

AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF ABSURDISM'S  
IMPACT ON CONSUMER RESPONSES TO PRINT  
ADVERTISING

By

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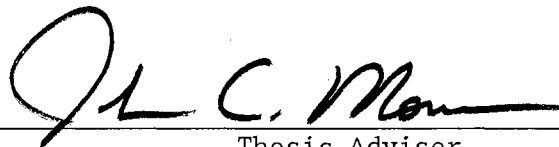
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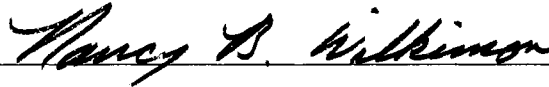
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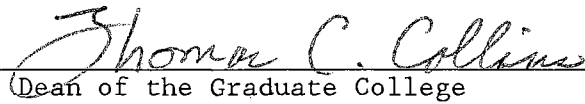


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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Absurd images frequently appear in modern day advertisements. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the use of an absurd character is found in print advertisements for Camel cigarettes. In these ads, a "smooth" camel is shown, cigarette dangling from his mouth in various situations, such as water-skiing, playing musical instruments, and wearing human clothing. Recently, the "Old Joe" ads have received criticism because of the high ability of children to match the Camel brand (logo) to the illustration (Deveny 1991). One possible explanation for this ability to match is the use of absurdism in the ads. Another example of absurd characters is a recent magazine ad for Minolta Corporation. In this ad, a hen is shown on top of a pyramid of eggs, the pyramid is so high that it goes above the clouds. In another ad for Hewlett Packard, a giant squirrel is shown, ready to jump over a couple having an outdoor picnic. Similarly, a bizarre ad for British Airways shows dozens of shoes flying into the sky.

Until recently, the concept of absurd images received little attention from advertising researchers. Although absurd images are quite widely used, research concerning the effectiveness and persuasive capabilities of absurdism is

almost nonexistent. The proposed dissertation asks the question, what impact does absurdism have on consumer responses to print advertising. Stern (1992) has suggested that "absurdism" is a subtle form of deceptiveness because it disrupts notions of meaning by questioning the very existence of reason. According to her conceptual work, absurdism in cigarette advertising diverts attention away from the Surgeon General's warning. Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) did a pilot study and found empirical evidence that supported Stern's proposition.

This dissertation builds upon the conceptual work of Stern (1990a, 1992) and the empirical work of Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992), to address a second issue concerning absurd images. The problem area investigated concerns what impact, if any, absurdism has on consumer responses to print advertising. By direct experimental control and by the measurement of possible extraneous variables (e.g., humor and involvement), the dissertation seeks to begin to develop an understanding of what absurdism is and is not. The research has implications for both advertising strategy and public policy. For the advertising manager, the work begins the process of understanding what effects absurdism has on consumers. In the public policy arena, the work explores the impact of absurdism on consumer recall of alcohol warning labels. If absurdism is found to successfully distract consumers from warning labels, then the question becomes what regulatory actions, if any, should be taken.

## What is Absurdism?

In this dissertation, absurdism is defined as the incongruous juxtaposition of pictorial images, words, and/or sounds that viewers perceive to be unique, irrational, bizarre, illogical, or disordered. This definition is based upon the literature review in Chapter II, which provides the intellectual history, origins, and explanation of the concept of absurdism. The concept of absurdism has roots going back to the field of philosophy in the early 1800s. It has since been discussed in the disciplines of art and literature. As the field continued to mature, the concept has been adopted by advertising.

Esslin (1969) suggested that absurdism is the basis for the subtlest form of deceptiveness, because it disrupts conventional notions about meaning by questioning its very existence. The term "absurdism" was coined to define a type of modern drama in which characters behave irrationally, where causal sequences of events are illogical, and where incongruous juxtapositions of people and things occur (Esslin 1969).

Although not recognized as such, the first unofficial "absurdist" drama was performed in 1896 in Paris with the premiere of Alfred Jarry's King Ubu. Jarry (1961) stated that rendering a matter comprehensible only "weighs down the mind and falsifies the memory, but the absurd exercises the mind and makes the memory work." His thoughts will serve as a basis for one of the main hypothesis in this dissertation.

In the marketing literature, Stern (1990a) related the contemporary dramatic movement of "theater of the absurd" (Esslin 1969) to marketing strategy. She discussed absurdism in terms of a standard dramatic framework for absurdism consisting of theme, action, characters, language, setting, and tone. Stern used advertising examples to illustrate these dimensions of absurdism. Further review of the literature on absurdism identifies possible areas of potential confusion regarding the domain of the construct. Much of the confusion results from the many forms that absurdism can adopt. To help clarify this matter, the literature review provides a comparison and contrast of absurdism with other types of pictorial information in ads such as anthropomorphism, surrealism, hyperbole, and allegory. Each type of approach is used in advertising today. From this analysis, different types of absurdism are developed and proposed.

#### Absurdism as a Pictorial Element in Advertising

Much of the existing research on advertising and its influence on consumers concentrates on the verbal elements of the advertising messages. Although advertising professionals have recognized that pictorial elements of the ad, such as the absurd image it contains, are at least as important as the verbal messages (Stern 1990a, 1992; Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen 1992), until recently the concept of absurd images has received little attention from advertising

researchers. Absurdism may be considered a type of pictorial element that can be employed in an advertisement. An important area of study, communication via the pictorial content of ads is important to advertisers, because of its potential role in order to overcome commercial "zapping" (switching to avoid commercials) by viewers. Visual images must be eye-catching in order to capture and maintain consumer attention. Nonverbal (pictorial) communication not only becomes a means for drawing attention to a verbal message, but also it becomes the message itself in many instances (Hecker and Stewart 1988).

The use of pictorial stimuli (such as an absurd image), visual associations, drawings, and paintings are pervasive in advertising. They are all forms of pictorial communication. Studies of pictorial communication in advertising are somewhat rare. There is a large body of literature in psychology, social psychology, and anthropology that directly examines the nature and influence of pictorial communication. Such research provides a useful foundation for an examination of "absurd images" in advertising.

Shepard (1967) found that pictorial stimuli frequently were remembered better than their verbal equivalents. Lynn, Shavitt, and Ostrom (1985) conducted a study in social cognition and concluded that pictures enhanced person memory by encouraging more elaboration of stimulus information and decoding. Bower (1972) proposed three conceptual explanations for what have become picture superiority

effects: cue redundancy, association strength, and stimulus differentiation. In the marketing literature, one of the first studies to explore the role of pictures in advertising include the work of Lutz and Lutz (1977). They used recall of the brand name as the dependent measure. Ability to recall brand names was superior for the ads containing a picture only in the interactive imagery--brand name and product class in pictorial format--condition. This finding supported Bower's (1972) study.

Other studies include Houston, Childers, and Heckler's (1987) manipulation of incongruity by using a variety of ad elements to create consistent/discrepant messages of pictorial and verbal components in an ad. Superior recall was found for ads in which picture and copy convey discrepant information. Heckler and Childers (1992) studied the effect of using incongruent information to improve the memorability of marketing communications. Incongruence was found to increase the amount of attention given to the ad. These studies suggest that when incongruent information is presented, consumers will engage in more elaborative processing.

Edell and Staelin (1983) investigated the impact of using dominant pictures in print ads. They found that such pictures influence consumers' cognitive activity differently, depending upon whether it is consistent or inconsistent with the verbal material in the message. Specifically, when the pictorial information is discrepant from the verbal information, it acts to distract the

consumer from the verbal information. This distraction results in consumers not being able to retrieve from memory evaluative criteria on the brand.

The recent consumer and marketing research on the effects of incongruous pictorial stimuli has direct relevance to absurdism in advertising. The author argues that theories of advertising are incomplete without an explicit consideration of absurd images as a form of pictorial stimuli. In addition, we should consider the possibility that much more than mere incongruity is operating with the use of absurdism.

In order for advertising creative directors to effectively employ absurd images, research is needed to understand their impact on consumers. This dissertation investigates the extent that absurd images in print ads influence cognitive responses, attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, and unaided recall of the brand name, the slogan, and the warning label. Each type of effect has important implications for advertisers. Memory effects are important because they can be a basis for influencing the nature of consumer information processing (Lynch and Srull 1982); attitudes are important because of their anticipated link to purchase behavior. Thus, the inclusion of absurdism in advertisements may influence both the recall of information and the attitudes of consumers.

#### Research Questions

The study is designed to investigate three research

questions: (1) Does absurdism in print ads influence attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, cognitive responses, and the unaided recall of an alcohol warning label, a brand name, and a slogan? (2) What impact does employing an animal or a human have within the context of absurd versus non-absurd ads? (3) Does the valence of prior attitudes moderate these effects? In accomplishing these research objectives, the dissertation will use a scale to measure absurdism from Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992). Also, scales that assess humor, mood, involvement, and need for cognition will be employed in the study.

In answering these questions, an experimental design is developed to test for the effects of absurdism and anthropomorphism on consumers' cognitive responses, consumers' attitudes, and consumers' unaided recall of the warning label, the brand name, and the slogan for a fictitious new brand of wine cooler. In addition, the study will control for several extraneous variables that could confound the results. The primary independent variable (absurdism), will be manipulated by creating advertisements for a fictitious brand of wine cooler by either employing or not employing an absurd visual element. In addition, whether or not the ads employ a human or an animal will be crossed with the absurdism independent variable. The subject's prior attitudes toward drinking wine coolers will be employed as a blocking variable. The dependent variables include cognitive responses, attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, as well as unaided recall of the



brand name, the slogan, and the warning label. (All ads will carry a standard warning concerning the effects of drinking alcohol.)

The hypothesized relationships among the variables may be explained by several psychological processes, including the von Restorff effect (Osgood 1964), the availability-valence hypothesis (Kisielius and Sternthal 1984, 1986), and the distraction hypothesis (Festinger and Macoby 1964).

### Predictions

The study seeks to test between the differential predictions of the availability-valence hypothesis in combination with or detached from the von Restorff Effect, and the distraction hypothesis as explanations for the impact of absurdism. Hypotheses derived from the distraction hypothesis predict only main effects for absurdism, while hypotheses derived from the availability-valence hypothesis predict interactions between absurdism and valence.

#### The von Restorff Effect and the Availability-Valence Hypothesis

Absurdism's novelty impact may be explained by the von Restorff effect which proposes that a unique and salient stimulus is recalled more easily. The high level of recall results from the increased amount of information processing, which makes ad elements more available in memory. This in turn will affect recall of the warning label, the brand

name, and the slogan in the ad. In addition, the increased amount of information processing will tend to result in greater number of cognitive responses in absurd conditions. That is, a main effect of absurdism on number of cognitive responses, recall of the warning label, the brand name, and the slogan are predicted; no main effects of valence are anticipated.

When combined with the von Restorff effect, the availability-valence hypothesis (AVH) may also be used to explain absurdism's impact. The AVH states that judgements depend on the favorableness or valence of information available (retrieved) from memory. Absurdity causes increased information processing. If the valence is positive, it will enhance favorable attitudes because of an increased availability of positive thoughts. If valence is negative, it will enhance negative attitudes because of an increased availability of negative thoughts. As a result, the subject's prior valence will interact with absurdism, exacerbating attitudinal judgements in the same direction as the valence of available information.

#### The Distraction Hypothesis

The distraction hypothesis predicts that a consumer exposed to stimulus will be more apt to express a response favorable to the position advocated by the communication under conditions of distraction. This is expected to occur because absurdity will act to focus attention on the image and away from other elements of the ad. According to the

distraction hypothesis, it is predicted that subjects valence will not interact with absurdism's novelty impact. Absurdism will have a main effect, which will generate fewer cognitive responses (as a result of distraction), regardless of valence. In addition, according to the distraction hypothesis, a discrepant message (in the negative valence condition), will be more effective in generating attitude change if the audience is distracted (through the use of absurdism) during message presentation. In other words, distraction will work to increase the effectiveness of a communication by suppressing counterarguments of the receiver. Distraction enhances persuasion by interfering with the person's attempts to counterargue against the dissonant information. Because absurdism may serve as a distraction agent, it may disrupt counterargumentation. Thus, when absurdism is present, attitudes will tend to be positive, regardless of valence.

Finally, distraction theory will help to understand how absurdism distracts attention from warning labels and, thereby, reduces their effectiveness by providing significantly lower recall of the warning label, regardless of valence. These results may have substantial public policy implications regarding the effectiveness of using absurd images in advertising of products having health / safety implications. Along similar lines, distraction theory will explain why absurdism distracts attention from the brand name and the slogan, and, thereby, reduces effectiveness by providing significantly lower recall of the

brand name and slogan. In this situation, we could refer to what Wells et al. (1989, p. 205) calls "vampire creativity," i.e., advertisements that are too original, too entertaining, or too involving. Such ads are so creative or entertaining that they overwhelm the product.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, it is intriguing to consider what impact absurdism might create and which theory might be used to explain its effects. For further details regarding the above predictions see Chapter III.

#### Anthropomorphism

This study also investigates the impact of the anthropomorphic effect of animals. It is expected that animal absurd images have a stronger impact, perhaps as a result of the perception of an increased level of absurdism (anthropomorphism). Furthermore, the charisma, attraction, beauty, warmth, etc. that animals portray could boost the impact of an ad.

Because of a total lack of previous research on anthropomorphism, hypotheses concerning its impact on cognitive responses, attitudes, and recall will not be formulated.

#### Contributions to the Literature

In the fields of marketing and advertising, there is a lack of information concerning the communication effectiveness of absurdism. Because absurdism is frequently

used by advertisers, one must assume that it is effective. Only one published empirical research study (Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen 1992), however, has investigated absurdism in a marketing context. Unquestionably, a complete understanding of absurdism's impact cannot be based on a single study. Thus, a major contribution of this study is to investigate absurdism and its impact on cognitive responses, recall, attitude toward the ad, and attitude toward the brand.

This study also provides a theoretical contribution to the field of marketing and the advertising research literature. It tests between competing hypotheses developed from the availability-valence hypothesis and distraction theory. Thus, existing research is extended and conceptual relationships are empirically investigated. In addition, this dissertation also replicates and extends the exploratory study on absurd images in cigarette advertising performed by Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992). The present study will use alcohol advertising (wine cooler) with a warning label. If the previous findings are replicated, the results would suggest that absurd images "distract" consumers from warning labels. Therefore, regulatory actions may be necessary.

The study of absurd images in advertising will expand the horizons of consumer advertising theory. Those aspects of an ad that do not directly communicate brand-relevant information using rational arguments tend to be lumped together as peripheral cues (Petty and Cacioppo 1981), a broad category in need of a more refined theoretical

differentiation. Consistent with the work by Mick (1986); Stern (1990a, 1992); Wells (1988); and Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992), it is argued in this dissertation that form matters; that is, changes in ad form can have measurable impact on consumer response.

This study also extends previous research on absurdism to include a definition of absurdism and an understanding of absurdism related constructs such as surrealism, allegory, anthropomorphism, humor, and hyperbole. With the identification of the impact of absurdism, a richer understanding will be developed of how advertising creative directors can make the best use of absurd images. For marketing academicians, on the other hand, it will provide a stream of research to be further developed in the years to come.

#### Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation will be organized into five different chapters. As an introduction to the dissertation, the first chapter views the scope, nature, and purpose of this study. The second chapter explicates the construct of absurdism. Further, it develops the posited theoretical mechanisms that could be used to explain the effects of absurdism. Chapter Three specifies the nature of the relationship when using absurd images through the development of hypotheses. Thus, the linkages between absurdism and the dependent variables in this study are proposed. This chapter also develops the research methodology to be utilized in carrying out the

study. Chapter Four presents the results of testing these hypotheses. Chapter Five discusses the study results in light of their advertising implications, identifies the limitations of the study, and analyzes the public policy implications of the results.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter argued that the effects of absurd ads on consumers have not been investigated even though absurdism is often used by advertisers. In addition, it was suggested that absurdism fits within the marketing literature on pictorial stimuli. To begin the process of enhancing our understanding of absurdism, this chapter describes absurdism's philosophical roots and its use in the disciplines of art, literature, and finally, advertising. In addition, relationships between the domain of absurdism and other constructs (e.g., surrealism, allegory, anthropomorphism, and hyperbole) are discussed. Within this section, the construct of absurdism is defined and theoretical mechanisms for the possible impact of absurd images are identified. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical explanation for the dependent variables.

What is Absurdism ?

#### Absurdism: Its Philosophical Roots

Historically, in the field of philosophy, "absurd" first surfaces with fully modern implications in the



writings of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who applied it to man's metaphysical condition; he maintained that religion, Christianity in particular, is "absurd" and cannot be explained or justified by rational means (A Kierkegaard Anthology, 1946, p.116). During this century, Esslin (1969, p. 5) provides one of the first definitions of "absurd," which he attributed to Eugene Ionesco:

all that lacks purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and psychological roots, man is lost. All his actions are senseless, useless.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), an existential philosopher, is another progenitor of "absurdism." He argues that the West has produced robots and monsters; for Nietzsche, Western civilization has stressed the wrong goals. He claims that one cause of enfeeblement results from an inordinate stress of the rational faculty. In addition, his declaration that "God is dead" (Nietzsche 1968) has become a catchword for the modern era and a slogan for the "absurdist" writers. As a result, absurdism is a philosophy derived from existentialism and is based on the belief that man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and that his search for order brings him into conflict with his universe (Webster 1984).

#### Artistic and Literary Explanation of Absurdism

Artistic absurdism has its origins in 1916 when a group of refugee artists got together in Switzerland under the

name of "Dada." The term denotes one of the most revolutionary artistic movements in modern art. World War I for the Dadaists contradicted the belief that humans are rational. According to Sandrow (1972, p. 16) Dadaism was born "out of the artists' awareness of a society gone haywire and clinging to rational explanations of increasingly irrational twentieth-century experiences, chief among which was World War I." Dadaists declared that madness is the world's true state; consequently, reason and logic must be replaced with incoherent thought and destructive spirit. The Dadaists' attack on reason knew few limits. The group insisted on artistic expression independent of rational control. According to Tristan Tzara (1957, p. 9), most of the plays that the Dadaists wrote and produced are essentially nonsense pieces and poems. In 1920 the Dada movement was coming to an end. By 1921 certain Dada members began to infuse the now-fading movement with positive principles. The new group, sought order and methodology, and they reversed their revolt into a strict intellectual discipline (Richter 1965, p. 42). As a result, they converted to Surrealism.

In contrast to Dada's blatant nihilism and absurdity, Surrealism, under the guidance of its principal leader, Andre Breton (1896-1966), was characterized by an active commitment to the intellectual pursuit of an ideal despite its obvious iconoclastic--image destroyer--purpose.

Continuing with the artistic aspect of absurdism Albert Camus (1955, p.97), indicates that for an absurd work of art

to be possible, thought in its most lucid form must be involved in it. But at the same time, thought must not be apparent except as the regulating intelligence. This paradox can be explained according to the absurd. The work of art is born of the intelligence's refusal to reason the concrete. The work of art embodies a drama of the intelligence, but it proves this only indirectly. The absurd work requires an artist conscious of these limitations and an art in which the concrete signifies nothing more than itself. The absurd work illustrates thought's renouncing of its prestige and its resignation to being no more than the intelligence that works up appearances and covers with images what has no reason. If the world were clear, art would not exist (Camus 1955, p.98).

Absurdist literature, on the other hand, has its origins in absurdist philosophy. The theater of the absurd (a literary style from this century) and the philosophy of existentialism have common themes, according to Dorczak (1990). The crisis in modern thought, represented by Nietzsche, spawned the "absurdist movement." However, it was not recognized as such until approximately 1950 when Martin Esslin applied the word "absurd" in relation to literature. The "Theater of the Absurd" as defined by the critic, Martin Esslin (1969), was a significant style of dramatic writing which encompassed the works of numerous West European and American dramatists during the decade of the 1950's and 1960's. Esslin (1969 p.5) defines absurd as

drama "out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical."

Esslin (1969) concurs that absurdism is the basis for the subtlest form of deceptiveness, because it disrupts conventional notions about meaning by questioning its very existence. The term "absurdism" was coined to define a type of modern drama in which characters behave irrationally, where causal sequences of events are illogical, and where incongruous juxtapositions of people and things occur (Esslin 1969).

Although not recognized as such, the first unofficial "absurdist" drama was performed in 1896 in Paris with the premiere of Alfred Jarry's King Ubu. Jarry (1961) stated that rendering a matter comprehensible only "weighs down the mind and falsifies the memory, but the absurd exercises the mind and makes the memory work." His thoughts will serve as a basis for one of the main hypothesis in this dissertation.

According to Pratt (1986), a literary critic, the notion of the absurd has had a continuing, albeit erratic, development since at least the Greek Heroic Age. The Heroic Code of Homer's Iliad is an ancient paradigm created to generate order in an otherwise preposterous and untenable world. One also finds similar concerns expressed in such literary works as Hamlet, (Shakespeare), and Candide (Voltaire), all recognized masterpieces of the Western literary tradition. Delineating the theme of the absurd in each of these three works demonstrates a long-established preoccupation with the concerns characterizing the

literature of the absurd, and, as will be explained later, this seems to have had an spillover effect which can be used to explain the current use of absurd advertisements.

The literature of the absurd includes those works of drama, poetry, and prose which have in common the theme that the human condition is illogical and without purpose. According to Pratt (1986) the characters of absurd literature attempt to create programs for investing existence with a modicum of meaning, whether it be simple hedonism, comic detachment, or some form of social commitment. The works of Sartre, Camus, Kafka, and Hemingway exemplify this struggle.

On the other hand, the etymology and development of the term "absurdism" offers insights into the nature of "absurdist" literature, which in turn, will offer insights into the nature of "absurd" advertising. The Latin word surdus, which forms the root of the English word "absurd," has several meanings. Originally, it meant "deaf," but later it denoted "mute," "irrational," "inaudible." Combined with "ab," the word "absurd" came into the English language and was used in the disciplines of music and logic. In the former it meant "inharmonious" and characterized certain musical aberrations. In the latter, eighteenth-century logicians and rhetoricians designed faulty syllogisms and violations of logic as "absurd" (The Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, 1953).

The sense of these definitions of absurd coming from music, logic, or even philosophy, still prevail today.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1963) offers the following:

Absurd. Harsh-sounding, incongruous...

1. marked by an obvious lack of reason, common sense, proportion, or accord with accepted ideas: ridiculously unreasonable; unsound or incongruous.
2. self contradictory: fallacious by reason of contradiction.

### Pursuing the Absurd

In this dissertation, "Pursuing the absurd" focuses on the elucidation of the notion of the absurd in philosophy, art, literature, and, today, in marketing through the use of absurd characters in advertising. In the marketing literature, Stern (1990a) has related the contemporary dramatic movement of "theater of the absurd" (Esslin 1969) to marketing strategy. She discussed absurdism in terms of a standard dramatic framework for absurdism consisting of theme, action, characters, language, setting, and tone. Stern used advertising examples to illustrate these dimensions of absurdism.

