or international markets. The concepts discussed, as well as the variables from past researches are useful in this research for the review and reference of definitions and comparisons of the findings.