### Literature and Advertising: A Comparison

According to Stern (1990a) literature is analogous to marketing in at least one important respect: an author (the firm) communicates a text (the advertisement) to a reader (the consumer). She suggests a literary framework is an additional way of approaching marketing as drama. Absurdity

is seen as a literary form that advertising has adapted. In addition, Stern indicates that absurdity can mislead by conveying subjectively ambiguous meanings. She indicates the need for balancing artistic creativity with the public policy need to protect the consumer from deception, especially in the case of cigarette advertising.

Stern (1992) indicates that both literature and advertising share similar goals of getting inside audiences' heads and inspiring them to experience things in fresh, new ways. In addition, they also employ similar creative techniques to say things in ways other than by direct statements of fact, because as Robert Frost noted, literary art is "the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another" (Barnet 1979, p.181).

Today, the influence of absurdism extends to cinema and advertising (Kanner 1988). Some absurdist advertisements create ambiguity by juxtaposing incongruous visual and verbal elements in sometimes humorous vignettes (Stern 1990a). For example, a spot for Chung King chow mein says "Nine out of ten doctors recommend Chun King," and the ad shows nine Chinese doctors with one Caucasian doctor. The ad challenges the reality of conventional meaning in two ways: first, medical specialists are used as spokespersons for a food as opposed to a medicinal product, and second, the ten doctors are gathered together in a formally posed picture for no other purpose than the ad. The spot mocks real medical endorsements (Stern 1990a).

## Absurdism Related Constructs

In the current research, absurdism is defined as "the incongruous juxtaposition of pictorial images, words, and/or sounds that viewers perceive to be unique, irrational, bizarre, illogical, or disordered."

By its nature, absurdism can be humorous or perhaps even pernicious and sinister. Absurdism can result from many illogical relationships, that may result from anthropomorphism, allegory, humor, hyperbole, and surrealism. Several constructs closely related to the absurdism construct are identified below.

### Surrealism

The term "surrealist" was first used by Apollinaire (1917) in his play The Breasts of Tiresias: A Surrealist Drama. In the preface to the drama, he states that

"to characterize my drama I have used a neologism... I have invented the adjective surrealist, which does not at all mean symbolic... but defines fairly well a tendency in art, which, if it is not the newest thing under the sun, at least has never been formulated as a credo, an artistic and literary faith."

Breton (1971) gave a more precise definition of surrealism in his Manifesto of Surrealism of 1924:

"Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior



reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanism and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life."

Gershman (1974) notes that Breton was especially concerned with the "other side of the coin called reality" a "surreality" and its relation to the creative process. Furthermore, by giving voice to the subconscious, he sought to provide a link between the irrational and rational components of man's nature and, therefore, favored "events occurring in dreams" over those of the "waking" state (Breton, 1971, p. 11).

Surrealists, in their paintings, advocated a spirit of openness in all art forms in order to record the fluidity of the mind, especially during dreams (Breton 1971, p. 11). The origins of surrealism can be placed within an interdisciplinary context. According to Rabinovitch (1985) the frame of reference to examine surrealism can be shifted from the history of art to the history of religions. The conjunction between the surreal and the sacred is developed through the phenomenological clues of the uncanny, the weird, and the irrational -- popular perceptions of the surreal. The origins of the surrealistic impulse to "transform life" are traced to occultism, alchemy, and hermetic philosophy, that attempts to create "the union of opposites." In so doing, surrealism creates a new

orientation based upon the power of contradiction and ambivalence. By the late 1930s Surrealism as a movement began to collapse because of dissension among its adherents as well as increased political polarity (Gershman 1974). Though the movement declined, its influence spread throughout the world, and surrealist's achievements proved seminal to such a titan of "absurdist" literature as Esslin.

One of the rationales about surrealism indicated by Alquie (1965), is that surrealism inverts and modifies the basic attitude of consciousness, giving the "pleasure principle" an authority over the "reality principle." This creates the freedom and power to assign meaning to objects. In essence, the basis of the surrealist procedure is liberty (Alquie 1965). Along similar lines, Homer and Kahle (1986) indicated that surrealism is a state of mind, with multiple meanings that cannot be easily expressed into words. This conclusion is consistent with Alcuaz (1984) who indicated that surrealism as a concept is a state of mind, a desire, an attitude. Surrealism is associated with dream imagery, imaginative worlds, and physical distortions. Surrealism is expressed by combining images in surprising ways. The clock, for example, is a classic surrealist image going back to Salvador Dali. For instance, The Persistence of Memory (1931). Surrealism tries to break every rule of photography and of editing so that the final visual graphics would be a visual surprise. For example, Grand Marnier's ads depict in colorful paintings, a man and woman enjoying the liqueur in rather unusual settings, a hot air balloon floating over the

New York skyline, or toasting each other aboard a rowboat at sunset, while elegantly dressed (Trager 1984). These ads are characterized by romanticism and fantasy. Fabrics such as silk, along with the hands of a faceless man and woman, provide the backdrop for an unusual juxtaposition of bottle and glass and life-style advertising. Clearly, surrealism requires the juxtaposition of several images, many of them are totally unrelated images.

Stein and Blount (1983) said that surrealism means combining images in surprising ways. In T.V. advertising care must be taken to avoid that the visual power of the moving graphics will not overshadow the ad copy message or the brand name, thus making people not likely to pay attention to the message. This problem is known as "vampire creativity" (Wells et al. 1989, p.205). A pre-test of the ad is always recommended since memorability of the message or brand has to be present. The same problem could be present when using absurd ads.

In the marketing literature, Homer (1986) has pioneered the study of surrealism in advertising. According to Homer, "it is not surprising that advertisers would also seek to create unique, unexpected, and dreamlike images for use in promotions because advertisers often try to gain consumer's attention, to fuel their fantasies, and to induce them to view a product in a new light." Homer (1986) describes an experiment investigating the effects of surrealistic design, involvement, and strength of message arguments on the effectiveness of print advertisements in terms of recall,

recognition, attitudes, affect towards the ad, and behavioral intentions. Her study was a serious attempt to make surrealism a topic of interest in the consumer behavior literature.

Two articles followed her unpublished dissertation about surrealism and advertising. The first of these studies is from Homer and Kahle (1986), which examined the effects of surrealistic design and priming on the effectiveness of a print advertisement. They found a significant interaction of priming and surrealism which most effectively pushes purchase intentions in the desired direction.

In their second study, Kahle and Homer (1988) employed social adaptation theory as a framework for understanding surrealism and guiding such research. They suggested that the use of surrealism is particularly useful for appealing to fantasy and core values. Two experiments were conducted that supported the prediction that social adaptation theory implies that the nonverbal material in surrealistic advertisements provides an important part of the impetus for optimal processing of information in advertisements.

When referring to the matchup hypothesis, Kahle and Homer anticipated that a matchup between, for example, celebrity, target market, and message will foster increased effectiveness in surrealistic advertisements. They indicate that the surreal elements of an ad ought to match with the message being conveyed. For example, a picture of ears on the product in an advertisement for stereos, may increase

the effectiveness of the ad because good stereotypes sound good to ears. A picture of a sheep in that ad may not have the same effectiveness. Perhaps, such an image could be labeled as absurd, but not surreal.

Surrealism and Absurdism: A Comparison. The previous literature review about surrealism and absurdism leads the author to establish the following commonalities and distinctions between surrealism and absurdism.

#### Commonalities

- Both absurdism and surrealism are daring and innovative advertising. They both use eye catching graphics and offer a contrasting design that makes the ads break away from the clutter. Liquor and cigarette advertising perhaps use surrealism and absurdism in view of the fact that "the awareness of liquor and cigarette advertising is low relative to other categories," (Trager 1984). In general, surreal ads in advertising are an effort to set them apart from the crowd through creativity (Barker 1984). This statement could be equally applicable to absurd ads.
- The reader has to look deep and hard to see what's going on in the ad (high involvement may be achieved). Therefore, the consumer is expected to come up with cognitive responses.

#### Differences

- The surrealist movement started in 1924 and collapsed in

the early 1940s; absurdism was originated one century before surrealism.

- Surrealism's origins and development in advertising come from the arts during this century, as well as from religion in the European culture; whereas absurdism's origins come from existential philosophy and drama literature which can be traced back to the Greek Heroic Age.

- Surrealism conveys meanings that cannot be easily expressed through words by the average consumer. Surreal ads are more exclusively targeted and are found mostly in upscale magazines, while absurdism conveys meanings that can be more easily expressed in words and is found more frequently in several other mass communication media. Perhaps, this is a result of the "pleasure principle" mentioned earlier, which creates a freedom that provides the power to assign meaning to objects. This "power" may be of interest to individuals highly educated in the arts who are likely to read upscale magazines and experience pleasure trying to interpret or understand the meaning of the surreal ad. In contrast, absurd ads appear to be targeted to the middle class and can be found in television, radio, billboards, magazines, and newspapers. The meaning of absurd ads appears to be easily expressed through words.

- The "dreamlike nature" of surrealistic ads is not clearly present in absurd ads.

- Essentially, it could be argued that the use of the terms surrealism and absurdism differs primarily through the medium employed. Absurdism refers to philosophy, theater,

and prose fiction, while surrealism refers more to the plastic arts -- painting, sculpture, and photos.

- It is not clear that surreal ads use anthropomorphic animal characters.

### Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is defined as an interpretation of what is not human or personal in terms of human or personal characteristics (Webster 1984). Although the literature on anthropomorphism is scant and is non-existent in the marketing field, in advertising we find absurd images that use an anthropomorphic character to communicate meaning e.g., "Joe Camel." However, being anthropomorphic may not be a necessary condition for an advertisement to be considered absurd. There are several absurd ads described in this dissertation that do not use anthropomorphic characters.

Possibly, once people become adapted to an absurd stimulus it may no longer be considered absurd. For example, for many Americans Mickey Mouse may not be considered an absurd image. Ascribing human characteristics to nonhuman things is widely used in many children's cartoons. Children's toys are another example to which one could attribute human characteristics e.g., stuffed animals (Lodhi 1988).

### Allegory

Allegory involves the description of a thing under the

veiled pretense of something else (Stern 1988b). For example, the popular California Raisin commercials represent an absurd allegory in which the qualities of liveliness, high spiritedness, and energy are represented by singing and dancing raisins. The Camel's ad is an absurdist allegory as well, in which excitement, fun, and enjoyment are represented by this "smooth" character named "Old Joe." Mr Goodwrench can also be viewed as an allegorical figure representing service, quality, and courtesy. It represents the abstract quality of "good car service," appealing to the consumer's desire to avoid accident or death. Quaker Oats' Aunt Jemima is another form of allegorical figure representing sweetness, charisma, and trustworthiness among other humanized abstract qualities. It is important to highlight that these last two allegorical figures are not absurd. The common thread linking all allegory is discontinuity of form. This is a dislocation that happens when reader expectations of a realistic narrative are jarred, and it is a source of double meaning (Stern 1990b). Absurd allegory may require words and music (e.g., California Raisins television commercials), whereas other forms of absurdism could rely strictly on images only (e.g., print advertisements).

Allegories can take two forms of contrasting types: reification and typology (Barney 1979). Within reification allegory, the action and characters are bizarre in that trick photography or animation is used (Rossiter and Percy 1978). Advertising that personifies product attributes



attracts attention by creating hybrid characters who split, evaporate...scatter, and converge weaving patterns made up of unfettered fancies, absurdities, and improvisations (Stern 1990b). In short, reification often relies on bizarre humor and fantastic executions. The presentation of "conflict" between fantastic characters in order to attract the audience's attention connects reification with bizarre appeals, especially those presenting problems/solutions. Reification offers the reader a "conflict," show it resolved, and highlight the brand as the solution for reconciliation.

In contrast, with typology as a form of allegory, the reader is expected to be sufficiently aware of a juxtaposition of two apparently unrelated stories to try to make sense out of the analogy by using one set of actions to interpret the other (Rollinson 1981). For example, a Reebok ad proclaims itself "Official shoe of the Varsity Cello Team, University of Wisconsin at Madison." This echoes Nike and Avia ads in which famous athletes are celebrity endorsers, and depends on knowledge of the others for impact (Stern 1990b). Clearly, typologies are a non-absurd form of allegory, since the elements required for an image or statement to be considered absurd are not present. Once again, the creation of "discontinuity of form" is a common thread linking both types of allegory. In sum, reifications and typologies seem likely to attract attention in advertisements; reifications rely on bizarre creations, and typologies on audience identification.

Reification allegory (typically absurd) uses personification of allegorical figures in order to permit abstract characteristics to be clothed in recognizably human garb. Allegory conveys meaning in a story-underneath-a-story, where something other than what is literally represented is also occurring (Stern 1990b). In addition, motivational conflict is a necessary characteristic of allegory. Motivational conflict is a facet of everyday life, it often affects consumption patterns, and in many instances the marketer can provide a solution to the motivational conflict. The Mr. Goodwrench campaign illustrates a motivational conflict and uses allegory in its advertisements to communicate it. Advertisements stress the importance of regular car maintenance, "Pay me now, or pay me (more) later." Allegory occurs only when the personified abstractions as terms in the metaphor act out inner conflicts (Stern 1988a).

In conclusion, reification allegory is a form of absurdism which is present in many advertisements.

### Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a gross exaggeration used in order to make a point. Hyperbole is frequently used to create "absurd allegorical humor." Isuzu has taken this approach in its commercial where "lies" about their cars are presented in an entertaining way, in order to demonstrate the car real performance. Verbal absurdism is also found in this advertisement. "Joe Isuzu" is a good example of a humorous

contradiction (Walley 1987). Outrageous lies are used to spread truth about the car. The celebrity becomes the equivalent to an absurdist hero in drama literature. Stern (1992) indicates that the confounding of truth/falsity presents an entertaining spoof of reality that ultimately leaves viewers with the task of constructing the reality of the message.

Typological (non-absurd) allegory is also commonly associated with hyperbolic expression. A good example can be seen in a print advertisement for Alexander Proudfoot, a business-to-business service. The explicit surface action invokes a parallel struggle between Hercules versus Hydra and a manager versus lack of productivity (Stern 1990b). Proudfoot's ad uses a historical event to teach a modern lesson on a large scale: "our clients realize a 400% return on their investment in the first year after installation of the system." The goal of the ad is to get a telephone call--"if you'd like to here how me might work for you, call us at...-- promising this as "the most productive move" the caller can make. The ad depends on structural parallels, making it a typological allegory, not a reification (absurd) allegory such as the Isuzu ad described earlier, where humor and bizarreness combine to produce a gross exaggeration.

In conclusion, hyperbole can be absurd as long as the characteristics of humor and/or reification allegory are present.

## Humor

Humor can be present in advertising as a result of absurdity. However, an ad that employs humor may not be absurd and viceversa. In marketing communications the use of a comic absurdist tone allows the firm to take itself lightly, admit to its flaws, and encourage the consumer to laugh along (Stern 1990a). One goal of the study will be to measure humor and covary out its effects.

The term "absurd humor" is cited in the literature (Policy 1991). Schultz (1980) refers to "black humor" -- note that black humor refers to humor as absurdist related humor (not to ethnic humor of black writers). In this dissertation, one of the types of absurdity proposed could be intended to be ludicrous or laughable, however, laughter is not a necessary response to absurdism.

Individuals could laugh about the funny, absurd, ironical side of daily life. Both absurdism and humor are entertaining forms. Humor is defined as something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing (Webster 1984). In addition, incongruity is the essence of humor (Torres-Robles 1988).

Lampert (1989) indicates three fundamental elements necessary for the perception of humor: incongruity (the juxtaposition of mismatched ideas and/or images), absurdity cues (internal and external signs that an incongruity is not to be taken seriously), and cognitive pleasure (the psychological relief and or self-satisfaction derived from

seeing an incongruity as absurd). Lampert also states that irony precedes humor, he uses the term perception of ironic incongruity as an independent variable that causes something to be humorous.

According to Meltzer (1987) humor may appear absurd, grotesque, or melodramatic. The absurd and the grotesque are clearly possible types of humor. On the other hand, personality aspects such as dominance (measured by the Ascendancy Scale) has been found to intervene in the appreciation of humor (Henkin 1984). Henkin focused on the influences of gender and sex role attitude, self-esteem, and dominance on the appreciation of sexist cartoons. She found that high dominance females failed to find any but female aggressive cartoons funny. In addition, it was supported that foreign birthplace, non-English as primary language, increased religiosity, and presence of sisters in subjects' families were all associated with increased humor appreciation.

Tentative explanations for these findings mainly involved the effects of traditional vs. non-traditional values on humor appreciation (perception). Madden and Weinberger (1984) found that the pleasure derived from the humor is a function of the congruity between the style of the humor and the idiosyncratic humorous preference of the individual. Humor, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder (Duncan and Nelson 1985). In this dissertation, absurdism is not in the eyes of the beholder. Perceived absurdism should not be affected by individual differences

that interfere with humor appreciation.

Sternthal and Craig (1973) offer the following conclusions about humor: humorous messages attract attention, may distract the audience thus yielding a reduction in counterargumentation and an increase in persuasion. However, they found that humor persuasiveness is at best no greater than that of serious appeals. The problem of these findings is that were mostly based on studies conducted in a non-advertising setting in either the speech or psychological literature. In order to seek the study's generalizeability, Madden and Weinberger (1984) conducted a survey on senior advertising practitioners to elicit their views concerning Sternthal and Craig conclusions. The results of their survey can be capsulized as follows: Humor does aid in attention, it may harm recall and comprehension, it may aid persuasion to switch brands, it creates a positive mood that enhances persuasion, and it is generally not very effective in bringing about sales. In addition, radio and television are the best media to use to communicate humor; whereas newspapers and magazines are least suited--note that this last finding is not the case of absurd advertisements. Finally, humor was found to be best suited for audiences that are younger, better educated, upscale, and professional (similar to the audience of surreal ads).

#### Types of Absurdism

In conclusion, after reviewing the concept of absurdism

and its related constructs, it can be seen that absurdism can take different forms. As a result, instead of talking about absurdism as a totally independent construct from humor, allegory, surrealism, hyperbole, or anthropomorphism, we should probably refer to "types" of absurdism. See Figure 1 for a graphic presentation of absurdism and its related constructs.

### Theoretical Mechanisms

Several mechanisms that have been employed to explain other phenomena in advertising and psychology may be useful for explaining the impact of absurd images in advertising. For example, absurdism may act to distract the audience or set in a mood induction device.

Some specific theoretical explanations of absurdism effects stem from the psychology literature:

#### The von Restorff Effect

Von Restorff found that any technique that resulted in increased novelty of certain items, or led them to be unexpected, enhances the resulting recall of aspects of those items (Osgood 1964). This effect applies particularly well to promotional strategy and the development of novel advertising images, e.g., absurd images. Enhanced recall for novel information was first found with nonsense syllables (Osgood 1964), followed by words (Jenkins and Postman 1948), and descriptions of personal behavior (Srull 1981).

In the novelty literature it is found that novel information--such as an absurd image in this dissertation--seems to capture ones attention, making it more likely to be encoded into memory and later recalled, than information that is redundant or expected to appear in a given context (Lynch and Srull 1982). Absurdism then increases information processing because it is a form of unexpected novelty. The increased information processing as a result of the presence of absurdism (novelty aspect) should also exacerbate affect toward the ad. In the case of absurd ads, the experience of pleasure achieved through exposure to absurdism should create liking for the ad.

Other interesting studies in the literature include the Berlyne (1958) findings that subjects focused more on recurring novel pictures than on a recurring picture that became more and more familiar. This probably explains why a series of novel absurd ads for "Joe Camel" have been so successfully recalled by consumers, particularly children (Deveny 1991).

Along similar lines to the von Restorff effect, early Greek philosophers suggested first that bizarre and unusual mnemonic imagery may facilitate recall (Andreoff and Yarmey 1976). Visual imagery mnemonics has been found to be effective when the mental images formed are as bizarre as possible (Hauck, Walsh, and Kroll 1976). In addition, contemporary interference theory (O'Brien and Wolford 1982), proposes that making images bizarre can be viewed as an effort to increase the distinctiveness of items and reduce



interference effects. These psychology researchers also investigated the effects of delay on recall of plausible and bizarre imagery. Bizarre images were found to have a facilitative effect when an extended delay (7 days) occurred between presentation and recall.

Wollen, Weber, and Lowry (1972), performed the first in a series of studies whose main focus was to determine just what effect, if any, bizarre imagery had on recall. They found that bizarre pictures facilitated learning only to the extent that they also depicted interaction. For example, a piano smoking a cigar (interaction), is more effective than a single image of a piano balancing on one leg, or a single image of a cigar burning at both ends.

Within the marketing literature on bizarre images, Rossiter and Percy (1987, p. 230) consider "bizarre executions" to be those characterized by visual gimmicks such as humor, trick photography, and innovative print layouts. Lorayne and Lucas (1974, p.9) in their nationwide bestseller, claim "... you need a ridiculous-impossible, crazy, illogical, absurd-picture or image to associate the two items. What you don't want is a logical or sensible picture." Also, Life Cereal's Brain Builders, Lesson 15, asserts "The sillier the picture, the easier to remember."

In this dissertation, bizarreness will be used as a key characteristic of absurdism which is expected to influence recall from the warning labels. Bizarre imagery is defined as something strikingly out of ordinary: as odd, extravagant, or eccentric in style or mode. Bizarreness

involves sensational contrasts or incongruities (Webster 1984). With an apparent unanimity among professionals concerning the advisability of bizarre imagery, one would expect that it would be an easy task to demonstrate the superiority of bizarre (e.g., absurd) over common (e.g., non-absurd) imagery in the laboratory. However, no such laboratory support is available in the marketing literature.

On the other hand, absurdism that is successfully decoded should lead to enhanced recall when compared to non-absurd ads, because of the additional semantic chains evoked as the consumer retrieves the ad. Anderson and Reder (1979) have done research in this area of cognitive psychology on the spreading activation of concepts in network models of memory. Their work suggests absurdism will be processed with greater elaboration because of the several semantic chains evoked, and this helps retrieval because of the larger number of paths being available for reconstructing the ad. In this study absurdism represents an additional, but different, form of advertising incongruity. That is, the incongruous absurd image is also incongruous with the warning label. For example, in this study, the warning label states that alcohol consumption is dangerous to your health. Simultaneously seen is either a healthy, attractive young woman coming out of the water and lifting a volcano with her head, or a parrot performing the same action.

One model having relevance to the issue of associative storage and retrieval is that proposed by Hastie (1980) in the study of a person's memory. He hypothesized that

information incongruent with a prior expectancy about a person is remembered better than information congruent with that expectancy. The essence of this explanation is that information incongruent with a prior expectation (e.g., information in direct conflict with the expectation) is more difficult to comprehend and, when received, will be held in working memory longer than congruent information. In other words, incongruent information stimulates more elaborate internal processing. The result is a greater number of associative pathways, linking the incongruent information to existing knowledge. These additional pathways make the incongruent information more retrievable from memory, thereby enabling greater recall. Srull (1981) suggests that the nature of the memory task influences whether congruent or incongruent information is remembered best. In a recall task incongruent information is remembered best because the greater number of associative pathways enhance retrieval.

#### Processing of Pictorial Stimuli

Much of the current interest in absurd images was sparked by research conducted in psychology, showing that bizarre pictorial stimuli is frequently remembered better than were their non-bizarre equivalent images (Bower 1972; Shepard 1967). Bower proposed three conceptual explanations for a picture versus words superiority effects in a paired associate learning context: cue redundancy, association strength, and stimulus differentiation.

The cue redundancy explanation is based on the notion

that, in addition to the message, a picture--an absurd image in this study--contains many incidental pieces of information that can be processed, providing multiple pathways in memory for connecting the absurd images of an ad with the brand name. A second explanation for why pictures are more readily remembered is that pictures can build associations between objects that are more meaningfully and effortfully made, resulting in a more memorable association. The third explanation was that pictorial stimuli is more distinctive. This allows memory to recall the corresponding item more easily. Absurdism is also relevant to the marketing literature on the impact of pictorial stimuli. Studies to explore the role of pictures in advertising include the works of Lutz and Lutz (1977) on the impact of interactive imagery on recall; Edell and Staelin's (1983) research on the impact of using dominant pictures; Houston, Childers, and Heckler (1987) research on recall for ads in which picture and copy convey discrepant information; and Heckler and Childer's (1992) research on the effects of using incongruent information to improve the memorability of marketing communications. All these studies are related to pictorial stimuli and were described in Chapter I.

Another area of research in the marketing literature, consistent with an information processing explanation of how absurd images have their effect, has also been carried out. This area examines attitudes formed as a result of pictorial elements. Kisielius and Sternthal (1984) tested Bower's (1972) hypothesis of cue redundancy. They suggested that

pictorial elements of ads contain more cues, these cues then stimulate the subject to activate more stored information in memory. In addition, Kisielius and Sternthal proposed that since the information activated from memory would be less positive than the information contained within the ads, the resulting attitude formed about the advertised brand will be less positive. This hypothesis is known as the "availability-valence."

#### The Availability-Valence Hypothesis

The availability-valence hypothesis (Kisielius and Sternthal 1984, 1986) states that people process message information and other stimuli by relating such information to relevant information they have stored in memory. In performing this operation, people typically do not access all the information they have processed previously. Rather, they rely on the previously stored information that is most available. The favorableness or valence of the information retrieved from memory influences the favorableness of the judgement rendered. Thus, attitudinal judgements (such as attitude toward the ad and/or attitude toward the brand) are hypothesized to depend on the favorableness of available information. If the available information is positive, judgements will tend to be positive. In contrast, if the information is negative, judgements will tend to be negative.

For example, a positive attitude toward an ad/brand for a wine cooler, would depend on having an associative pathway

in memory that relates wine cooler consumption to parties, fun, celebration, good, sex, etc. Therefore, a person is likely to have a positive judgement of the ad or the product advertised. In contrast, if the information most available in memory is negative, as a result of an associative pathway in memory that relates drinking of wine coolers to danger (drinking and driving), gaining weight, sin (religious belief), bad taste, etc., then the person is likely to have a negative attitudinal judgement toward the ad/brand being advertised.

Information availability can be affected by a number of factors, one of these factors is cognitive elaboration. According to Anderson and Bower (1980), the term refers to the number of associative pathways in memory that imply a particular concept (e.g., wine coolers in this dissertation). Apparently, the greater the number of associative pathways, the easier a subject can access information.

### The Distraction Hypothesis

The distraction hypothesis (Festinger and Macoby 1964), is another possible theoretical mechanism by which nonverbal elements (e.g., absurd images in our study) may impact consumers. According to the distraction hypothesis, a discrepant message will be more effective in generating attitude change if the audience is distracted during message presentation. In advertising, this condition may hold when a new product is introduced that conflicts with existing

attitudes, values, or product use patterns. Distraction enhances persuasion by interfering with the person's attempts to counterargue the dissonant information. Because absurdism may serve as a distraction agent, the emotional response created by absurdism may disrupt counterargumentation. The distraction mechanism suggests that subjects may become distracted from the warning label and/or the advertiser's message by the salient absurd image on which they then focus their processing resources. In fact, the distraction hypothesis was found to be a possible explanation of how absurdism influences advertising response when subjects are exposed to warning labels in cigarette ads (Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen 1992).

In the marketing literature, Hollander and Jacoby (1973) did a study in which the audio of one commercial was presented with the video of another, as a result, recall improved. Evidence indicates that such a novel (distractive) occurrence improves brand recall. However, if we look at the literature in psychology dealing with distraction and persuasive communications (Festinger and Macoby (1964), Haaland and Venkatesan (1968) and Osterhouse and Brook (1970)); we find that all the studies were primarily concerned with the effects of distraction upon message acceptance--that is, attitude change. In all the studies it was generally found that increased distraction produced lower content recall. This finding is consistent with predictions coming from traditional learning theory (Gardner 1966).

In addition, the division between antagonistic elements (audio of one commercial with video of another), may be perceived as a unique or novel ad. In this regard, researchers working with nonsense syllables in the early 1930s found that when a novel or unique item is placed in an otherwise homogeneous series of items, it is more rapidly learned--von Restorff Effect--according to Osgood (1964). The question here is, would this also happen with meaningful material such as warning labels or brand names, when unique, absurd advertisements are used?

Within the literature on distraction and pictorial stimuli, Rossiter and Percy (1978) found that when the picture was dominant, subjects rated the brand more positively than when the picture was smaller, and the difference was greater when the copy was concrete. They also found that individuals who possessed high visual-imaging ability were so preoccupied with the visual elements of the ad that they paid less attention to the copy, especially when it was long, supporting a distraction hypothesis.

Edell and Staelin (1983) suggest that for unframed pictures, subjects were distracted from their assigned task of forming brand evaluations and engaged in a different task that involved thinking more about the picture and less about how it related to the brand.

Park and Young (1986) found that music interfered with subjects' motivation or ability to cognitively encode the message of the ad. This was reflected in a measure of



attention to the performance claims and in the amount of time it took the subjects to write down the same number of thoughts about the brand.

From these three studies, several factors can be suggested that indicate when distraction may explain how pictorial elements of ads (e.g., absurd images) have their effects. In each of these studies where results consistent with a distraction explanation were obtained, subjects had been instructed to evaluate the subject of the communication. In the cases where the pictorial elements had an effect, the picture was salient either through its size, or by increasing its salience with additional information. Even the music used in Park and Young's (1986) study may have been quite salient, as subjects rated it as being a piece with which they were very familiar. Hence, saliency appears to be a necessary condition for a pictorial element to have a distracting effect.

In addition, Redfern (1982) indicates a kind of distraction effect by saying that he expects to see less counterarguing in the case of "resonant ads"--defined as the combination of wordplay with a relevant picture to create ambiguity and incongruity (McQuarrie and Mick 1992), -- inasmuch as effort is expended on decoding the ad, not on contesting its claims. The impact of resonant ads could be analogous to the impact of absurd images in advertising.

## Dependent Variables: A Theoretical Explanation

### Cognitive-Responses Theory

Cognitive-response theory emphasizes the role of articulation of one's own thoughts in determining the immediate and persisting acceptance of a persuasive message. Cognitive-response theory suggests that unique, idiosyncratic responding will increase persistence of message acceptance. The theory emphasis is on idiosyncratic-thought production and self-persuasion (Padgett 1982). In addition, McGuire (1968) called attention to the importance of cognitive responses in the attitude change process. Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty (1981) indicate that cognitive responses influences the final attitude. In sum, there is good evidence that cognitive responses in persuasion are one important causal determinant of attitudes. Cognitive responses have also been found to account for the effects of distraction (Osterhouse and Brock (1970)).

For that purpose, the cognitive response model originally proposed by Greenwald (1968) and first tested in marketing by Wright (1973, 1975) will be used in this study. Its basic idea is that consumers compare incoming information to their existing knowledge structures (valence), thereby producing a series of primary thoughts. These primary thoughts are said to mediate message acceptance and, thus, subsequent affective reactions (Wright 1973, p.54). Four types of primary thoughts were identified

by Wright (1973): counterarguments, support arguments, source derogations, and curiosity statements. Therefore, the cognitive response model suggests that primary thoughts evoked by message exposure mediate the consumer's response to product related information. Positive cognitive responses--support arguments-- (e.g., for absurdism) are likely to produce positive consumer attitudes toward an ad; negative cognitive responses-- counterargumentations--are likely to produce negative attitudes toward the ad.

The cognitive response approach to persuasion (Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty 1981; Greenwald 1968; Olson, Toy and Dover 1978; Wright 1973, 1980) is currently enjoying considerable popularity among advertising researchers. This approach suggests that the spontaneous thoughts elicited by audience members as they view an advertisement are the primary mediators of an ad effects on attitudes about the advertised brand (Hastak 1990). Cognitive responses are usually measured by the method of retrospective thought listing--respondents are asked immediately after ad exposure to write down all the thoughts they had as they processed the ad. The thought-listing data has been used to test theories and hypotheses about the cognitive mechanisms that mediate advertising effects. Recent uses of the cognitive-response approach include studies on one-versus two-sided messages (Kamins and Assael 1987), ad repetition effects (Batra and Ray 1986; Belch 1982), and source credibility effects on attitude (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983).

The thought-listing task is usually administered

immediately after subjects have viewed the test advertisement. Subjects are instructed to list all thoughts, reactions, and feelings (cognitive responses) that they experienced as they processed the ad. Some of these cognitive responses are still available in short-term memory, and can be reported. However, there are some cognitive responses that are unavailable in short-term memory and must be searched and retrieved from long-term memory (Wright 1980). As subjects try to retrieve their cognitive-responses, one or more nodes in memory are activated; the availability valence hypothesis helps to explain this phenomena. This activation spreads like a flow of electrical current to other neighboring nodes, e.g., to other cognitive-responses as well as attitudes and ad claims that are stored in memory. It is important to note that this activation is automatic and outside the conscious control of the individual (Collins and Loftus 1975). In summary, cognitive responses can be seen as a two-stage process: a reporting stage and a search retrieval stage.

If the receiver is indeed an active information processor, s/he can be expected to attempt to compare the external information (absurd ad), to his or her structure of beliefs and values, for example, in relation to consumption of wine coolers. These relational activities thus generate a body of cues--the spontaneous cognitive responses, or critical thoughts--which recent research suggests are the primary mediators of message acceptance (Wright 1973).

## Attitude Toward the Ad and Attitude Toward the Brand

Analyses of cognitive responses assess the thoughts generated by consumers in response to an advertisement; attitudes toward the ad/brand (that is, the affects) assess the way consumers feel about an ad.

The results of a study by Mitchell and Olson (1981) indicate that the visual elements of advertisements (e.g., absurd images) may affect attitudes. If the visual element is positively, neutrally, or negatively evaluated, depending upon the subject's retrieved valence, it may have an effect on brand attitudes that operate through attitudes toward the advertisement.

Mitchell (1986) found that attitude toward the ad is strongly influenced by the valence of the photograph used in the advertisements. Photographs that were evaluated positively created more favorable attitudes toward the advertisements and brand attitudes, whereas the reverse was true for photographs that were evaluated negatively. Other studies have found that when consumers have a positive attitude toward the ad, they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the advertised brand (Gardner 1985; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989). These findings suggest the desirability of creating a positive feeling so that a positive attitude toward the ad will carry over to the brand (Gardner 1985). In addition, according to Puto and Wells (1982), if the attitude toward the ad carries over to the

brand, it can create a transformational effect in which the experience of using the brand becomes even more positive due to the positive feelings evoked from the ad. Other studies have found that positive attitudes toward the ad are more likely to carry over to the brand for less-involved consumers than for more involved consumers (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1983). This is true because when an uninvolved consumer focus on peripheral factors such as the ad's absurdism, a feeling is likely to be created that will result in a positive or negative attitude toward the ad. As a result, advertisers use these peripheral cues to try to create positive feelings for low involvement products.

An interesting opposing finding is that a disliked ad can produce a positive consumer response because it creates attention and retention (Moore and Hutchinson 1983). This leads Moore and Hutchinson to believe that the most successful ads are those that produce either very positive or very negative attitudes. Interestingly, the ad examples used by the Moore and Hutchinson study include forms of absurdist allegory, such as Ajax's "White Tornado, and the "Don't Squeeze the Charmin" campaign. This led Silk and Vavra (1974) to suggest that the key is not so much to create a positive attitude toward the ad but to create arousal--a direct positive or negative response to the ad. Once again, absurdism should create and exacerbate such an effect. Arousal results in brand familiarity and recognition once the consumer is in the store. Absurd ads may be effective in creating arousal for certain products.

## Recall

One of the most extensive models with relevance to the issue of associative storage and retrieval is the model proposed by Hastie (1980) in the study of memory. He hypothesized that information which is incongruent with a prior expectancy about a person is remembered better than information congruent with that expectancy. The essence of this explanation is that information incongruent with a prior expectation (e.g., information in direct conflict with the expectation) is more difficult to comprehend and, when received, stimulates more elaborate internal processing. The result is a greater number of associative pathways, linking the incongruent information to existing knowledge. These additional pathways make the incongruent information more retrievable from memory, thereby enabling greater recall. Srull (1981) suggests that the nature of the memory task influences whether congruent or incongruent information is remembered best. In a recall task, incongruent information is remembered best because the greater number of associative pathways enhance retrieval. Because absurdism violates expectancies it may result in greater recall of information.

## Warning Labels

The literature on alcohol warning labels indicates that warnings are one of the most common and politically palatable forms of information disclosure to consumers

(Mayer, Smith, and Scammon, 1991). For the purposes of alcohol advertising, such warnings are currently not mandatory. However, according to Colford (1993) the Kennedy-Thurmond Bill was recently introduced, would require rotated health warnings, much like those currently mandated for product labels, in all ads, with audio as well as visual versions for TV. Such legislation proposed to require rotating warnings in advertising has been described as very hardhitting (Mayer, Smith, and Scammon, 1991). Some of those warnings would state that "alcohol is a drug and may be addictive." Another would say that "the consumption of this product, which contains alcohol, can increase the risk of developing hypertension, liver disease, and some cancers." The later message will be chosen to appear on the ads to be used in this study.

Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) found that absurd images distracted attention away from the warning label in cigarette advertising. The present study provides a partial replication of their study by measuring, once again, unaided recall of the warning label. However, in the present study, alcohol advertising will be used instead of cigarette advertising. The results are expected to support the external validity of Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen's study.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to investigate three research questions: (1) Does absurdism in print ads influence attitudes toward the ad, attitudes toward the brand, cognitive responses, and the recall of an alcohol warning label, a brand name, and a slogan? (2) What impact does employing an animal or a human have within the context of absurd versus non-absurd ads? (3) Does the valence of prior attitudes moderate these effects? In accomplishing these research objectives, the dissertation used a scale to measure absurdism from Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992). Also, scales that assess humor, mood, and involvement were employed in the study.

#### Research Objectives

The dissertation has three main goals. First, it seeks to extend the conceptual literature on absurdism by comparing and contrasting the construct with other types of pictorial information in ads, such as surrealism, anthropomorphism, allegory, and hyperbole. In addition, it identifies several psychological processes that may account for absurdism's possible effects, including the von Restorff effect (Osgood 1964), the availability-valence hypothesis

(Kisielius and Sternthal 1984, 1986), and the distraction hypothesis (Festinger and Macoby 1964).

The second goal of the research is to conduct a controlled laboratory study that manipulates absurdism independently of anthropomorphism. The laboratory study investigates the impact of absurdism and anthropomorphism on consumer cognitive responses, consumer attitudes, and consumer recall of an advertisement for a fictitious new brand of wine cooler. In addition, the study seeks to test between the differential predictions of the availability-valence hypothesis in combination or detached with the von Restorff effect and the distraction hypothesis, as explanations for the impact of absurdism. The dependent variables include cognitive responses, attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, as well as unaided recall of the warning label, the brand name, and the slogan.

The third goal of the research is to assess the impact of employing absurd and/or anthropomorphic images on the recall of a warning label stating the dangers of drinking alcohol on a print advertisement. One hypothesis, derived from distraction theory, proposes that absurdism acts to distract attention from such warning labels and, thereby, reduces their recall. The results may have substantial public policy implications regarding the effectiveness of using absurd images in advertising of products having health / safety implications. A competing hypothesis derived from the von Restorff effect, proposes that absurdism will cause increased recall of the ad (including its warning label),

because the ad is such a novel occurrence.

The investigation of the posited relationships between absurdism and a series of dependent variables required a suitable device for measuring each construct, particularly, absurdism. Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) developed a scale that provides a valuable first step toward the operationalization and measurement of absurd images in advertising. Their scale was used in this dissertation.

### Design Overview

In order to answer the research questions, a three-factor (2 x 2 x 3) between-subjects experimental design was employed (n = 12 to 20 per cell). The first factor manipulated whether subjects view an absurd or a non-absurd image. The second factor varied whether the image is either human or animal. The third factor blocked on the prior attitude of subjects toward the product category of wine cooler (positive, neutral, or negative). (See Appendix A for a visual depiction of the design.)

Subjects were assigned to the blocking variable based upon their preferences toward drinking wine coolers (positive, neutral, or negative). Subjects were exposed to four ads, one of which involved the experimental advertisement, located in the third position. After exposure, dependent measures were collected for only the ad having the experimental manipulation, followed by the scales that measure potential covariates. Questions about the subject's age, gender, and their thoughts concerning the

purpose of the experiment were asked next. Finally, the manipulation check of absurdism was taken.

The choice of a product for the experimental advertisement and the presentation of the advertisement was aimed at the elimination of confounding factors. The product, an unfamiliar brand of wine cooler, and the animal, a parrot to be used in both the absurd ad or non-absurd conditions, were selected after careful investigation had established that they met certain important criteria. Two pilot studies and six focus groups were run. First, the animal chosen showed appeal among students. Second, the wine cooler product revealed wide differences in attitudes among the students. Third, a means of varying absurdism was developed that would fit with either a human or an animal. The print advertisements employed in the study were professionally produced, adding to the realism of the test material. Subjects were exposed to a print advertisement for a fictitious brand of wine cooler named "Caribbean Cooler." It is expected that relationships will be stronger if unfamiliar brands are employed because strong prior brand attitudes are not existent. The slogan for the ad read "The Taste of the Tropics." Both, the brand name and the slogan resulted from brainstorming sessions during the focus groups.

On the other hand, an important control variable is exposure time. Longer exposure time might lead to greater recall, and such an increase in recall would be spurious from the standpoint of demonstrating the memory effects of

absurdism per se. In this experiment time of exposure was subject to pretest and considered appropriate to be at 20 seconds. Each group of subjects viewed a slide of a photo taken from each of the four ads that were specially created for the present study. Three of the ads consisted of products found to be appealing to a college student population. Such products were jeans, tennis shoes, and cars. In all three situations the ads were also for unfamiliar brand names. This assured consistency with the also unfamiliar brand name used for the wine cooler ad and should contribute to hide the purpose of the experiment.

#### Pilot Studies

Two pilot studies were performed. The first study was run to select a product appropriate to appear in the experimental advertisement. The second study was run to select an animal to appear in the experimental manipulation. Because the major experiment was administered to college students, it was important that the product depicted in the experimental manipulation be one with which students have some level of familiarity. A final factor of concern was whether the product was perceived by college students as being either feminine-oriented or masculine-oriented. This assessment was made in an effort to avoid biases due to preference for a product that was obviously oriented towards one sex. Such bias could interact with involvement -- a variable expected to impact the dependent variable examined in this experiment.

### First Pilot Study

The first pilot study presented 80 college students (61 percent females and 39 percent males), with seven alcoholic drink products (see Appendix B for a summary of the results). Subjects rated each product in terms of attitudes toward drinking it. All attitude scales were measured on a scale ranging from zero to one-hundred, with intervals of ten, (0 = sinful or disliked very much and 100 = I love it or it is my favorite drink). Students were asked to indicate their gender at the end of the survey. Based on examination of the mean scores and variance of attitudes for the alcoholic drinks considered, wine coolers were chosen as an appropriate product for the experimental advertisements. The sample mean value for attitudes toward wine cooler was 35.7 for men and 51.2 for women (standard deviation of 27.6 and 32.8 respectively). These results provided sufficient verification that wine coolers did not receive extreme mean ratings on their attitudes by either sex. Extreme attitudes happened in the case of beer, with a sample mean of 83.2 for men and only 58.2 for women. Similarly, extreme attitudes were also found for mixed drinks with a sample mean of 66.9 for men and 74.0 for women. For further information on mean responses refer to Appendix B.

### Second Pilot Study

The purpose of the second pilot study was to select an animal for the manipulation of the absurd / non-absurd

animal condition in the wine cooler ad. The study requested 125 undergraduate students (55 percent females and 45 percent males) to recall three animals for which they had either a positive, neutral, or negative attitude. Parrots were not listed as an animal conveying a negative attitude; 2.4 percent indicated a positive attitude (two-thirds females and one-third males); and finally, 1.6 percent of the sample (half males and half females) indicated a neutral attitude toward a parrot. The sample frequency of attitudes toward different animals is presented in Appendix C.

### Independent Variables

#### Manipulation of Absurdism and Human/Absurd

In the absurd conditions, the stimulus organism (either human or animal) has a volcano on its head. The absurd animal condition was anthropomorphic. That is, a parrot was seen grasping a wine cooler while having a volcano on its head.

In the human condition, the image used consists of an attractive woman. In the absurd condition, a volcanic island rests on her head. As she emerges from the ocean grabbing a bottle of wine cooler, her head and shoulders are seen. In the non-absurd (control) condition a volcanic island appears in the background, and she emerges from the ocean grabbing a bottle of wine cooler in "normal" fashion. In the animal condition, the woman is replaced by a female parrot in the absurd animal (anthropomorphic) condition.

For the non-absurd condition the parrot appears standing on a tree branch while a volcanic island appears in the background, and the parrot looks "normal." See Appendix D.

For the absurd human condition, the following figurative forms of speech are expected to be represented by the woman emerging from the ocean: hyperbole -- gross exaggeration by the woman lifting a volcano with her head; allegory -- qualities of fun, searching for a goal (wine cooler bottle) are represented by the woman; and finally, it is possible that absurd humor -- humor is on the eye of the beholder -- could be present as well.

In addition, for the absurd animal condition, the female parrot is expected to portray anthropomorphism -- the parrot is not human but is doing human activities (e.g., emerging from the ocean, making a grin, and grabbing a bottle of wine cooler with its paws which look like a hand); allegory -- qualities of fun, nimbleness, and energy are expected to be personified by the female parrot. The viewer expectations of a realistic image are jarred and it is a source of double-meaning; hyperbole -- gross exaggeration -- like in the absurd human condition, is also present.

The above types of absurdism are commonly seen in many of today's advertisements and are expected to be captured within the proposed manipulations.

#### Blocking of Valence

The subject's valence was the third independent variable. It was a blocking variable based upon a pretest



that identified whether subjects attitudes were positive, neutral, or negative toward wine coolers. Matching the respondents on the basis of pertinent background information about orientation towards drinking wine cooler beverages ensured each group of respondents was matched with the proper valence. Thus, for the positive valence condition only individuals with positive judgements toward drinking were included, and, similarly, for the neutral valence and the negative valence, only individuals with neutral judgements or negative judgements respectively were included.

#### Scale to Measure Absurdism in Advertising

An extended scale originally developed by Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) was used to measure the manipulation of absurdism. The extended scale includes seven-point Likert scale questions (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). See Appendix E. The original scale has previously revealed an acceptable level of internal reliability (Cronbach alpha of 0.85).

#### Absurdism Manipulation Pretest

Crucial to the success of experimental work on absurdism is the development of an effective and unconfounded manipulation. Starting with a pool of absurd ads created by students from an art department graphic design class, one of the ads was selected after a careful pretest in which focus group interviews were employed. A

pictorial image to operationalize absurdism was selected in which an organism had a volcano on its head. The juxtaposition of the two objects of a vastly different size was incongruous, bizarre, and irrational. An important condition for selection was that when the absurd image is removed, the ad will still convey the basic brand meaning(s) appearing in the absurd version. Several criteria guided the selection of ads for inclusion in this study. The newly created ads had to be able to display human or animal absurd images; the ads had to be constructed such that their absurdism was removable; the ads had to make sense and be consistent on the basis of the slogan, brand name, warning label, and picture alone; the ads had to be readily comprehensible; and, finally, the product advertised had to be relevant across gender.

For the absurdism variable pretest, sixty undergraduate students at a midwestern university were divided into four groups of fifteen each and exposed to either the human (absurd or non-absurd) and the animal (absurd or non-absurd) conditions. The manipulation of absurdism for both the animal and human conditions were assessed via Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) scale indicated in Appendix E.

For the analysis of the manipulation, a t-test was conducted to determine if significant differences were present between two treatment groups (human images and animal images) in ratings of absurdism. The absurdism scale's internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was also assessed in the pretest. In addition, item-to-total

correlations were determined in order to detect possible low correlations (below 0.30), for any of the questions.

### Main Experiment

#### Sample

The use of student samples has been an often debated issue in consumer research (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981; Lynch 1982). The purpose of this research is to conduct a test of theorized relationships between absurdism and pertinent advertising response variables. Therefore, as Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) point out, samples that are convenient, homogeneous, and not exactly representative of a target segment do not invalidate or even diminish conclusions in research of a basic or theoretical nature. The student sample used in this study is more homogeneous than any target market would be for an advertised product.

#### Procedure

For the main experiment, 178 undergraduate students from a marketing class participated as part of an exercise that offered them an incentive for their participation. Students were requested to show up by appointment in a room specially selected for conducting the experiment. Groups of eight students were shown the four ads in order to have tight control over the experiment. Students were assigned to blocking groups based upon their preferences (positive, neutral, or negative) toward drinking wine coolers. The

students in the eight person groups were all assigned to the same treatment condition. Preferences were identified several weeks prior to the experiment. This process first requested subject's involvement with wine coolers -- assessed using Zaichkowsky's (1985) scale. In addition, attitudes toward drinking wine coolers were requested -- assessed using Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum's (1957) scale. (See Appendix F for a description of the survey used.)

Each individual group member was assigned to one of the four treatment conditions (absurd human, non-absurd human, absurd animal, non-absurd animal), resulting in 12 to 20 subjects in each cell of the 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design. See Appendix A. Upon arrival, subjects were asked to read a cover story describing the experiment as a "study about advertising." The cover story also indicated that this pretesting was a common practice in the industry. In addition, subjects were told that the study was for an advertising firm in the West Coast, who wants to obtain the overall reactions of consumers to a number of ads (see Appendix G). Subjects were exposed to four ads projected onto a screen via a slide projector for a constant number of seconds each.

The ad for "Caribbean Cooler" was always in the third presentation position. This should avoid any primacy-recency effects. Each group of subjects viewed a slide of a photo taken from each of the four ads specially selected for the present study, one of which involves the experimental manipulations. The purpose of having three additional ads

is to hide the purpose of the experiment.

After exposure to all four ads, even though subjects were told before exposure that responses would be required for one or more of the four different ads, the truth of the matter is that the response booklet included only those questions for the wine cooler ad. This minimized possible respondent burn-out, or any unnecessary over-attention to any of the ads.

Thus, the first task was to obtain unaided recall for the wine cooler ad. For this assignment, subjects were asked to write down everything they can remember about the ad. The purpose here is to measure the unaided recall of the brand name, the slogan, and the warning label. See Appendix H. After the subjects have completed their unaided recall (exactly two minutes were judged appropriate based on pre-test data), the next page continued by asking subjects to indicate their cognitive responses (see Appendix I). This time, exactly two-and-a-half minutes (time judged appropriate based on pre-test data), were given to list all the thoughts they had relevant to the product or the advertising message while viewing the wine cooler ad. The essential idea was to allow sufficient time for complete recording of spontaneous thoughts. Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty (1981) suggest that directive thought-listing instructions (e.g., "list all thoughts you had about the advertised brand") may produce stronger reactive effects than general instructions (e.g., "list all your thoughts"), because the former is more likely to encourage subjects to

engage in additional thought processing about the advertised brand. The likelihood for additional thought processing may also depend on the amount of time given to subjects for the thought-reporting task. If stringent limits are placed on reporting time, subjects will likely have minimum opportunity for generating new cognitive responses from scratch via elaborating processing. However, if reporting time is excessive or unconstrained, additional thought processing during the reporting task is a distinct possibility. In this context, it is interesting to note that the amount of time given to subjects for thought listing in past cognitive response studies has varied widely (from two to ten minutes), and has usually been set rather arbitrarily (Wright 1975). Subjects were also instructed to ignore spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

The next page of the questionnaire continued with a half-page of instructions on how to answer scale questions. See Appendix J. This was followed by multiple, seven-point scales used to measure attitude-toward-the-ad and attitude-toward-the-brand. The following pages were followed by the scale assessments of potential covariates including involvement, humor, mood, and need for cognition. Questions about the subject's gender, age, and their thoughts concerning the purpose of the experiment were asked next. An analysis of their thought statements indicated that none of the subjects guessed the purpose of the experiment (if they did, then they would have been dropped). On the next page, the manipulation check of absurdism was taken.

Finally, the student's name and class section was requested. This allowed to match his/her responses with the proper valence, which was identified several weeks prior to the experiment. When subjects departed the experimental session a debriefing sheet was provided (see Appendix K).

### Analysis of Covariance

A number of covariates were used in this study. However, their final incorporation to the analysis was subject to whether the covariate interacted or not with the independent variables. If an interaction was present, the covariate was removed because the effect on the dependent variable could not be separated out from the independent variable.

### Subject's Task Involvement: A Covariate

In a real life situation, the individual's motivation to respond cognitively to the advertisement is not great. However, when a person is confronted with an advertisement which he perceives as particularly relevant to an impending decision, he/she can be expected to engage its cognitive facilities in critical processing of the message. Variations in acute involvement with the advertising information, stemming from the receiver's perception of the relevancy of that content to some threatening problem he faces, may thus result in contrasting processes of cue weighing (Wright 1973). The Elaboration likelihood model (ELM), suggests that motivation (involvement) of ad

receivers may have an impact on the type of processing employed (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). An analysis of covariance can examine the extent to which the process of attitude development is influenced by the subject's task involvement. The (ELM) rests on the proposition that consumer involvement at the time of message reception determines the type of information that is encoded and subsequently used to evaluate the brand. Under low involvement, visual information is important because it is processed first, and there is little subsequent processing of verbal information (peripheral route). Under high involvement, there is more processing of text material and hence pictures should have less influence (central route). The ELM identifies involvement as the critical mechanism that switches the focus from one level of information to another. During the main experiment, in order to measure involvement as a covariate, a task involvement scale from Ozanne, Brucks, and Grewal (1992) was used. See Appendix L. This scale was designed to measure a person's involvement with the task he/she is requested to perform.

#### Humor: A Covariate

In this dissertation it is believed that humor and absurdism are related -- absurd humor is a possible type of absurdism. One example is found in Reddi-whip's ad for strawberry shortcake recipe (Stern 1990a). The recipe lists all of the usual ingredients, but ends with "15 cans Reddi-wip whipped cream." The firm (Beatrice Cheese Inc.) first



laughs at the implicit but serious sales goal: selling as much product as possible. It also pokes fun at a consumer motivational conflict between love of sweets and need to control calories.

As a result of the possible relation between humor and absurdism, this study measured the possible humor content of the ad, if any. For such purpose, a scale adapted from Duncan and Nelson (1985) was used and assessed via four seven-point Likert scale questions (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). See Appendix M.

#### Mood: A Covariate

According to Peterson and Sauber (1992), even though it may not be possible to "control" the mood of individuals from whom self-report data are being collected, by measuring mood at the time of data collection it may be possible to statistically account for its effect on responses, for instance, by employing it as a covariate during data analysis. Peterson and Sauber have also developed a scale for investigating the influence of mood on self-report data. The MSF (Mood Short Form) scale used in this study consists of four seven-point Likert type questions. See Appendix N.

#### Need for Cognition: A Covariate

Need for cognition refers to an individual's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors (Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao 1984). Research on need for cognition suggests that this characteristic is predictive of

the manner in which people deal with tasks and social information. In the present study, the need for cognition scale (NCS) from Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao (1984) was used to try to explain possible differences in the dependent variables explained by the NCS. See Appendix O.

#### Product Involvement: A Covariate

Product involvement refers to a general level of interest in or concern about an issue without reference to a specific position (Hupfer and Gardner 1971). Research on product involvement suggests that this construct is predictive of perception of attribute differences, perception of greater product importance (e.g., attitudes), and greater commitment to brand choice. In the present study, the product involvement scale adapted from Zaichkowsky (1985) was used to try to explain differences in the dependent variables explained by the involvement scale. This measure of involvement was taken together with the attitude toward the product scale, which identified whether the subject's attitude (valence) was positive, neutral, or negative toward wine coolers. See Appendix F. The measures of product involvement and attitude toward the product (valence) were taken several weeks prior to the main experiment.

#### Operationalization of Dependent Variables

Subjects completed a booklet, containing the dependent measures. Specifically, they answered questions designed to

provide unaided recall of the brand name, slogan, and warning label (list all they recall from the wine cooler ad), cognitive responses for the wine cooler ad (list all thoughts they had about the wine cooler ad), attitude toward the ad, and attitude toward the brand (Likert-scale measures). Questions were also included to measure the covariates: a task involvement scale, a mood scale, a humor scale, and a need for cognition scale. This was followed by some bogus questions to disguise the intent of the experiment (see Appendix P). On the next page, the evaluation of the experimental manipulation (absurdism scale) was given. Finally, the student's name and class section was requested in order to match his/her responses with the proper valence.

Unaided Recall from Brand Name, Slogan,  
and Warning Label

To measure this first dependent variable, subjects were given two minutes to recall (write down) everything they could remember about the ad (time judged appropriate based on pre-test data). For the warning label response to be judged a recall, the subjects had to either mention the term "warning label," or indicate the actual message content of the warning label, either partially or completely. For the brand name to be judged a recall, subjects had to mention the term "caribbean cooler." For the slogan to be judged a recall, subjects had to indicate the actual slogan "The taste of the tropics," either partially or completely e.g.,

tropical taste. Responses were coded by two judges who did not know the manipulation being considered.

### Cognitive Responses

The second part of the booklet consists of an unexpected "cognition listing" question that asks respondents to "please write on this page all thoughts you can remember going through your mind while you were looking at the advertisement." The number of cognitive responses was used as the operational measure. These primary thoughts were categorized for analysis. Evaluation of thoughts was expected to be in terms of its intent (i.e., positive thoughts, negative thoughts, and neutral thoughts). An array of spontaneous cognitive responses to the advertising stimulus were provided and responses were coded by two independent judges who did not know the manipulation being considered. After the coding, both judges got together to try to reach an agreement. Conceptually, distinct modes of response were identified within this array. Wright (1973) identified three such variables, two of which were primarily expected, such as counterarguments and support arguments.

A counterargument is activated when incoming information is compared to the existing belief system and a discrepancy is noted. The spontaneous thought activated is suppose to neutralize or counter message evidence. For example, in response to an absurd advertisement image showing fun, or excitement for drinking alcohol, the receiver may immediately think of a disadvantage.

Counterargument has been cited previously by Festinger and Macoby (1964), most notably in the research on distraction effects.

On the other hand, a support argument happens when incoming information is related to existing beliefs, as a result, the receiver may activate responses indicating that congruent associations have been discovered, or that the message argument is supported by already entrenched beliefs (Kelman 1953).

#### Attitude Toward the Ad

This dependent variable has been measured before by Holbrook and Batra's (1987) four-item index of attitude toward the ad. See Appendix Q. The coefficient alpha for this measure was calculated. Inter-item reliability for the four-item attitude toward the ad index has been found to be 0.99 by Holbrook and Batra, suggesting extremely high internal consistency for this measure. This multiple-item scale was expected to be more reliable and sensitive. If, as expected, multi-item scales are more reliable, less attenuation from measurement error should result in greater effect sizes (Brown and Stayman (1992)).

#### Attitude Toward the Brand

Subjects were asked to complete an affect scale: "I feel (the brand) is...", using four bipolar semantic differential scales (pleasant-unpleasant, agreeable-disagreeable, satisfactory-unsatisfactory [Osgood, Suci, and

Tannenbaum 1957]). In addition, other adjectives included in the scale were: positive-negative; tastes good-tastes bad; exciting-dull; romantic-unromantic; weak-powerful; social-not social; expensive-inexpensive. See Appendix R. Responses were coded from 1 to 7 and an average score was computed as a measure of overall attitude toward the product. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this measure was determined.

### Analysis

As this research considers multiple dependent variables, the actual rate of type I errors is greater for the set of analysis than the stated alpha level. In response to this issue, multivariate analysis of variance was performed. The dependent variables of cognitive responses and attitudes were analyzed separately in a single MANOVA. However, in view of the categorical nature of the unaided recall measure from the brand name, the slogan, and the warning labels, the categorical mode procedure (CATMOD) from the SAS/Stat User's Guide (1990) was used to analyze the effects on this specific dependent variables.

For each of the scales used, Cronbach alpha was run. According to Nunnally (1978, p. 245), a Cronbach alpha above 0.70 is considered acceptable. In addition, when required, item-to-total correlations were performed to eliminate any questions having low correlations (below 0.30).

## Hypotheses Development

Each of the hypotheses developed in this study is based upon a specific theory. The main theories applied are, the von Restorff effect, the availability-valence hypothesis, and the distraction hypothesis. These theories predict different outcomes as explanations for the impact of absurdism and they are presented in the Absurdism-Response Model (see Figure 2 on next page).

Absurdism focuses attention on the pictorial content of the ad. Its novelty impact may be explained by the von Restorff effect (VRE) which proposes that a unique and salient stimulus is recalled more easily. The high level of recall results from the increased amount of information processing, which makes ad elements more available in memory. This in turn will affect recall of the warning label, the brand name, and the slogan in the ad -- see model. Thus, the following hypotheses are developed:

**H1.1:** IN COMPARISON TO NON-ABSURD CONTROL CONDITIONS, ABSURD ADS WILL INCREASE THE RECALL OF THE WARNING LABEL.

**H1.2:** IN COMPARISON TO NON-ABSURD CONTROL CONDITIONS, ABSURD ADS WILL INCREASE THE RECALL OF THE BRAND NAME.

**H1.3:** IN COMPARISON TO NON-ABSURD CONTROL CONDITIONS, ABSURD ADS WILL INCREASE THE RECALL OF THE SLOGAN.

When combined with the von Restorff effect, the availability -valence hypothesis (AVH) may be also used to explain absurdism impact. The AVH states that judgements depend on the favorableness or valence of information





available (retrieved) from memory. Absurdity causes increased information processing. If the valence is positive, it will enhance favorable attitudes because of an increased availability of positive thoughts. If valence is negative, it will enhance negative attitudes because of an increased availability of negative thoughts. As a result, the subject's prior valence will interact with absurdism, exacerbating attitudinal judgements in the same direction as the valence of available information. Along similar lines, when absurdism interacts with the subject's valence, this will tend to also increase the number of cognitive responses in the direction indicated by the valence. In addition, the increased amount of information processing resulting from absurdism will increase the total number of cognitive responses.

In all these situations, a main effect of absurdism on the total number of cognitive responses will occur; also, an interaction effect between absurdism and valence will impact the direction (positive or negative) of the dependent variables of cognitive responses and attitudes--see model on previous page. Thus, the following hypotheses are developed. For cognitive responses:

**H2:** THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COGNITIVE RESPONSES WILL BE HIGHER UNDER THE ABSURD CONDITION THAN IN NON-ABSURD CONDITION.

**H3.1:** IF PRIOR VALENCE TOWARD THE PRODUCT CLASS IS POSITIVE, THEN THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF POSITIVE COGNITIVE RESPONSES IN THE ABSURD AD CONDITION WILL INCREASE, IN COMPARISON TO THE NUMBER IN THE NON-ABSURD AD CONDITION.

**H3.2:** IF PRIOR VALENCE TOWARD THE PRODUCT CLASS IS NEGATIVE, THEN THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF NEGATIVE COGNITIVE RESPONSES IN THE ABSURD AD CONDITION WILL INCREASE, IN COMPARISON TO THE NUMBER IN THE NON-ABSURD AD CONDITION.

For attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand:

**H4:** THE PRIOR PRODUCT VALENCE WILL MODERATE THE IMPACT OF ABSURDITY VERSUS NON-ABSURDITY IN ADS. WHEN USING ABSURD IMAGES, ATTITUDES WILL BE MODERATED BY PRODUCT VALENCE. UNDER CONDITIONS OF POSITIVE VALENCE, ATTITUDES WILL BE MORE POSITIVE, WHILE UNDER CONDITIONS OF NEGATIVE VALENCE, ATTITUDES WILL BE MORE NEGATIVE IN THE ABSURD CONDITION THAN IN THE NON-ABSURD CONDITION.

Figure 3 shows graphically the hypothesized relationships for attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. Under the absurd conditions, when the subject's valence is either positive or negative it is expected that attitudes will be magnified in the direction indicated by the subject's valence. If positive, will get magnified in a positive direction, whereas if negative, will get magnified in a negative direction. In contrast, under the non-absurd condition, it is expected that attitudes will be more neutral regardless of the subject's valence.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were derived from the availability-valence hypothesis (AVH) and predict interactions between absurdism and valence on the dependent variables. The remaining hypotheses diverge based upon the theory used to examine the phenomenon. Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 are derived from the distraction hypothesis (DH) and predict only main

effects for absurdism.

The rationale of the distraction hypothesis is that a person will not passively accept a discrepant influence attempt but, instead, will resist. However, when a distraction interferes with counterargumentation, resistance is reduced and the receiver becomes more inclined to passively absorb the message. As a result, attitude will shift in the advocated direction. In other words, the distraction hypothesis predicts that a consumer exposed to a stimulus will be more apt to express a response favorable to the position advocated by the communication under conditions of distraction. This is expected to occur because absurdity will act to focus attention on the image and away from other elements of the ad. Thus, according to the distraction hypothesis, it is predicted that the subject's valence will not interact with absurdism's novelty impact. Absurdism will have a main effect, which will generate positive attitudes and fewer cognitive responses (as a result of distraction), regardless of valence--see model. In a previous study from Osterhouse and Brock (1970), distraction was found to have a significant effect upon cognitive responses (counterargument production). Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H5:** SUBJECTS WILL HAVE FEWER COGNITIVE RESPONSES (SUPPORT ARGUMENTS AND COUNTERARGUMENTS) UNDER THE ABSURD CONDITION (HUMAN OR ANIMAL) WHEN COMPARED TO THE NON-ABSURD CONDITION.

Note that hypothesis 5 has a different effect when compared to hypothesis 3. In hypothesis 5 an interaction

effect between absurdism and valence is not predicted; only absurdism main effects are expected. A similar pattern of main effects is expected for the next two hypotheses under the distraction hypothesis.

According to the distraction hypothesis, a discrepant message (in the negative valence condition), will be more effective in generating attitude change if the audience is distracted (through the use of absurdism) during message presentation. In other words, distraction will work to increase the effectiveness of a communication by suppressing counterarguments of the receiver. Distraction enhances persuasion by interfering with the person's attempts to counterargue against the dissonant information. Because absurdism may serve as a distraction agent, it may disrupt counterargumentation. Therefore, when absurdism is present, attitudes will tend to be positive--see model. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H6: ATTITUDES WILL BE MORE POSITIVE IN ABSURD THAN IN NON-ABSURD CONDITIONS.**

Finally, distraction theory will help to understand how absurdism distracts attention from warning labels and, thereby, reduces their effectiveness by providing significantly lower recall of the warning label, regardless of valence. These results may have substantial public policy implications regarding the effectiveness of using absurd images in advertising of products having health / safety implications. Along similar lines, distraction theory can also explain whether or not absurdism distracts

attention from other parts of the ad which should be attended to, such as the brand name and the slogan, and, thereby, absurdism reduces ad effectiveness by providing significantly lower recall of the brand name and slogan. In this situation, we could refer to what Wells et al. (1989, p. 205) calls "vampire creativity," i.e., advertisements that are too original, too entertaining, or too involving. Such ads are so creative or entertaining that they overwhelm the product. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H7.1:** THERE WILL BE LOWER UNAIDED RECALL OF THE WARNING LABEL FOR SUBJECTS EXPOSED TO ABSURD ADS AS COMPARED TO THE SAME ADS WITH ABSURDISM REMOVED.

**H7.2:** THERE WILL BE LOWER UNAIDED RECALL OF THE BRAND NAME FOR SUBJECTS EXPOSED TO ABSURD ADS AS COMPARED TO THE SAME ADS WITH ABSURDISM REMOVED.

**H7.3:** THERE WILL BE LOWER UNAIDED RECALL OF THE SLOGAN FOR SUBJECTS EXPOSED TO ABSURD ADS AS COMPARED TO THE SAME ADS WITH ABSURDISM REMOVED.

For a summary of expected interaction effects and expected main effects under each of the theories, see Appendix S.

### Anthropomorphism

This study also investigates the impact of the anthropomorphic effect of animals. It is expected that absurd animal images have a stronger impact, perhaps as a result of the perception of an increased level of absurdism (anthropomorphism). Furthermore, the charisma, attraction,

beauty, warmth, etc. that animals portray could boost the impact of an ad. Based on these ideas, the following hypothesis is developed:

**H8:** ANTHROPOMORPHISM INCREASES THE ABSURD PERCEPTION OF THE ADS.

Because of a total lack of previous research on anthropomorphism, hypotheses concerning its impact on cognitive responses, attitudes, and recall were not formulated.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter begins with results from the viewing time pretest, followed by the absurdism manipulation pretest, and the procedure pretest. Next, an explanation of the sample characteristics and the incentive-method used to recruit the subjects is provided. This is followed by reliability measures for the administered scales and reliability estimates of the judges content-analysis. Finally, results for the hypotheses are presented. Beginning with categorical measures for hypotheses 1 and 7, the analysis tests the remaining hypotheses by employing analysis of variance and multivariate analysis of variance procedures.

#### Pretest

##### Viewing Time Pretest

In developing the study, it became apparent that the length of time that subjects viewed the ads needed to be controlled. Longer exposure time might lead to greater recall, and such an increase in recall could be confounded with the effects of absurdism. In addition, controlling for viewing time would minimize the impact of individual

differences. For the viewing time pretest, the print advertisements employed were professionally produced and specially created for the present study, adding to the realism of the test material. A total of twelve people (three for each of the four ad manipulations), were individually tested to determine how long it took them to go through a randomly assigned test ad (absurd human, absurd animal, non-absurd human, or non-absurd animal). Subjects were requested to raise their hand when they had completed viewing the ad. Results are reported in Table 1. They reveal that subjects required a longer viewing time under absurd conditions than non-absurd conditions ( $t = 3.48, p < 0.007$ ). Means (in seconds) were 16.33 (absurd human) and 15.33 (absurd animal) versus 10.33 (non-absurd human) and 10.66 (non-absurd animal). Although the grand mean was 13.16 seconds, it was considered important to also look at the range of responses. Range was 7.55 to 20.05 seconds across the four ads. Therefore, in order to increase the chances that all subjects would get a full opportunity to process the information in the absurd/non-absurd ads, it was considered appropriate to use the higher range value (i.e., twenty seconds) as the ideal time of exposure to be used in the study.

#### Absurdism Manipulation Pretest

For the absurdism variable pretest, sixty undergraduate students at a midwestern university were divided into four groups of fifteen each and exposed to either the human



(absurd or non-absurd) and the animal (absurd or non-absurd) conditions. The degree of the success of the manipulation of absurdism for both the animal and human conditions was assessed via the Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) modified scale. (See Appendix E.)

The analysis revealed that the manipulation was successful. A t-test indicated a significant difference between the treatment groups in ratings of absurdism ( $t = 13.24$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ). Mean absurd = 5.35, mean non-absurd = 3.20. When analyzed as an index, the scale revealed a high level of internal reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.85 for the absurdism scale).

#### Procedure Pretest

For the procedure pretest, six undergraduate students volunteered to participate. The experimenter tried to do everything exactly the way it was expected to be done during the main study procedure. Immediately after the session, students were asked to remain for a few minutes to discuss with the experimenter their reactions to the procedure. No major problems were reported, with the exception of the term "irrational" present on the scale of absurdism. This term seemed to be creating interpretation problems, and it had already been previously mentioned by two students during the manipulation pretest. Therefore, it was considered necessary to change the term irrational to the term "absurd." Other procedure modifications were minor and included things such as sharpening the pencils, telling

subjects beforehand that an answer sheet will be provided in order to avoid unnecessary explanations, numbering pages of the survey to facilitate finding the page to start transferring answers from the booklet to the answer sheet, and adding a statement to the first two booklet pages requesting subjects to wait for instructions before turning to the next page.

## Results

### Sample Characteristics

Students from six class sections of Introduction to Marketing were invited to participate. A total of one hundred and seventy-eight students (55 percent males and 45 percent females), volunteered to participate in the experimental design. The sample age distribution was ninety percent ages 18 to 25, eight percent ages 26 to 35, and two percent ages 36 to 45. The nationality was ninety percent Americans and ten percent international students. Ninety-seven percent of the sample had previous knowledge of the product type--wine cooler.

For the sample selection process, students were told that they were participating in a study about advertising. The students' names were matched from a previous study, conducted two months before for the purpose of blocking for valence (find attitudes) toward drinking wine coolers. The connection between the previous study and the current study, was never made by the experimenter. Furthermore, an

analysis of the students thoughts concerning the purpose of the experiment, conducted during the study, revealed that none subjects either guessed the purpose of the study or connected the two studies.

As an incentive for taking part in the study, each student received five bonus test-points. Students participated in small, out-of-class group sessions of six to nine people. All sessions were held by appointment. A total of twenty-four group sessions were conducted. Each session lasted for a total of 25 to 30 minutes. Final sample cell sizes ranged from 12 to 20. For a frequency distribution of the twelve cells of the (2 X 2 X 3) factorial design, see Table 2.

### Reliability Measures

It is important that any empirical test of a theory be based on reliable scales. Multiple measures were obtained for each variable of concern. The reliability of each underlying construct (i.e., attitude toward the ad scale, attitude toward the brand scale, humor scale, mood scale, task involvement scale, need for cognition scale, and absurdism scale) were assessed via coefficient alpha. Table 3 depicts the Cronbach alphas found for each of the scales. From the table, it can be seen that high reliability levels were obtained. Furthermore, the reliability levels reported for product involvement (0.97), need for cognition (0.91), task involvement (0.76), and absurdism (0.86) are higher, but fairly close to the ones reported by the original scale

developers (0.95, 0.90, 0.72, and 0.85 respectively).

#### Estimation of Judges Reliability

The next step was to measure the reliability of the quality of nominal data developed from qualitative judgements provided by two independent judges. Judges did not know the manipulation under examination. They did a content analysis of the two open-ended experimental questions (the first question asked subjects to recall what they saw and/or remember in the wine cooler ad, and the second question asked them to write their thoughts and feelings about the ad -- cognitive responses). A relatively new index of reliability developed by Perreault and Leigh (1989) was employed as the measure of reliability. Their measure is based upon the given level of percent agreement between judges, the different number of coding categories, and the sample size. The pre-discussion reliability indexes found were 0.95 for warning label recall, 0.94 for brand name recall, 0.95 for slogan recall, 0.60 for total number of cognitive responses, 0.77 for total number of positive cognitive responses, 0.84 for total number of negative cognitive responses, and 0.82 for total number of neutral cognitive responses. Clearly, with the exception of total number of cognitive responses, high reliability levels were obtained. In addition, correlations found between the two judges decisions were 0.83 for total number of cognitive responses, 0.82 for total number of positive cognitive responses, 0.93 for total number of negative cognitive

responses, and 0.91 for total number of neutral cognitive responses.

#### Absurdism Manipulation Check

The scale to measure absurdism was found to have a Cronbach alpha of 0.86, thereby providing an acceptable estimate of reliability. For the analysis of the manipulation of absurdism a t-test was conducted to determine if a significant difference was present between the two treatment groups in ratings of absurdism. The t-test indicated a significant difference between the treatment groups in ratings of absurdism. The mean response for absurd ads was 4.99 versus 3.40 for non-absurd ads; ( $t=7.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, ad type had a significant main effect on the absurdism scale ( $F = 18.54$ ,  $p = 0.0024$ ). No other significant main effects or interactions were found.

#### Analysis of Covariance

The correlation results between the covariates of humor, mood, task involvement, need for cognition, and product involvement with each of the dependent variables, were below 0.16 (excluding product involvement with  $r = 0.22$ ). (See Table 4.) According to Keppel and Zedeck (1989), for correlations less than 0.20, a standard ANOVA is actually more powerful than an ANCOVA. Huitema (1980) is more conservative and indicates that when the correlation is below 0.40, the precision of ANCOVA is equal to or less than

the factorial design. That is, in the present study, ANCOVA will not increase the sensitivity of the experiment.

On the other hand, one of the most important assumptions underlying the appropriate use of ANCOVA is that the regression slopes associated with the different groups in the design are homogeneous. To verify that the assumption was met, a median-split was conducted for each of the covariates in order to determine possible high or low values for the covariate that may be associated with the dependent variables. Results revealed significant interaction effects (heterogeneity of slopes) between each covariate and one or more of the independent variables (treatment levels). These interaction effects created a problem, because it indicates that covariate(s) and independent variable(s) cannot be separated out. If the covariate effect would be removed, then the treatment effect would be removed as well. As a result, the experiment purpose would be destroyed.

In conclusion, ANCOVA was not considered an appropriate analysis to be conducted in this dissertation. The following results will omit discussing ANCOVA.

### Tests of Hypotheses

For the test of hypothesis, a three-factor (2 x 2 x 3) between-subjects experimental design was employed. The first factor (ad type) manipulated whether subjects viewed an absurd or a non-absurd image. The second factor (organism) varied whether the image was either human or

animal. The third factor (valence) blocked on the prior attitude of subjects toward the product category of wine cooler (positive, neutral, or negative). Based upon a pretest of subjects' attitudes, subjects' names were matched with the corresponding valence. Name identification ensured that each subject was matched with the proper valence. (See Appendix A for a visual depiction of the design.) Subjects were assigned to the blocking variable based upon their preferences toward drinking wine coolers taken two months previously.

Subjects were exposed to four ads, one of which involved the experimental advertisement. Dependent measures were then collected for the ad having the experimental manipulation. Next, subjects completed the scales that measured the potential covariates. Questions about the subject's age, gender, and their thoughts concerning the purpose of the experiment were asked next. Finally, the manipulation check of absurdism was taken.

#### Unaided Recall Effects: Tests of H1 and H7

For the analysis of H1 and H7, the categorical mode procedure (CATMOD) from the SAS/Stat User's Guide (1990) was used to analyze the data for the specific dependent variables (warning label recall, brand name recall, and slogan recall).

#### Warning Label Recall

H1.1 was based on the von Restorff effect, stating that

in comparison to non-absurd ad conditions, absurd ads will increase the recall of warning label. H7.1, on the other hand, was based upon distraction theory, stating that there will be significantly lower unaided recall of the warning label for subjects exposed to absurd ads as compared to the same ads with absurdism removed.

As indicated in Table 5, the result is consistent with H7.1 and distraction theory. This result is also consistent with those reported by Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992). As shown in Table 6, ad type had a main effect (chi-square = 6.41,  $p < 0.01$ ). Under absurd conditions, 19.3 percent did recall the warning label, whereas 80.7 percent did not recall the warning label. The frequency/percentages are reported in Table 6. They provide strong evidence that the use of an absurd image may distract consumers so that they fail to process the information contained in warning labels.

Absurd images distracted attention from the warning label, thereby suggesting that distraction theory came into play. The von Restorff Effect, suggesting that a high level of recall results from the increased amount of information processing, which makes ad elements more available in memory, was not supported. The distraction mechanism was supported, suggesting that subjects may become distracted from the warning label by the salient absurd image on which they focus their processing resources.

#### Brand Name Recall

H1.2 was based on the von Restorff effect, stating that



in comparison to non-absurd ad conditions, absurd ads will increase the recall of brand name. H7.2, on the other hand, was based upon distraction theory, stating that there will be significantly lower unaided recall of the brand name for subjects exposed to absurd ads as compared to the same ads with absurdism removed.

As indicated in Table 5, the results were consistent with neither hypothesis. The results revealed a significant interaction effect between valence and ad type (chi-square = 14.82,  $p < 0.0001$ ). The frequencies and percentages for valence and ad type (absurd/non-absurd) interaction are reported in Table 7. The results on Table 7 provide evidence that recall of brand name was higher under conditions of neutral valence (58.3 percent) and negative valence (56 percent), when absurd images are present. These specific results add credence to the von Restorff Effect, suggesting that a high level of recall results from the increased amount of information processing, which makes ad elements more available in memory. However, under conditions of positive valence, recall of brand name is lower when absurd images are present (25.9 percent). This specific result adds credence to distraction theory, suggesting that subjects may become distracted from the brand name by the salient absurd image on which they focus their processing resources. Finally, there was also an ad type main effect for brand name recall (chi-square = 4.79,  $p < 0.03$ ). See Table 5. The frequency distribution on Table 7 indicates that brand name recall was higher under absurd

conditions.

In conclusion, in comparison to non-absurd ads, absurdism harms recall of brand name in positive valence conditions, but enhances recall in neutral and negative valence conditions.

### Slogan Recall

H1.3 was based on the von Restorff effect, stating that in comparison to non-absurd ad conditions, absurd ads will increase the recall of the slogan. H7.3, on the other hand, was based upon distraction theory, stating that there will be significantly lower unaided recall of the slogan for subjects exposed to absurd ads as compared to the same ads with absurdism removed.

As indicated in Table 5, the results were consistent with neither hypothesis. The results revealed a significant three-way interaction effect between valence, ad type, and organism (chi-square = 6.18,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, Table 5 shows interaction effects of valence and organism, and valence and ad type. Finally, a main effect of organism is also observed. In order to try to explain the three-way interaction, the probability of an interaction effect between ad type (absurd/non-absurd) and valence was requested for each organism (human/animal). Interestingly, results showed a significant interaction effect only when the organism is animal (chi-square = 9.11,  $p < 0.01$ ). Next, the probability of an interaction effect between organism and valence was requested for each ad type. This time,

results only showed a significant interaction effect when the ad type is non-absurd (chi-square = 7.38,  $p < 0.03$ ). Finally, the probability of an interaction effect between organism and ad type was requested for each valence. Results did not show any interaction effects under any of the three possible valences. In addition, frequency tables "by valence" were run first for ad type and then for organism. Also, frequency tables for ad type by organism were run. (See Table 8.) What can be observed is that when valence is neutral, there is a marginally significant higher recall of slogan under non-absurd conditions (chi-square = 3.51,  $p < 0.06$ ), and also, there is a significantly higher recall of slogan under animal conditions (chi-square = 8.15,  $p < 0.0004$ ). As a result, the three-way interaction can be explained as a consequence of the significantly higher frequency of recall of the slogan when the valence is neutral under the condition of a non-absurd, animal image. Apparently, subjects looked at the ad slogan much more when the parrot was shown out of the ocean (non-absurd animal).

In conclusion, there is not a theoretical explanation available for this three-way interaction. Neither distraction theory (H7.3), nor the von Restorff effect (H1.3) can be used as feasible explanations. Perhaps, as will be discussed later, the construction of the ad contributed to provide a physical/layout reason for this result.

### Total Number of Recalled Items

During the data analysis it was considered appropriate to evaluate the total number (quantity) of items being recalled under each treatment condition. Examples of some recalled items were: the volcano, bright colors, the ocean, a bottle of wine cooler, the warning label, palm trees, etc. Although not hypothesized, the findings may provide some explanation for the overall impact of the independent variables. ANOVA results indicate a main effect for ad type ( $F = 9.68$ ,  $p < 0.0022$ ; mean absurd = 5.89, mean non-absurd = 5.09.). This finding add credence to the von Restorff effect. That is, absurdism as a novel stimulus increases overall recall.

### Cognitive Responses Effects: Tests of H2 and H5

#### Total Number of Cognitive Responses

H2 was based on the von Restorff effect, stating that in comparison to non-absurd ad conditions, absurd ads will increase the total number of cognitive responses. H5, on the other hand, was based upon distraction theory, stating that subjects will have fewer cognitive responses under the absurd condition when compared to the non-absurd condition.

To test these competing hypotheses, ANOVA was used. (See Table 9.). Results indicated a strong main effect for ad type ( $F = 51.97$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). Means were 4.72 in absurd and 3.45 in non-absurd conditions. (See Table 10.) This result is consistent with the von Restorff effect and

supports H2. The ANOVA in Table 9 also found a significant main effect for valence and a near significant main effect for organism. For valence,  $F = 3.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; means were 4.21 (positive), 4.23 (neutral), and 3.75 (negative). For organism,  $F = 3.35$ ,  $p < 0.07$ ; means were 4.19 (human) and 3.98 (animal).

### Positive and Negative Cognitive Responses

#### Effects: Test of H3

H3.1 and H3.2 were based on the von Restorff effect in combination with the availability-valence hypothesis. The hypotheses stated that an interaction effect between absurdism and valence will impact the direction of the dependent variables of positive cognitive responses (H3.1) and negative cognitive responses (H3.2). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess H3. See Table 11. The MANOVA examined group differences in positive cognitive responses, negative cognitive responses, and also included neutral cognitive responses.

MANOVA results revealed no interaction effects. Only main effects for valence, organism, and ad type were found. See Table 11. For the valence main effect,  $F = 6.03$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ . For the organism main effect,  $F = 5.95$ ,  $p < 0.0007$ . Finally, for the ad type main effect,  $F = 13.90$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ . These two last main effects add credence to the von Restorff effect, particularly the ad type effect. Although the effect of organism was not hypothesized, it emerged as having an impact on the number of positive cognitive

responses. The animal organism (perhaps a novelty aspect), lead to a higher number of positive cognitive responses (mean animal = 2.36, mean human = 1.64).

H3.1 stated that, if the prior valence is positive, then the number of positive cognitive responses in the absurd ad condition will increase, in comparison to the non-absurd ad condition. At the univariate level, similar effects to those found under MANOVA were present. That is, main effects for valence, ad type, and organism were found for positive cognitive responses. For the valence main effect, ( $F = 5.24$ ,  $p < 0.006$ , mean positive = 2.60; mean neutral = 1.99; mean negative = 1.44). The higher mean score for positive valence can be explained by the availability valence hypothesis. That is, judgements depended on the valence of information available (retrieved) from memory. For ad type main effect,  $F = 11.51$ ,  $p < 0.0009$ ; (mean absurd = 2.48, mean non-absurd = 1.55). Finally, for organism main effect,  $F = 6.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; (mean human = 1.64, mean animal = 2.36). These effects can be explained by the von Restorff effect. The interaction effect predicted for H3.1 (when combining the von Restorff effect with the availability-valence hypothesis), was not supported.

H3.2 stated that, if the prior valence is negative, then the number of negative cognitive responses in the absurd ad condition will increase, in comparison to the non-absurd ad condition. At the univariate level, slightly different effects were found. This time only valence and

organism effects were found for negative cognitive responses (ad type effect was not present). Results revealed no interaction effects. See Table 9. For organism main effect,  $F = 12.59$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ; (mean human = 1.37, mean animal = 0.66). For the valence main effect,  $F = 8.89$ ,  $p < 0.0002$ ; (mean positive = 0.69; mean neutral = 0.79; mean negative = 1.65). The higher mean score for negative valence can be explained by the availability-valence hypothesis. Similar to the effects found earlier for positive cognitive responses, an organism main effect was found for negative cognitive responses. The human ads had the higher mean (1.37 versus 0.66).

In sum, for negative cognitive responses only main effects for valence and organism were found. In comparison to the previous findings for positive cognitive responses, an ad type effect was not found. The interaction effect predicted for H3.2 was not supported.

Finally, although not hypothesized, it is interesting to report the findings for neutral cognitive responses. At the univariate level, results indicated a main effect for valence,  $F = 8.14$ ,  $p < 0.0004$ ; (mean positive = 0.79; mean neutral = 1.41; mean negative = 0.65). Once again, the higher mean score for neutral valence can be explained by the availability valence hypothesis. That is, judgements depended on the valence of information available (retrieved) from memory. A main effect for ad type ( $F = 4.61$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ) was also found, (mean absurd = 1.23, mean non-absurd = 0.78). This outcome is consistent with the von Restorff

effect.

In conclusion, no interaction effect between absurdism and valence was found for the cognitive responses dependent variables. A valence main effect, supporting the availability valence hypothesis was consistently obtained. An organism main effect was found for positive and negative cognitive responses. The impact of animal image was higher only for positive cognitive responses. For negative cognitive responses, the impact was reversed. In other words, animals produce more positive responses and less negative responses. This organism main effect, is somewhat consistent with the previous finding for slogan recall under H7.3, and, as will be explained later, a similar effect was obtained for attitudes under H4 and H6. Finally, for positive and neutral cognitive responses there was a main effect of ad type (absurdism) that can be explained by the von Restorff effect.

#### Attitude Effects: Tests of H4 and H6

H4 predicted an interaction effect between ad type and valence on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand (attitudes). This hypothesis is predicated on the availability-valence hypothesis in combination with the von Restorff effect. H6, on the other hand, predicted that when using absurd images, attitudes will be more positive than in non-absurd conditions. This hypothesis was based on distraction theory. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess H4 and H6. The MANOVA examined



group differences in attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. The MANOVA results are reported in Table 12.

MANOVA results indicated significant main effects for valence ( $F = 2.62, p < 0.035$ ). Means are reported in Table 10. Means for valence were 4.73 (positive), 4.34 (neutral), and 3.75 (negative) for attitude toward the ad; for attitude toward the brand, means for valence were 4.74 (positive), 4.42 (neutral), and 3.85 (negative). Also found were significant main effects for organism ( $F = 13.57, p < 0.0001$ ). Mean for human = 3.64, mean for animal = 3.90 for attitude toward the ad; whereas for attitude toward the brand, mean for human = 3.79, mean for animal = 4.88. At the univariate level, both attitudes were also significant and the previous simultaneous main effects for valence and organism were repeatedly present for both type of attitudes. These results do not support H4, which states that when using absurd images attitudes will be moderated by valence, which would be indicated by a significant interaction effect between ad type and valence. However, no such interaction was obtained. Given that the mean results for valence are significant and also in the predicted direction, what is found is support for the availability valence hypothesis itself, but not in combination with the von Restorff effect.

An interesting finding is an organism main effect, which could be explained by the von Restorff effect. Organism impacted attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. When subjects viewed the animal, it resulted in

a higher mean score for attitude toward the ad (mean animal = 4.90; mean human = 3.64). When viewing the animal, similar results were found for attitude toward the brand (mean animal = 4.88; mean human = 3.79).

The results for differences in attitudes, reported in Table 13, do not support H6. This hypothesis stated that, in absurd conditions, attitudes will be more positive than in non-absurd conditions. In fact, the results show no significant difference in attitudes under absurd or non-absurd conditions for attitude toward the ad ( $t = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.63$ ); and for attitude toward the brand ( $t = 0.96$ ,  $p < 0.34$ ). This finding is not consistent with distraction theory and cannot be explained under the von Restorff effect either. Absurdism had no measurable impact on attitudes. However, according to the MANOVA discussed earlier, valence and organism did have a significant main effect on attitudes.

As was explained earlier, it was found that absurdism had a main effect on total number of cognitive responses, positive cognitive responses, and neutral cognitive responses. Absurdism, on the other hand, did not have a main effect on negative cognitive responses and attitudes. The literature indicates that attitudes stem from cognitive responses (Wright 1973; Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty 1981). In order to try to determine why ad type (absurdism) had no effect on negative cognitive responses, an attitude index was created for attitude toward the ad in combination with attitude toward the brand. The strong correlation between

the two attitudes (0.89) allowed a confident attitude index (for a complete correlation analysis see Table 4). Positive cognitive responses, negative cognitive responses, and neutral cognitive responses were used as independent variables in a regression equation. See Table 14. The purpose was to determine whether or not attitudes were governed by negative cognitive responses. Results indicated main effects for all three types of cognitive responses ( $p < 0.02$  for positive cognitive responses;  $p < 0.005$  for neutral cognitive responses; and  $p < 0.0001$  for negative cognitive responses). Interestingly, however, negative cognitive responses accounted for the most variance (36 percent), followed by positive cognitive responses (20 percent) and neutral cognitive responses (0.5 percent). That is, total explained variance was 56.5 percent. A test for significant differences between the beta coefficients for positive cognitive responses and negative cognitive responses was significant at  $p < 0.0001$ . Thus, negative cognitive responses tended to most strongly influence attitudes.

#### Anthropomorphism Effects: Test of H8

The results failed to support H8, stating that anthropomorphism (absurd animal) would increase the absurd perception of the ads. In fact, the mean score for the absurd human image was slightly higher than the mean score for the absurd animal image. Means equal to 5.03 versus 4.95 respectively and  $t = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.78$ .

### Humor as a Dependent Variable

An ANOVA was run to determine the impact of the independent variables on the perceived humor of the ad. A significant main effect occurred for organism, ( $F = 9.3$ ,  $P < 0.003$ ), mean human = 3.21, mean animal = 3.90. Also found are significant main effects of ad type, ( $F = 12.37$ ,  $p < 0.0006$ ), mean absurd = 4.00, mean non-absurd = 3.14. The direction of the means may suggest that absurd ads and animal ads are funnier. Furthermore, the correlation between the absurdism scale and humor was 0.19,  $p < 0.01$ .

### Mood as a Dependent Variable

An ANOVA was run to assess the effects of the independent variables on subjects' mood. Results revealed a significant interaction effect for organism and ad type ( $F = 4.53$ ,  $p < 0.035$ ). (See Table 15.) Results revealed that the highest impact on a positive mood was explained by the absurd-animal image (mean = 5.74). That is, anthropomorphism appeared to enhance subjects' mood. Furthermore, the correlation between the absurdism scale and mood was 0.14,  $p < 0.06$ .

### Other Covariates as Dependent Variables

An ANOVA was run to determine if ad type, or any other independent variable, had an effect on the remaining covariates of task involvement, need for cognition, and product involvement. Results did not indicate any

significant main effect or interaction effect. Also, the absurdism scale did not have any significant correlation with the above covariates.

### Effect Sizes

Effect sizes were calculated for each of the significant effects in this study. According to Rosenthal and Rosnow (1984), the magnitude of these effect sizes is considered moderate. (See Table 16.)

Sample effect sizes were also calculated for the categorical dependent variables. (See Table 17.) In addition, the sample effect size from the previous study of Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) was compared with the current study's effect on warning label recall. The comparison indicated that the studies were found to be significantly heterogeneous ( $\chi^2 = 7.40, p < 0.01$ ). For a detailed explanation of how calculations were made see Table 17.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The discussion of this study follows in three parts. First, the research findings are reviewed. Second, the implications for researchers and practitioners are developed. Finally, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are presented.

#### Discussion of Findings

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of absurdism on recall of an alcohol warning label, on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand, and on cognitive responses. To achieve the study's goals, a three-factor (2 x 2 x 3) between-subjects experimental design was employed. The first factor manipulated whether subjects view an absurd or a non-absurd image. The second factor varied whether the image was either human or animal. The third factor blocked on the prior attitude of subjects toward wine coolers (positive, neutral, or negative).

Results revealed that only two of the hypotheses were supported: H2 stating that cognitive responses will be higher under absurd conditions; and, H7.1 stating that warning label recall will be lower under absurd conditions.

An additional two competing hypotheses were partially supported: H1.2 stating that brand name recall will be higher under absurd conditions (supported only when valence was neutral or negative); and, H7.2 stating that brand name recall will be lower under absurd conditions (supported only when valence was positive). The remaining hypotheses, including those predicting interactions between absurdism and valence on cognitive responses and attitudes, were not supported.

Overall, ad type (absurdism) appeared to lower warning label recall; enhanced brand name recall (at least under neutral and negative valence); increased the total number of items recalled; increased the number of cognitive responses; increased positive cognitive responses and neutral cognitive responses. Absurdism was also found to impact the perceived humor of the ad.

On the other hand, organism (animal image), provided the most unpredicted findings. The animal image was found to increase slogan recall (at least under neutral valence and non-absurd conditions--triple interaction effect); increased positive cognitive responses; decreased negative cognitive responses; and increased attitudes in a positive direction. Organism (animal image) was also found to impact the perceived humor of the ad, and it interacted with ad type to positively influence subject's mood.

Finally, valence did interact with ad type to impact brand name recall. Also, valence interacted with ad type, and interacted with organism to influence slogan recall; all

cognitive responses mirrored the valence. Finally, valence had an impact on attitudes.

### General Findings

As predicted in H7.1, warning label recall was significantly lower under absurd conditions. Results indicate that only 19.3 percent did recall the warning label under absurd conditions. Thus, absurdism was found to distract. However, an inconsistent set of results were obtained for other recall measures under absurd conditions. For example, brand name recall revealed a two-way interaction effect. Frequency of brand name recall was low only under the positive valence condition (25.9%), when absurdism was present. Thus, the competing hypotheses, H1.2 and H7.2, were not fully supported. Slogan recall, on the other hand, revealed a three-way interaction effect. Frequency of slogan recall was not affected by ad type. Thus, the competing hypotheses H1.3 and H7.3 were not supported. Finally, although not hypothesized, it was found that the total number of recalled items were higher under absurd conditions. That is, a main effect for ad type was observed.

Another major finding of the study was the consistent main effect of ad type (absurdism) on total number of cognitive responses (supporting H2). This absurdism effect was also present for positive cognitive responses, and neutral cognitive responses. The absurdism effect did not occur for negative cognitive responses. A possible reason



for failing to find an ad type (absurdism) effect on negative cognitive responses, can be explained by the overwhelming organism effect which was consistently found across the different valences for cognitive responses. The type of cognitive response, on the other hand, mirror the valence, i.e., positive valence created greater number of positive cognitive responses; neutral valence created greater number of neutral cognitive responses; and negative valence created greater number of negative cognitive responses.

In sum, the interaction effects between valence and ad type, predicted for positive cognitive responses and negative cognitive responses (H3.1 and H3.2), were not supported.

Along similar lines, the interaction effect between valence and ad type, predicted for attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand (H4) was not supported either. What was found is a main effect of organism (instead of ad type) on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. The animal image resulted in more favorable attitudes. This effect may be explained by the more attractive appeal of the animal, reflected on the cognitive responses (e.g., parrot beautifully colored, parrot and volcano gave the island a tropical, caribbean effect, etc.)

What follows is a more detailed discussion of each finding.

## Recall Findings

### Warning Label Recall

In the non-absurd conditions, warning label recall was more easily recalled than in the absurd condition. This effect remains significant, regardless of subject's valence. The presence of absurdism reduced counterarguing, thereby introducing a distraction effect that explains this conclusion. A similar finding was reported by Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992).

Distraction theory appears to explain warning label recall. The distraction mechanism suggests that subjects may become distracted from the warning label by the salient absurd image on which they focus their processing resources.

Public Policy Implications The fact that the results for warning label recall suggests that absurd ads are highly effective in distracting audiences from perceiving the contents of warning labels, has implications for public policy makers. As Preston (1976) suggested, advertisers can mislead consumers without putting factually incorrect information into words. Thus, this study suggests that regulators should analyze the construction of ads to assess their impact on the processing of warning labels. Perhaps standards should be set regarding the extent of recall of warning labels, requiring producers of products with warning labels to demonstrate empirically that consumers perceive and recall the warning label information. According to

Colford (1993), the Kennedy-Thurmond bill, recently introduced, would require rotated health warnings, much like those currently mandated for product labels, in all ads, with audio as well as visual versions for TV. The timing of this study finding should contribute to the creation of standards regarding the extent of warning label recall, not only for alcoholic beverages, but for any product warning label.

#### Brand Name Recall

For the recall of brand name, the hypothesized differential effects of absurd versus non-absurd images (H1.2), were observed in the experiment only when valence was either negative or neutral. Significant chi-squares revealed that brand name recall is higher under conditions of neutral valence (58.3%) or negative valence (56%) when absurd images were present; however, this difference did not materialize when the valence was positive (25.9%). In other words, the presence of absurdism enhanced the memorability of brand name recall for those subjects having a neutral or negative valence. Therefore, it is likely that subjects with neutral or negative valence were motivated to process by the presence of absurdity, whereas subjects with positive valence were distracted by absurdity. The first conclusion would partially support H1.2; the last conclusion would partially support H7.2.

Brand name recall can be partially explained by the von Restorff effect, which proposed that a high level of recall

results from the increased amount of information processing, which makes the ad elements more available in memory. This was supported only when subject's valence was either neutral or negative. However, when subject's valence was positive, distraction theory appeared as the possible explanation for the lower brand name recall. Although this experiment provides important new information about absurdism in advertising and support for the prior empirical study in absurdism, care is suggested for advertisers when using absurd images. The null finding for higher brand name recall under positive valence condition might suggest the use of caution when using absurd images in advertisements where consumers already have a positive attitude (positive valence) toward the product. This is because when valence was positive, subjects appeared to be distracted by absurdism. The ad may succeed in getting itself remembered, but not the brand name. If this happens, it might be the result of absurdism simply overwhelming the brand name. Marketers are warned to be sure that "a really unusual or bizarre execution does not reflect negatively on the brand's image" (Rossiter and Percy 1987, p. 230). Absurdism could buy attention at a high price, and companies must be cautious in choosing an ad strategy that does not backfire in unexpected ways, thus representing a possible threat to the sender.

However, absurd images might be appropriate for enhancing brand name recall of advertisements aimed to consumers with neutral valence (attitude) toward the product

and also for advertisements aimed to consumers with negative valence toward the product. This effect could be particularly important if ads are seen by children. Initially, children may have a neutral to negative view of a product, such as cigarettes. Over time, absurd images could increase their recall of the brand name and eventually impact their evaluations of the product. Indirect support comes from Deveny (1991) who indicated that children have a high ability to match the brand name Camel to the illustration of Old Joe, (an absurd/animal character used in Camel cigarette advertising). Once again, the public policy implications of using absurd images is a critical issue that demands further investigation.

#### Slogan Recall

For the recall of slogan, the hypothesized main effects for ad type were not supported. A three-way interaction effect for valence, ad type, and organism was found. To interpret this triple interaction, the two-way interactions for slogan recall (significant and not significant) were analyzed through frequency/percentage tables. In addition, a frequency table for the organism main effect was analyzed. The results on Table 7 lead the author to conclude that slogan recall was significantly higher under neutral valence, when organism was animal instead of human and when ad type was non-absurd instead of absurd. The animal effect is further reinforced by the frequency table results for the main effect of organism, showing recall of slogan

significantly higher when organism is animal. The reason why ad type (non-absurd) was brought into the triple interaction effect, can be explained by the near significant interaction of ad type with neutral valence ( $p < 0.06$ ).

The above findings must be addressed with caution, given that the frequency cells were less than five for many of the comparisons. Therefore, the strength of the findings was affected. Furthermore, the results do not have a feasible theoretical explanation. Results revealed that the presence of an animal when subjects have neutral valence provided a higher recall of slogan. One possible explanation could be that the correlation between attitude toward the product (valence) and product involvement was the strongest under neutral valence ( $r = 0.50$  for neutral,  $r = 0.42$  for negative, and  $r = 0.31$  for positive). The high correlation under neutral valence could be attributed to the blocking by valence (attitude) study measuring a surrogate for involvement. Therefore, subjects under neutral valence tended to be more involved and motivated to process the ad.

Another possible explanation, could be that subjects had positive thoughts toward the animal. The finding of higher slogan recall for animal images suggests an interesting research topic, yet unexplored in advertising, regarding the impact of animals on ad recall. This issue requires further investigation in the years to come.

An additional explanation is provided by the total recall analysis for the non-absurd/animal ad, which evidenced subjects' disclosure of thoughts such as warm and

bright colors, palm trees, bird beautifully colored, ad created a tropical, caribbean scene, etc. Thoughts like these may have explicitly contributed to enhance recall of the slogan "the taste of the tropics." Again, such comments resulted from the construction of the non-absurd/animal ad, which gives a possible physical/layout reason for the higher slogan recall.

Finally, a possible explanation is that the absurdism manipulation (ad type), was recalled by some subjects (9.8% of those exposed to the absurd condition) as unnatural, confusing, or weird. This raises a concern that the manipulation of absurdism was confounded with these other negative variables, which in turn might have turned-off any further attention and subsequent recall of the ad content (e.g., slogan). Nonetheless, the finding that ad type had a positive effect on total recall and perception of humor, appeared to prevail.

#### Total Items Recalled

Although not hypothesized, the finding of higher number of total items recalled under the absurd conditions, added credence to the von Restorff effect.

It can be concluded that absurd ads are attention getting (Stern 1990a). Growing consumer inattention as a result of information overload and clutter of promotional messages has made many people insensitive to ads. Absurd ads offer an interesting option. However, since absurd images have been found to distract attention from other

elements of the ad that should be attended to (e.g., warning labels), then they may represent a possible threat, not to the sender, but to the receiver of the communication.

In summary, absurdism in advertising appeared to produce higher recall of brand name and lower recall of warning label. For the former, this is expected under conditions of neutral or negative valence, whereas absurdism, on the other hand, decreased recall of the warning label. When it comes to slogan recall, the presence of animal/non-absurd image appeared to increase recall under neutral valence conditions. Finally, total items recalled was higher under absurd conditions. A possible reason for these different patterns of results across the dependent variables for recall may be attributed to the fictional nature of the brand name and slogan. Fictional ads were created in an effort to eliminate prior brand attitudes. Thus, recall of brand name and slogan may have been weak because the subjects were relying on memory-based ads of a fictitious brand name and slogan.

#### Cognitive Responses Findings

H2 was supported, stating that total number of cognitive responses was higher under absurd conditions. Hypothesis 3.1 and 3.2 were not supported. The predicted interaction effects between valence and ad type did not occur for positive cognitive responses and negative cognitive responses.

Positive cognitive responses were higher under absurd



conditions. In addition, positive cognitive responses were also higher under animal conditions and under positive valence conditions. That is, main effects for ad type, organism, and valence were found. Negative cognitive responses, on the other hand, were higher under human conditions (opposite to positive cognitive responses), and were also higher under negative valence conditions. That is, main effects for organism and valence were found. Finally, number of neutral cognitive responses were higher under absurd conditions and under neutral valence conditions.

In sum, what we find for all cognitive responses is a consistent main effect of valence, followed by an ad type main effect (excluding negative cognitive responses), and an organism main effect for positive and negative cognitive responses.

### Discussion of Cognitive Responses

#### Total Number of Cognitive Responses

The results of the present research indicate that the presence of absurd images increased the total number of cognitive responses. This finding provides support for the von Restorff effect by suggesting that absurdism increases information processing because it is a form of unexpected novelty. The data are consistent with the proposal that the novel, unexpected nature of an absurd image results in a deeper level of processing. This magnified level of

processing served to increase the number of thoughts and feelings about the ad. Clearly, to the extent that absurd ads are attended to more deeply, they have the power to influence future cognition. As a result, advertisers have a powerful execution format available to influence number of thoughts and feelings about the advertisement.

#### Positive Cognitive Responses

Results related to the valence of cognitive responses were mixed. For total number of positive cognitive responses, main effects for organism (human/animal) and ad type (absurd/non-absurd) were found and can be explained by the von Restorff effect. The mean scores for organism suggest that the animal image created a larger number of positive cognitive responses. This finding has important implications for advertisers who would like to enhance the brand image of their products. In this study absurd images generated an increased number of positive thoughts and feelings toward the brand. A third main effect for valence is also present. The largest mean under positive valence is consistent with the availability-valence hypothesis and reinforces the importance of maintaining favorable attitudes toward a product type.

#### Negative Cognitive Responses

For number of negative cognitive responses, two main effects for valence (explained by the availability-valence hypothesis) and organism (explained by the von Restorff

effect) were found. For valence, it is no surprise to find that the highest mean score was under negative valence when compared to positive valence or neutral valence. In addition, more negative cognitive responses occurred in the human organism condition than in the animal organism condition. This finding implies that the human image contributed to exacerbate negative thoughts, whereas the animal image seemed to diminish the number of negative cognitive responses. It may be possible that people simply disliked the female image. There is some evidence on the ratings of the female, which criticized her look and cartoon appearance. Under the non-absurd human condition, 17.8 percent disliked the female, whereas under the absurd human condition, 22 percent disliked the female. Nonetheless, once again, we find an intriguing and somewhat positive impact when using animals in advertisements, which is consistent with the prior finding for total number of positive cognitive responses.

What is intriguing under negative cognitive responses, is that ad type (absurd/non-absurd) did not have a main effect. Perhaps, attitudes are governed by negative cognitive responses. This conclusion is supported by the results of the regression equation for the valence of cognitive responses on attitudes. Even though the results indicated main effects for all three types of cognitive responses. The strongest main effect was for negative cognitive responses. In addition, negative cognitive responses explained 36 percent of the variance, whereas

positive and neutral cognitive responses explained 20 percent and 0.5 percent respectively. That is, the total amount of R-square equal to 56.5 percent. Furthermore, a test for the difference between the beta coefficients for positive and negative cognitive responses was highly significant, thereby contributed to partially support the suspicion on why ad type did not have an effect.

The literature does not provide a theoretical explanation for this unusual finding. However, it can be speculated that the reason why attitudes tended to be somewhat governed by negative cognitive responses might be due to the presence of the human organism creating a negative cognitive responses. As mentioned earlier, 9.8 percent of those exposed to the absurd condition indicated that the woman was unnatural, monstrous, weird, ugly, etc. These negative responses may have affected the attitude index.

#### Neutral Cognitive Responses

Two main effects for valence (explained by the availability-valence hypothesis) and ad type (explained by the von Restorff effect) were found for number of neutral cognitive responses. The mean scores for valence indicated a greater number of neutral cognitive responses for subjects having a neutral valence. Once again, it can be seen that type of cognitive responses mirror the valence. In addition, absurd images generated an increased number of neutral thoughts and feelings. This ad type effect is

consistent with the one found for total number of cognitive responses and positive cognitive responses.

### Attitudes Findings

H6 was not supported, stating that attitudes will be higher under absurd conditions. That is, a main effect for ad type was not present. Hypothesis 4 was not supported either. The predicted interaction effects between valence and ad type did not occur for attitudes.

For the dependent variables of attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand, the results revealed that both attitudes were more positive in the animal conditions and in the positive valence conditions. That is, main effects were found for organism and valence.

The non-hypothesized findings of organism on cognitive responses mediated the results on attitudes. The significant mean differences behaved similar as they were for cognitive responses. That is, animals produced higher, more positive attitudes when compared to human images. As mentioned earlier, the content analysis revealed that the human image was disliked by some subjects. There was some evidence of aversion, resulting from the use of a drawing of the female instead of a fashion photograph from an attractive model. Even though this finding was not hypothesized, it is consistent with the previous conclusion regarding animal image impact on cognitive responses.

In conclusion, there were two main effects of organism and valence on both attitudes. The mean results indicated

that under positive valence, attitudes tended to be more positive, whereas under negative valence attitudes tended to be more negative. This is consistent with the previous findings for cognitive responses. Organism's impact, on the other hand, continued to be stronger under the animal condition. It seemed that the colors of the parrot added to the attraction of the ad. What is intriguing is the lack of an ad type (absurdism) effect. It appeared that the organism effect (animal image) was so powerful, that it dictated the ad impact on attitudes, independently of its absurdism.

#### Anthropomorphism Findings

H8 was not supported, stating that anthropomorphism (absurd/animal condition) would increase the absurd perception of the ads when compared to the absurd/human condition. What was found is a reverse effect. The direction of the means was opposite to the prediction. Despite the finding, the fact that the presence of an animal organism was found to significantly affect cognitive responses and attitudes, introduces a new approach to be considered in future advertising studies.

#### Humor Findings

When humor was run as a dependent variable (instead of a covariate), significant main effects were found for ad type -- absurdity,-- ( $F = 12.37, p < 0.0006$ ); and for organism --animal image,-- ( $F = 9.30, p < 0.003$ ). The

former is consistent with one of the possible absurd ad dimensions -- humor, -- included in the scale for absurdism. In fact, the correlation between the absurdism scale and the humor scale was 0.19,  $p < 0.01$ . Finally, the animal image impact on humor is another interesting finding which hopefully, should spark an interest for further research in this area.

### Mood Findings

When mood was run as a dependent variable (instead of a covariate), ad type and organism had a significant interaction effect on subject's mood. Mean absurd animal = 5.74; mean non-absurd human = 5.60; mean absurd human = 5.37; mean non-absurd animal = 5.14. (See Table 15.) The implications are clearly reflected by the mean scores. That is, absurd animal conditions (anthropomorphism) appeared to have the strongest impact on arousing a positive mood.

There were no significant effects for the other covariates when run as dependent variables.

### Effect Sizes Findings

According to Rosenthal and Rosnow (1984), the effect sizes ( $\eta$ ) for each of the significant effects on the continuous dependent variables can be considered medium effects.

The sample effect sizes for the categorical dependent variables indicated medium effects (Cohen 1988). These results exclude the sample effect size found for Arias-

Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) study, which can be considered as having a large effect size (0.670). Although the effect sizes were different in magnitude, they were in the same direction. However, the finding of heterogeneous studies when comparing the study from Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (using cigarette ads), with the current study (using liquor ads), can be attributed to the following reasons. First, as previously mentioned, the current study used liquor ads instead of cigarette ads. Therefore, they cannot be fully comparable. Second, the current study was more realistic, adding additional variance, and thus providing a smaller absurdism effect.

#### Contributions

A major contribution of the laboratory study was that absurdism was manipulated in a manner that minimized the effects of potential confounding variables. This allowed the research to begin the process of gaining an understanding of absurdism's impact on a number of dependent variables.

Following Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992) study, the research is the first to empirically investigate absurdism as a communication variable. By testing absurdism's impact on recall, cognitive responses, and attitudes; a number of practical implications emerged from this study.

First, the repeated finding that absurdism distracted attention from the warning label and, thereby, reduced their effectiveness by providing significantly lower recall of the



warning label, has substantial public policy implications. This study suggests that regulators should analyze the construction of ads to assess their impact on the processing of warning labels. Perhaps standards should be set regarding the extent of recall of warning labels, requiring producers of products with warning labels to demonstrate empirically that consumers perceive and recall the warning label information.

Second, the findings also suggest that marketing managers should be cautious when using absurd images to enhance recall of the brand name. The different results found for recall of the warning label and the brand name, should be addressed carefully. Given the public policy implications discussed earlier, the use of absurd images on certain product categories can be considered pernicious. However, if the product category is acceptable, absurd images can be an attractive option. Specifically, when the interest of the manager is on increasing the total recall of the ad, and the number of positive and neutral cognitive responses, the use of absurdism may be an appropriate strategy.

Third, attitudes appeared to be unaffected by absurdism. Overall, given the exploratory nature of this study, the findings must be taken with caution. Unquestionably, a greater understanding of absurdism's impact requires further studies.

The powerful effect found for the animal organism (parrot), on attitudes, cognitive responses, and slogan

recall has important implications for advertisers who would like to enhance the brand image of their products. Hopefully, the present study will stimulate further research in this area.

The study did a test between competing hypotheses developed from the availability-valence hypothesis, the von Restorff effect, and distraction theory. Thus, existing research was extended and conceptual relationships were empirically investigated.

Finally, the study extended previous research on absurdism to include a definition of absurdism in advertising and an understanding of absurdism related constructs such as surrealism, allegory, anthropomorphism, hyperbole, and humor. With this beginning on the exploration of absurdism's effects, a richer understanding can now be developed of how creative directors can make the best use of absurd images. For marketing academicians, on the other hand, this study should provide a stream of research to be further developed in the years to come.

#### Limitations

As in virtually any study of consumer behavior, the results and interpretations were limited by the nature of the stimuli, respondents, and instruments. Using different products, one might find different results. Using different respondents (e.g., consumers actively engaged in consumption) one might find different responses. Using different procedures one might include additional variables

in the model. One can never be sure that to what extent demand artifacts might have colored the measures of advertising response.

The present study outcomes might have been affected by the type of product represented in the stimulus ads. In this regard, Holbrook and Batra (1987) indicate that researchers should use ads for a mixture of product types as stimulus in the research stream. This would generalize the effects of ad recall, cognitive responses, and attitudes across product types. Furthermore, this practice is likely to be effective in avoiding any potential biasing effects of product type. Clearly, the present study lacks external validity and needs further research using more products and more stimuli (people/animals).

The choice of only one human and one animal is a limitation which hinders the generalizability of the present findings. Including different absurd animal images, absurd male images, or absurd objects will contribute to the ecological validity of the present study. Finally, the generalizability of the study was also limited because only one medium was used (print).

Another limitation stems from the use of the experimental method to investigate the impact of absurdism. In an effort to enhance the internal validity of the study, formal aspects that normally characterize print advertising exposure were not employed, such as a mock magazine along with the consumers' autonomy (selective perception) to decide how much attention, if any, will be devoted to the

ads. Similarly, although subjects were instructed to approach the ads naturally, as if they were consumers for the products, in fact the laboratory setting differed considerably from natural viewing situations, most notably in the use of paper and pencil rating scales immediately following the viewing of ads, and the high degree of task involvement characteristic of experiments. Despite these shortcomings, there can be no replacement for the experimental design when causal analysis is among the goals of the research plan.

The method of selecting the sample for the focus groups, pretests, and data collection stage is another limitation. Voluntary cooperation was solicited from students in order to participate in this study and receive bonus points. The fact that students self-selected themselves to join the study, limits the generalizability of results to the overall target market population.

The fact that the female image was disliked by some of the subjects, introduces a confounding variable for the analysis and interpretation of the study results. That is, absurdism was confounded with what for a few subjects was ugly, monstrous, and unattractive.

#### Future Research

As an exploratory study, the dissertation discusses the limitations of the research and identifies future directions for study. The author hopes to encourage researchers to collect data which will give additional insights into the

theoretical construct of absurdism and its underlying effects on the consumer when used in advertisements. Replications are encouraged in order to verify the results.

Future research might examine the relationship between absurdism and behavioral intentions, and between absurdism and brand name recognition. The design should also include a mixture of product types to allow generalization of the findings. In addition, obtaining a random sample of target market consumers for the product being investigated will help to avoid the problem of self-selection, present in this study's convenience sample. Another problem to be avoided is the possible lack of representativeness of the sample.

A task for future research is also to determine whether absurd object images (e.g., an ad for British Airways showing flying shoes), absurd animal images (the most common type found today in print advertising), and absurd human images differ in their effectiveness and impact.

This study identified purely visual forms of absurdism. The manipulation of verbal (auditory) absurdism, or a combination of visual-verbal absurdism could test the incremental effects of purely visual absurdism. Other absurd forms, including olfactory absurdism, could be explored as well.

Although public policy issues are not considered as a framework for this dissertation, they cannot be ignored. There is a need for additional research on absurdism techniques that may influence consumers in a way that is unacceptable to society. This type of research has the

potential to protect consumers.

Finally, during the discussion section it was reported a significant positive impact for the animal image. This provocative finding requires further investigation. The study of the impact of animals in advertisements is long overdue and requires further empirical investigation. Today, there is no "animal theory" available to help explain part of the results from this study. Among the many things that could be empirically supported, is that the charisma, beauty, warmth, etc. that certain animals portray could boost the impact of an ad.

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**APPENDICES**

		NON-ABSURD		ABSURD	
		Human	Animal	Human	Animal
Valence	Positive	1	2	5	6
	Neutral	9	10	11	12
	Negative	3	4	7	8

HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS UNDER THE AVAILABILITY-VALENCE HYPOTHESIS (AVH) - THE VON RESTORFF EFFECT (VRE) - OR THE DISTRACTION HYPOTHESIS (DH)

COGNITIVE RESPONSES		ATTITUDES		UNAIDED RECALL		ANTHROPOMORPHISM
VRE & AVH	DH	AVH	DH	VRE	DH	
1 < 5	1 > 5	1 < 5	3 < 7	1 < 5	1 > 5	5 < 6
2 < 6	2 > 6	2 < 6	4 < 8	2 < 6	2 > 6	7 < 8
3 < 7	3 > 7	3 < 7	1 < 5	3 < 7	3 > 7	5 = 7
4 < 8	4 > 8	4 < 8	2 < 6	4 < 8	4 > 8	6 = 8
H2 & H3	H5	H4	H6	H1	H7	H8

## APPENDIX B

## SCALE FOR ATTITUDES TOWARD DRINKING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Please indicate with an "X" on a scale from 0 to 100 your attitude toward drinking the seven alcoholic beverages you will find listed below.

0 (zero) in each scale means that the product may be sinful, or that you don't like to drink alcoholic beverages, or that you simply dislike that product, therefore you will avoid drinking it.

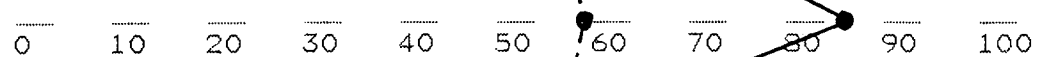
100 (one hundred) means that you like the product very much, or that it is your favorite drink.

Your response for each product category may fall between the extremes [ 0 or 100 ].

A. Attitude toward drinking wine cooler:



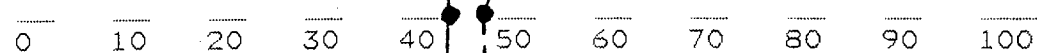
B. Attitude toward drinking beer:



C. Attitude toward drinking white wine:



D. Attitude toward drinking red wine:



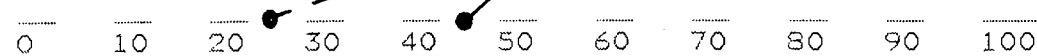
E. Attitude toward drinking sparkling wine:



F. Attitude toward drinking mixed drinks:



G. Attitude toward drinking tequila:



Finally, please indicate your GENDER.

Male 60% . ●—————●  
Female 40% ●-----●

THANK YOU!

## APPENDIX C

## ATTITUDES TOWARD ANIMALS

## Frequency Table (n = 125)

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Bear	5	5	1
Dog	29	11	1
Elephant	5	3	0
Dolphin	10	1	0
Cat	16	16	4
Rabbit	8	4	0
Lion	7	1	0
Horse	10	9	0
Tiger	2	0	0
Monkey	4	8	0
Squirrel	2	1	0
Jaguar	4	1	0
Cow	7	12	0
Leopard	2	0	0
Penguin	5	3	0
Parrots	3	2	0
Whales	2	1	0
Giraffe	1	1	0
Birds	2	12	0
Seals	0	2	0
Fish	1	5	1
Racoon	0	1	1
Pigs	0	4	2
Eagle	0	2	0
Lamb	0	1	0
Gerbil	0	1	0
Camel	0	2	0
Ants	0	1	1
Ducks	0	2	0
Deer	0	2	0
Walrus	0	2	0
Frogs	0	1	5
Rhinoceros	0	1	0
Mouse	0	1	8
Rat	0	1	13
Zebra	0	2	0
Insects	0	1	17
Crocodile	0	1	4
Snake	0	0	21
Spider	0	0	18
Sharks	0	0	8
Skunk	0	0	4
Lizards	0	0	2
Crow	0	0	3

Flies	0	0	4
Wolf	0	0	1
Bees	0	0	2
Scorpion	0	0	1
Roach	0	0	3

**APPENDIX D**

**ADVERTISEMENTS CREATED FOR MAIN EXPERIMENT**

The following advertisements are black and white reductions of the original professionally developed color advertisements (22 x 16 inches) used in this dissertation. The reduction process resulted in the loss of a great deal of clarity in comparison to the originals.




# *Caribbean Cooler*



The consumption of this product which contains alcohol, may increase the risk of developing, hypertension, heart disease, and some cancers.

# Caribbean Cool

The Best  
of the Tropics



The consumption of this product which contains alcohol, may increase the risk of developing, hypertension, heart disease, and some cancers.

# Caribbean Co



The consumption of this product which contains alcohol, may increase the risk of developing, hypertension, heart disease, and some cancers.

# Caribbean Co

*The Taste  
of the Tropics*



The consumption of this product which contains alcohol, may increase the risk of developing, hypertension, heart disease, and some cancers.

## APPENDIX E

## ABSURDISM SCALE

Once again, please bring to mind the **WINE COOLER** ad and indicate your degree of disagreement or agreement with the following statements about the **wine cooler ad image**. (A = strongly disagree and G = strongly agree). There are not good or bad answers. What we need is your true impressions.

1. The wine cooler ad image was bizarre.
2. The wine cooler ad image was highly unique.
3. The wine cooler ad image presented a strikingly unusual image.
4. An illogical action was presented in the wine cooler ad image.
5. There was a comic tone present in the wine cooler ad image.
6. I saw an absurd action in the wine cooler ad image.
7. The image I have seen in the wine cooler ad cannot happen in a real life situation.

The scale was assessed via seven-point Likert scale questions (A= strongly disagree and G = strongly agree).

Source: adapted from Leopoldo G. Arias-Bolzmann and John C. Mowen, "Absurd Images in Cigarette Advertising: An Empirical Investigation," in Marketing Perspectives for the 1990s, Robert L. King, ed., Southern Marketing Association, (Proceedings), 1992, 295-299.

## APPENDIX F

## SURVEY FOR BLOCKING OF VALENCE

The purpose of this study is to measure a person's involvement or interest in **wine coolers**. To make this measure, we need to ask you two things:

(1) We need you to **assume** that you are in a fun party atmosphere and you are thirsty. You have a variety of beverages to choose from, including beer, wine cooler, soft drinks, water, orange juice, and mixers for various hard liquors.

(2) We need you to **judge wine coolers** against a series of descriptive scales according to how YOU perceive the product. Here is how you are to use these scales:

If you feel that wine coolers are very closely related to one end of the scale, you should place your check mark as follows:

Unimportant      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Important

or

Unimportant      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Important

If you feel that wine coolers are quite closely related to one or the other end of the scale (but not extremely), you should place your check mark as follows:

Unappealing      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Appealing

or

Unappealing      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Appealing

If you feel that wine coolers seem only slightly related (but not really neutral) to one end of the scale, you should place your check mark as follows:

Uninterested      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Interested

or

Uninterested      1   2   3   4   5   6   7      Interested

**Important:**

Never put more than one check mark on a single scale.

Make each item a separate and independent judgement.

Work at fairly high speed through the questionnaire. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the immediate feelings about the items, that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

**Any questions?**

If there are no questions, please wait for instructions before turning to the next two pages.

## Involvement Scale

## WINE COOLERS

Unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Important
Of no concern to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Of concern
Irrelevant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Relevant
Means nothing to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Means a lot
Useless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Useful
Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
Trivial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fundamental
Not beneficial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Beneficial
Doesn't matter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Matters to
Uninterested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interested
Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Significant
Superfluous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Vital
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting
Unexciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Exciting
Unappealing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Appealing
Mundane	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fascinating
Nonessential	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Essential
Desirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Undesirable
Unwanted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Wanted
Not needed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Needed

Source: adapted from Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky, "Measuring the Involvement Construct," Journal of Consumer Research, 12, December 1985, 341-352.

## Attitude Toward the Product Scale

## INSTRUCTIONS

Once again, assuming that you are at a fun party atmosphere that you are thirsty, and that you have a wide variety of beverages to choose from, please indicate with an "X" on a scale from 1 to 9 your **attitude toward drinking wine coolers**.

## ATTITUDE TOWARD WINE COOLERS

"I feel wine coolers are....,"

bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	good
unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	pleasant
disagreeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	agreeable
unsatisfactory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	satisfac.
dull	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	exciting
unromantic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	romantic

"Overall, I feel that in general wine coolers....,"

taste bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	taste good
-----------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------

The scale was assessed via seven nine-point semantic differential scale.

Source: adapted from Charles E. Osgood, George J. Luci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1957.



## Demographic Questions

Finally, please indicate the following information about yourself:

PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER: Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!

## APPENDIX G

## EXPERIMENT INSTRUCTIONS

This is a consumer study and we are interested in receiving consumer input. The study concerns the pretesting of ads that are being considered for use in magazine advertisements by a West Coast advertising firm. This pretesting of ads is a common practice in the industry. We are interested in how would **you as a consumer** react to various ads, therefore, your overall reaction to a number of ads may be required.

First, you will be asked to examine several ads projected on a screen for a few seconds each. After viewing the ads, you will be asked to give your reaction to one or more of the ads. For each of the descriptive scales, circle the number that best reflects your response. Work at your own pace, but do not worry over individual items. We want your first impressions -- that is, your immediate feelings about the items. But please do not be careless because we want your true impressions. It is important that you answer all questions in the order in which they are presented. Finally, the ads on which we may ask you questions may not be in the same order as the ads that you saw.

Please do not discuss this experiment with other students until all sessions have been held.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

**APPENDIX H****MEASURE OF UNAIDED RECALL OF THE WARNING LABEL,  
THE BRAND NAME, AND THE SLOGAN****Instructions**

Please describe everything you saw and/or remember in the **WINE COOLER** ad. Be as specific as possible. Write down everything that you remember that was in the ad. Please ignore spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

PLEASE WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE TURNING TO THE NEXT PAGE

**APPENDIX I**

## MEASURE OF COGNITIVE RESPONSES

## Instructions

Please bring to mind the ad for the **WINE COOLER** and try to write a paragraph or two about all your thoughts and feelings about the advertised brand. Write anything that comes to mind. Please ignore spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

PLEASE WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE TURNING TO THE NEXT PAGE

**APPENDIX J****INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO ANSWER SCALE QUESTIONS**

Now, we would like you to answer questions on a number of scales. Please read the instructions below.

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Be sure you answer all the questions.
2. Never put more than one check mark on a single scale.
3. Make a separate judgement for each question. Work at a fairly high speed through the questionnaire.
4. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the immediate feelings about the items, that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.
5. Answer the questions in the order presented (do not go back to previous questions).

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION !**

**PLEASE TURN THE PAGE AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX K****DEBRIEFING SHEET**

Thank you very much for participating in this study about advertising. We would like to remind you to please not discuss this experiment with other students until all sessions have been held, at least for the next 72 hours. The reason is that we are interested in student consumers true feelings.

If you would like to contact us to learn the results of the study, you may call at (405) 744-2954 during the month of July.

Finally, if you have any questions at this moment, please let me know.

**THANK YOU!**

## APPENDIX L

## TASK INVOLVEMENT SCALE

WHILE PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY I...

- (1) I did not want to do a good job/did want to do a good job.
- (2) I did not care/did care about performance.
- (3) The study was unenjoyable/enjoyable.
- (4) The study was boring/interesting.
- (5) I do not recommend/do recommend participation by others.

The scale was assessed via five seven-point scale items (A = strongly disagree and G = strongly agree).

A low score indicated low involvement.

Source: adapted from Julie Ozanne, Merrie Brucks, and Dhruv Grewal, "A Study of Information Search Behavior during the Categorization of New Products," Journal of Consumer Research, 18, March 1992, 452-463.

## APPENDIX M

## HUMOR SCALE

- (1) The image in the wine cooler ad was funny.
- (2) The image in the wine cooler ad was more funny than it was serious.
- (3) Most people would find the wine cooler ad image to be funny.

The scale was be assessed via three seven-point Likert scale questions (A= strongly disagree and G = strongly agree).

Source: adapted from Calvin P. Duncan and James E. Nelson, "Effects of Humor in a Radio Advertising Experiment," Journal of Advertising, 14, 1985, 33-40.



## APPENDIX N

## MOOD SCALE

Now, we would like to ask you some shorts questions about your participation in this study. Your honest true impressions and feelings about this study will be greatly appreciated.

- (1) Currently, I am in a good mood.
- (2) As I answer these questions, I feel very cheerful.
- (3) For some reason I am very comfortable right now.
- (4) At this moment I do not feel "edgy" or irritable.

The scale was assessed via four seven-point Likert scale questions (A = strongly disagree and G = strongly agree).

A high score indicated a good mood.

Source: adapted from Robert A. Peterson and Matthew Sauber, "A Mood Scale for Survey Research," AMA Educators' Proceedings, eds., Patrick Murphy et al., Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 1983, 409-414.

## APPENDIX O

## NEED FOR COGNITION SCALE

1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.
2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
3. Thinking is my idea of fun.
4. I would rather do something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities than something that requires little thought.
5. I like situations where there is likely chance I will have to think in depth about something.
6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and long hours.
7. I like to think as hard as I have to.
8. I prefer to think about long-term projects to small, daily ones.
9. I like tasks that require thought.
10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.
11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
12. Learning new ways to think excites me very much.
13. I prefer my life to be filled by puzzles that I must solve.
14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.
15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important and does not require much thought.
16. I feel satisfaction rather than relief after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.
17. It's not enough for me that something gets the job done; I do care how or why it works.
18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.

The scale was assessed via eighteen seven-point Likert scale (A= strongly disagree and G = strongly agree).

Source: adapted from John T. Cacioppo, Richard E. Petty, and Chuan Feng Kao, "The Efficient Assessment of Need for Cognition," Journal of Personality Assessment, 1984, 48, 3, 306-307.





## APPENDIX R

## ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND SCALE

Based upon the ad for Caribbean Cooler, please circle the number that best reflects your feelings as a consumer about the Caribbean Cooler brand.

- |     |                |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |              |
|-----|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| 1.  | negative       | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | positive     |
| 2.  | unpleasant     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | pleasant     |
| 3.  | disagreeable   | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | agreeable    |
| 4.  | unsatisfactory | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | satisfactory |
| 5.  | dull           | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | exciting     |
| 6.  | unromantic     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | romantic     |
| 7.  | weak           | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | powerful     |
| 8.  | inexpensive    | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | expensive    |
| 9.  | tastes bad     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | tastes good  |
| 10. | not social     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | social       |

The scale was assessed via seven-point semantic differential scale.

## APPENDIX R

## ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND SCALE

Based upon the ad for Caribbean Cooler, please circle the number that best reflects your feelings as a consumer about the Caribbean Cooler brand.

- |     |                |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |              |
|-----|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| 1.  | negative       | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | positive     |
| 2.  | unpleasant     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | pleasant     |
| 3.  | disagreeable   | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | agreeable    |
| 4.  | unsatisfactory | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | satisfactory |
| 5.  | dull           | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | exciting     |
| 6.  | unromantic     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | romantic     |
| 7.  | weak           | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | powerful     |
| 8.  | inexpensive    | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | expensive    |
| 9.  | tastes bad     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | tastes good  |
| 10. | not social     | $\bar{1}$ | $\bar{2}$ | $\bar{3}$ | $\bar{4}$ | $\bar{5}$ | $\bar{6}$ | $\bar{7}$ | social       |

The scale was assessed via seven-point semantic differential scale.

TABLE 1  
PRETEST RESULTS FOR VIEWING TIME

N = 12

ADVERTISEMENT	Average Viewing Time in Seconds
Absurd Human	16.33"
Absurd Animal	15.33"
Non-Absurd Human	10.33"
Non-Absurd Animal	10.66"
GRAND MEAN	13.16"

When absurd mean is compared to non-absurd mean,  
 $t(10) = 3.48, p < 0.007$

Range was 7.55" to 20.05" seconds

TABLE 2  
CELL SAMPLE SIZE

		NON-ABSURD		ABSURD		
		Human	Animal	Human	Animal	
Valence	Positive	12	14	+	13	14
	Neutral	19	18	N	16	20
	Negative	14	13	-	12	13



TABLE 3  
CRONBACH ALPHAS

Scale	Cronbach Alpha	Original Scale Developer's Cronbach Alpha	Number of Scale Items
Attitude Toward the Ad	0.95	0.99	4
Attitude Toward the Product	0.94	n/a	7
Humor	0.85	n/a	3
Mood	0.86	n/a	4
Task Involvement	0.76	0.72	5
Need for Cognition	0.91	0.90	18
Absurdism	0.86	0.85	7
(*) Product Involvement	0.97	0.95	20
(*) Attitude Toward the Product	0.96	n/a	9

(\*) measures taken in prior study for the purpose of blocking for valence

TABLE 4  
CORRELATION ANALYSIS  
PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

Note: Number in parenthesis indicate the p-values for a two-sided tail

	ATTITAD	ATTITBR	NCR	POSCR	NEUCR	NEGCR	HUMOR	MOOD	TASKINV	NEEDCOG	(VALENCE) ATTITPR	PRODINV
ATTITAD	1.0000 0.0											
ATTITBR	0.88539 (0.0001)	1.0000 0.0										
NCR	-0.00848 (0.9106)	0.02965 (0.6944)	1.0000 0.0									
POSCR	0.60222 (0.0001)	0.55468 (0.0001)	0.45431 (0.0001)	1.0000 0.0								
NEUCR	-0.11744 (0.1185)	-0.10111 (0.1793)	0.22659 (0.0024)	-0.32965 (0.0001)	1.0000 0.0							
NEGCR	-0.72328 (0.0001)	-0.64278 (0.0001)	0.06539 (0.3858)	-0.56165 (0.0001)	-0.20203 (0.0068)	1.0000 0.0						
HUMOR	0.15555 (0.0381)	0.10393 (0.1674)	0.02028 (0.7882)	0.10840 (0.1498)	-0.03447 (0.6479)	-0.06880 (0.3615)	1.0000 0.0					
MOOD	0.13740 (0.0674)	0.10348 (0.1693)	0.01398 (0.8530)	0.08535 (0.2573)	-0.02134 (0.7773)	-0.12138 (0.1065)	0.07165 (0.3419)	1.0000 0.0				
TASKINV	0.13647 (0.0693)	0.11006 (0.1436)	0.00520 (0.9450)	0.02909 (0.6999)	0.01517 (0.8407)	-0.06579 (0.3829)	-0.05426 (0.4720)	0.45730 (0.0001)	1.0000 0.0			
NEEDCOG	-0.13137 (0.0805)	-0.08279 (0.2719)	-0.00733 (0.9226)	-0.03456 (0.6469)	-0.08641 (0.2514)	0.12231 (0.1039)	0.09305 (0.2167)	0.13632 (0.0696)	0.10463 (0.1646)	1.0000 0.0		
ATTITPR (VALENCE)	0.20960 (0.0050)	0.24166 (0.0012)	0.20164 (0.0070)	0.26070 (0.0004)	0.09511 (0.2066)	-0.26570 (0.0003)	-0.04497 (0.5511)	0.01075 (0.8867)	0.03642 (0.6293)	-0.07144 (0.3433)	1.0000 0.0	
PRODINV	0.14831 0.0482	0.16714 0.0257	0.14464 0.0541	0.22231 0.0029	0.06525 0.3868	-0.22661 0.0024	-0.02350 0.7555	-0.00289 0.9694	0.03678 0.6259	0.02003 0.7908	0.82930 0.0001	1.0000 0.0

TABLE 5

## CATMOD RESULTS FOR CATEGORICAL DATA

Dependent Variable: Warning Label Recall

Effect	Parameter Estimate	Chi-Square	P-Value
Valence (Val)	0.05	1.15	0.28
Organism	-0.02	0.31	0.58
Ad Type	0.08	6.41	(*) 0.01
Val * Organism	0.04	0.79	0.37
Val * Ad Type	0.04	0.59	0.44
Organism * Ad Type	-0.04	1.20	0.27
Val * Organ * Ad Type	0.05	1.03	0.31

Dependent Variable: Brand Name Recall (1)

Effect	Parameter Estimate	Chi-Square	P-Value
Valence (Val)	0.01	0.05	0.82
Ad Type	-0.08	4.79	(*) 0.03
Val * Ad Type	0.20	14.82	(*) 0.0001

Dependent Variable: Slogan Recall

Effect	Parameter Estimate	Chi-Square	P-Value
Valence (Val)	0.03	0.53	0.47
Organism	0.06	4.61	(*) 0.03
Ad Type	0.008	0.09	0.77
Val * Organism	-0.03	5.87	(*) 0.05
Val * Ad Type	-0.04	6.14	(*) 0.04
Organism * Ad Type	0.01	0.14	0.71
Val * Organ * Ad Type	0.07	6.18	(*) 0.05

(\*) indicates significant effect

(1) Analysis of brand name recall did not include the organism manipulation because one of the factorial design cells had equal response values (non-absurd, animal, negative valence). As a result, CATMOD cannot be run under this condition. To solve this problem, only valence and ad type effects were requested. For organism, on the other hand, chi-square tables revealed no significant main effects or interaction effects.

TABLE 6  
 FREQUENCY/PERCENTAGE RESULTS FOR WARNING LABEL RECALL

		Frequency/ Percentage		
		Absurd	Non- Absurd	
Warning Label Recall	Yes	17 19.3%	32 35.5%	49
	No	71 80.7%	58 64.5%	129
		88	90	178

Chi-Square = 5.88(1),  $P < 0.015$

CATMOD probability results for ad type effect was 0.01,  
 chi-square(1), = 6.41

TABLE 7

FREQUENCY/PERCENTAGE RESULTS FOR BRAND NAME RECALL

I.) VALENCE AND AD TYPE INTERACTION

		VAL = POSITIVE			VAL = NEUTRAL		
Frequency Percentage		Absurd	Non-Absurd		Absurd	Non-Absurd	
Brand Name Recall	Yes	7	13	20	21	11	32
		25.9%	50%		58.3%	29.7%	
	No	20	13	33	15	26	41
		74.1%	50%	63%	41.6%	70.3%	
		27	26	53	36	37	73
		chi-square(1), = 3.27, P < 0.07			chi-square(1), = 6.06, P < 0.01		

		VAL = NEGATIVE		
Frequency Percentage		Absurd	Non-Absurd	
Brand Name Recall	Yes	14	4	18
		56%	14.8%	
	No	11	23	34
		44%	85.2%	
		25	27	52
		chi-square(1), = 9.73, P < 0.002		

CATMOD probability results for valence and ad type interaction was 0.0001, chi-square (1), = 14.82

II.) AD TYPE MAIN EFFECT

		AD TYPE MAIN EFFECT		
Frequency Percentage		Absurd	Non-Absurd	
Brand Name Recall	Yes	42	28	70
		47.7%	31.1%	
	No	46	62	108
		52.3%	68.9%	
		88	90	178
		chi-square(1), = 5.15, P < 0.023		

CATMOD probability result for ad type main effect was 0.03, chi-square(1), = 4.79.

TABLE 8

FREQUENCY/PERCENTAGE RESULTS FOR SLOGAN RECALL

I.) FOR VALENCE AND AD TYPE INTERACTION

Slogan Recall		VAL = POSITIVE		Frequency Percentage	VAL = NEUTRAL		Frequency Percentage	VAL = NEGATIVE		Frequency Percentage	
		Absurd	Non-Absurd		Absurd	Non-Absurd		Absurd	Non-Absurd		
Yes	8	5	3	18.5%	11.5%	8	17	5	3	8	
	22	23	45								31
No		81.5%	88.5%	53		73		52		87.7%	
		27	26	$\chi^2(1) = 0.50, P\text{-value} < 0.48$		$\chi^2(1) = 3.51, P\text{-value} < 0.06$		$\chi^2(1) = 0.79 = P\text{-value} < 0.38$			

II.) FOR VALENCE AND ORGANISM INTERACTION

Slogan Recall		VAL = POSITIVE		Frequency Percentage	VAL = NEUTRAL		Frequency Percentage	VAL = NEGATIVE		Frequency Percentage	
		Human	Animal		Human	Animal		Human	Animal		
Yes	8	3	5	12%	17.9%	8	17	4	4	8	
	22	23	45								32
No		88%	82.1%	53		73		52		84.6%	
		25	28	$\chi^2(1) = 0.35, P\text{-value} < 0.55$		$\chi^2(1) = 8.15, P\text{-value} < 0.0004$		$\chi^2(1) = 0.00, P\text{-value} < 1.00$			

TABLE 8 (continued)

## III.) FOR AD TYPE AND ORGANISM INTERACTION

Frequency Percentage		ORGANISM = HUMAN			ORGANISM = ANIMAL		
		Absurd	Non-Absurd		Absurd	Non-Absurd	
Slogan Recall	Yes	4 9.8%	6 13.3%	10	11 23.4%	12 26.7%	23
	No	37 90.2%	39 86.7%	76	36 76.6%	33 73.3%	69
		41	45	86	47	45	92
		$\chi^2(1), = 0.27, P\text{-value} = 0.61$			$\chi^2(1), = 0.13, P\text{-value} = 0.72$		

## IV.) FOR ORGANISM MAIN EFFECT

Frequency Percentage		Human	Animal	
Slogan Recall	Yes	10 11.6%	23 25%	33
	No	76 88.4%	69 75%	145
		86	92	178
		$\chi^2(1), = 5.26, P\text{-value} = 0.02$		

TABLE 9

## ANOVA RESULTS FOR COGNITIVE RESPONSES

Dependent Variable: Number of Cognitive Responses

EFFECT	Type III SS	F-value	df	p-value
VALENCE	7.86	3.00	2	* 0.05
ORGANISM	4.39	3.35	1	0.07
AD TYPE	68.19	51.97	1	* 0.0001
VAL * ORGANISM	2.68	1.02	2	0.36
VAL * AD TYPE	2.26	0.86	2	0.42
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.24	0.18	1	0.67
VAL*ORGANISM*AD TYPE	1.77	0.68	2	0.51

Dependent Variable: Positive Cognitive Responses

EFFECT	Type III SS	F-value	df	p-value
VALENCE	32.27	5.24	2	* 0.006
ORGANISM	19.44	6.32	1	* 0.01
AD TYPE	35.43	11.51	1	* 0.0009
VAL * ORGANISM	0.07	0.01	2	0.99
VAL * AD TYPE	1.86	0.30	2	0.74
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	1.39	0.45	1	0.50
VAL*ORGANISM*AD TYPE	3.60	0.58	2	0.56

Dependent Variable: Neutral Cognitive Responses

EFFECT	Type III SS	F-value	df	p-value
VALENCE	21.87	8.14	2	* 0.0004
ORGANISM	3.47	2.59	1	0.11
AD TYPE	6.18	4.61	1	* 0.03
VAL * ORGANISM	6.60	2.46	2	0.09
VAL * AD TYPE	6.94	2.59	2	0.08
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.26	0.20	1	0.66
VAL*ORGANISM*AD TYPE	6.70	2.50	2	0.09



TABLE 9 (continued)

Dependent Variable: Negative Cognitive Responses

EFFECT	Type III SS	F-value	df	p-value
VALENCE	31.72	8.89	2	* 0.0002
ORGANISM	22.45	12.59	1	* 0.0005
AD TYPE	1.05	0.59	1	0.44
VAL * ORGANISM	4.49	1.26	2	0.29
VAL * AD TYPE	2.53	0.71	2	0.49
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.007	0.00	1	0.95
VAL*ORGANISM*AD TYPE	8.61	2.41	2	0.09

(\*) indicates significant effect

TABLE 10  
CELL MEANS

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES						
	VALENCE			ORGANISM		ADTYPE	
	POS	NEUT	NEG	HUMAN	ANIMAL	ABSURD	N-ABSURD
Total Number of Cognitive Responses	A 4.21	A 4.23	B 3.75	** 4.19	3.98	* 4.72	3.45
Total Number of Positive Cognitive Responses	A 2.60	A/B 1.99	B 1.44	* 1.64	2.36	* 2.48	1.55
Total Number of Negative Cognitive Responses	B 0.66	B 0.79	A 1.65	* 1.37	0.66	0.90	1.11
Total Number of Neutral Cognitive Responses	B 0.79	A 1.41	B 0.65	1.13	0.89	* 1.23	0.78
Attitude Toward Brand (1)	A 4.74	A 4.42	B 3.85	* 3.79	4.88	4.46	4.25
Attitude Toward Ad (1)	A 4.73	A/B 4.34	B 3.75	* 3.64	3.90	4.36	4.22
Total Items Recalled	A 5.45	A 5.56	A 5.40	5.56	5.41	* 5.89	5.09

NOTE: cell means comparisons are for rows

(\*) Indicates significant differences (p-value  $\leq$  0.05)

(\*\*) Indicates p-value = 0.07

(1) Scale ranges from +1 to +7

From Duncan's test, A-A indicates no significant difference; B-B no significant difference; A-B significantly different from each other (p-value < 0.05). For example, for total number of cognitive responses there is no difference between positive and neutral; but there is between positive and negative, and between neutral and negative.

TABLE 11  
 MANOVA RESULTS FOR VALENCE OF COGNITIVE RESPONSES  
 P-VALUES FOR WILKS' LAMBDA

EFFECTS	Positive, Neutral and Negative Cognitive Responses as DVs
VALENCE (VAL)	(1) 0.0001
ORGANISM	(2) 0.0007
AD TYPE	(3) 0.0001
VAL * ORGANISM	0.17
VAL * AD TYPE	0.19
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.91
VAL * ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.16

(1)  $F(6,328) = 6.03$   
 (2)  $F(3,164) = 5.95$   
 (3)  $F(3,164) = 13.90$

TABLE 12  
 MANOVA RESULTS FOR ATTITUDES  
 P-VALUES FOR WILKS' LAMBDA

EFFECTS	ATT <sub>ad</sub> & ATT <sub>br</sub> as Dependent Variables
VALENCE (VAL)	* 0.035
ORGANISM	** 0.0001
AD TYPE	0.58
VAL * ORGANISM	0.98
VAL * AD TYPE	0.66
ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.76
VAL * ORGANISM * AD TYPE	0.45

\* F(4,330) = 2.62  
 \*\* F(2,165) = 13.57

TABLE 13  
DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES

Dependent Variable	t-value (dt)	Prob.	Absurd Mean	Non-Absurd Mean
Attitude Toward the Ad	0.48 (174)	0.63	4.36	4.23
Attitude Toward the Brand	0.96 (176)	0.34	4.46	4.25

Higher numbers imply a more favorable evaluation.

TABLE 14  
REGRESSION PARAMETER ESTIMATES  
Dependent Variable: Attitude Index

Variable	Parameter Estimate	t for Ho	p-value	Variance Explained
POSCR	0.1432	2.35	0.02	20%
NEUCR	-0.2198	-2.87	0.005	0.5%
NEGCR	-0.6661	-8.73	0.0001	36%

TABLE 15  
MOOD AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE: MEANS FOR  
AD TYPE AND ORGANISM INTERACTION

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		ADTYPE	
		Absurd	Non-Absurd
ORGANISM	Human	5.37	5.60
	Animal	5.74	5.14

---

$F(11,166) = 4.53, p < 0.035$

TABLE 16  
EFFECT SIZES FOR CONTINUOUS VARIABLES (ETA)

Dependent Variable	Significant Effect	Effect Size (ETA)
MANOVA for Attitudes	Valence	0.175
	Organism	0.376
MANOVA for Cognitive Responses	Valence	0.315
	Organism	0.313
	Ad Type	0.450
Number of Cognitive Responses	Valence	0.187
	Ad Type	0.109
Positive Cognitive Responses	Valence	0.244
	Organism	0.192
	Ad Type	0.255
Neutral Cognitive Responses	Valence	0.304
	Ad Type	0.164
Negative Cognitive Responses	Valence	0.311
	Organism	0.266

$$ETA = \sqrt{\frac{F(df \text{ effect})}{F(df \text{ effect}) + df \text{ error}}}$$

Effect size (ETA) is the magnitude or degree that a particular relationship differs from zero. The effect size indicator is *eta* (Rosenthal, Robert and Ralph L. Rosnow (1984), *Essentials of Behavioral Research*, New York: NY, McGraw Hill Co.).



TABLE 17  
 SAMPLE EFFECT SIZES FOR CATEGORICAL VARIABLES (W)

Dependent Variable	Significant Effect	Sample Effect Size (w)
Warning Label Recall	(1) Ad Type	0.670
	(2) Ad Type	0.189
Brand Name Recall	Ad Type	0.164
	Ad Type * Valence	0.292
Slogan Recall	Valence * Organism * Ad type	0.186

$$w = \sqrt{\frac{\text{chi-square}}{\text{Total Sample Size}}}$$

w is the sample size effect. According to Cohen (1988) a value of w = 0.10 is a small effect, w = 0.30 is a medium effect, and w = 0.50 is a large effect size.

(1) and (2) results compared previous study from Arias-Bolzmann and Mowen (1992), with the current study. The comparison indicated that the value of the *approximate distribution of chi-square* was significant (chi-square = 7.40, p < 0.01). Therefore, the studies were heterogeneous, because the effect sizes differed significantly. See calculations below.

$$\text{Approximate distribution of Chi-square} = \sum_{j=1}^{\kappa} W_j' (h_j - \bar{h})^2$$

WHERE:

$$h = \phi_{\text{Absurd}} - \phi_{\text{Non-absurd}}$$

$$\phi = 2 \arcsin \sqrt{p}$$

p = proportion recalled under ad type (absurd/non-absurd) condition.

TABLE 17 (continued)

$$h \text{ (variance)} = \frac{\sum (\phi_i - \bar{\phi})^2}{N}$$

WHERE:

$$\phi_i = \phi_{\text{Absurd}} \text{ and } \phi_{\text{Non-absurd}}$$

$$\bar{\phi} = \text{mean}$$

$N$  = total sample

$$W' \text{ (reciprocal of } h) = \frac{1}{h}$$

$$\bar{h} \text{ (weighted mean)} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{\kappa} W'_j h_j}{\sum_{j=1}^{\kappa} W'_j}$$

Calculations were made according to Rosenthal and Rubin (1982), "Comparing Effect Sizes of Independent Studies," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 92, 500-504; and personal communication T. Bristol and G. Chakraborty.

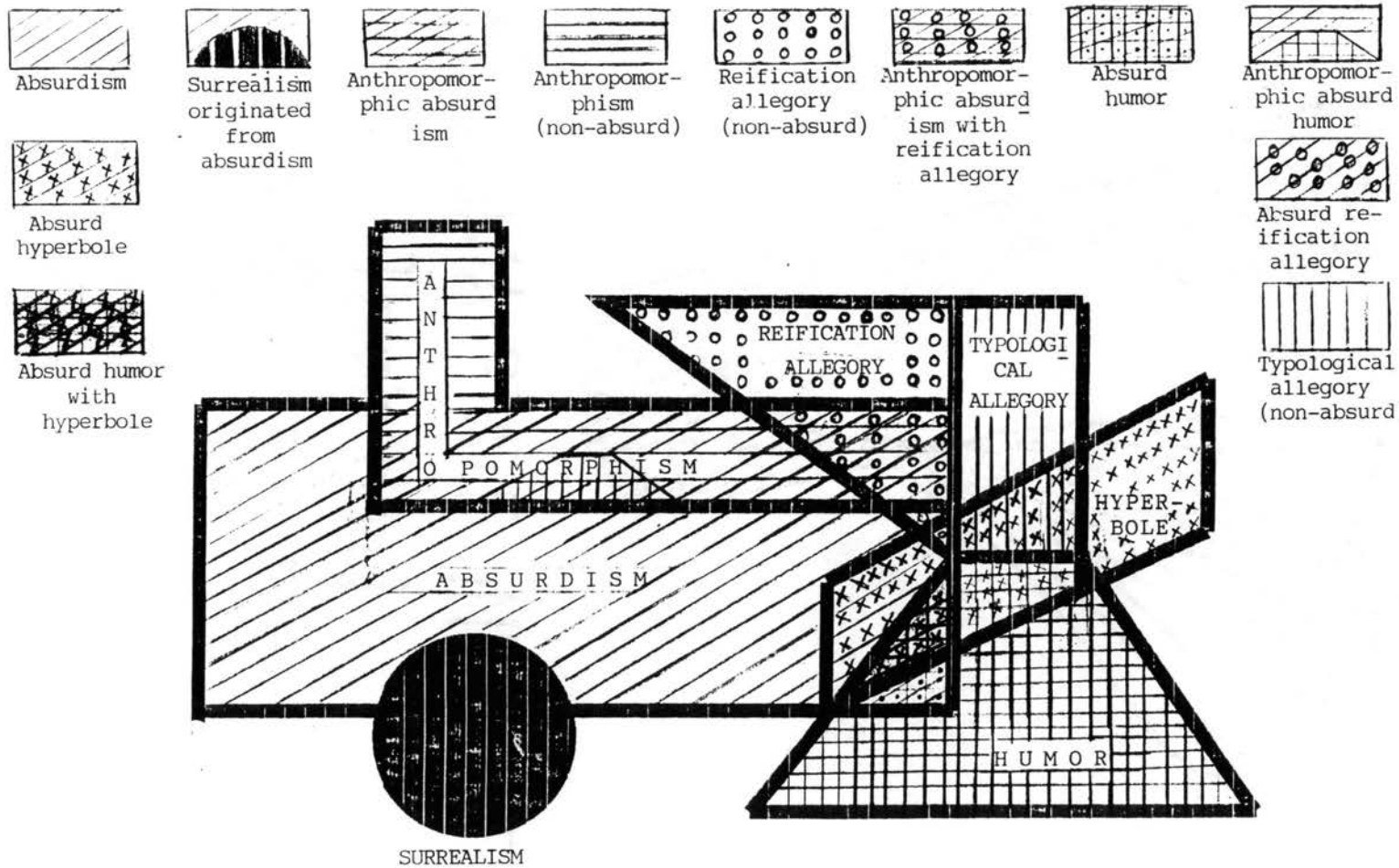


Figure 1. Types of Absurdism

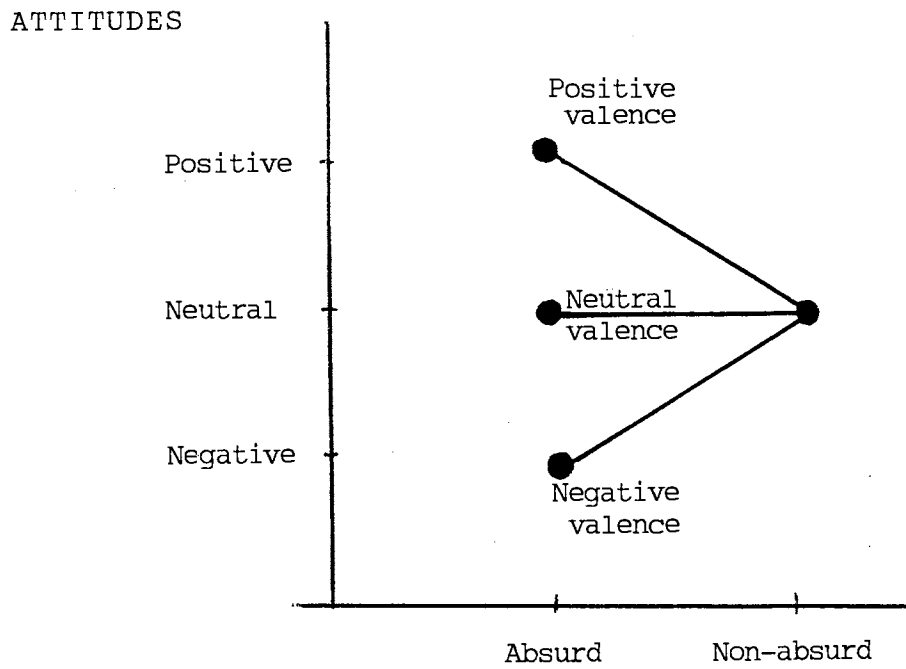


Figure 3. Hypothesized Effects for Attitudes

2  
VITA

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