



**EXPLORING EFFECT OF HUMOR USAGE AND STORE  
AMBIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND  
IMPULSE PURCHASE IN A RETAIL CONTEXT**

**BY**

**MISS THANATTHA ANUWONGPINIT**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM IN MARKETING  
(INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM)  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015  
COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY**

**EXPLORING EFFECT OF HUMOR USAGE AND STORE  
AMBIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND  
IMPULSE PURCHASE IN A RETAIL CONTEXT**

**BY**

**MISS THANATTHA ANUWONGPINIT**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF MASTER OF SCIENCE PROGRAM IN MARKETING  
(INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM)  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015  
COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY**



THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY

INDEPENDENT STUDY

BY

MISS THANATTHA ANUWONGPINIT

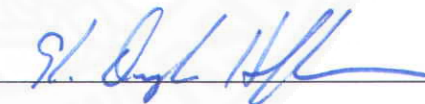
ENTITLED

EXPLORING EFFECT OF HUMOR USAGE AND STORE AMBIENCE ON  
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND IMPULSE PURCHASE IN A RETAIL  
CONTEXT

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Science Program in Marketing (International Program)

on..... 6 JUN 2016 .....

Chairman



(Professor K. Douglas Hoffman, Ph.D.)

Member and Advisor



(Professor Paul G. Patterson, Ph.D.)

Dean



(Professor Siriluck Rotchanakitumnuai, Ph.D.)

Independent Study Title	EXPLORING EFFECT OF HUMOR USAGE AND STORE AMBIENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND IMPULSE PURCHASE IN A RETAIL CONTEXT
Author	Miss Thanattha Anuwongpinit
Degree	Master of Science Program in Marketing (International Program)
Major Field/Faculty/University	Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy Thammasat University
Independent Study Advisor	Prof. Dr. Paul G. Patterson, Ph.D./M.D
Academic Years	2015

## **ABSTRACT**

The study of “exploring effect of humor usage and store ambience on customer satisfaction and impulse purchase in a retail context” has been chosen as a part of contemporary topic in applied marketing. The main objective of this research is to explore ways of using humor frontline and store ambience in service encounter of apparel business. The field experiment was conducted to examine in the two following aspects: (1) the humorous versus non-humorous service counter and (2) the impact of store ambience between business casual look versus fun and joyful ambience on customer satisfaction and impulse purchase behavior.

From the research surveys, both observation and quantitative survey, the humor frontline and store ambience help enhance customers’ in-store experience as well as overall customer satisfaction. Also they motivate impulse purchase behavior. The most impact conditioned results were from the groups of customers who interacted with humorous frontline in fun & joyful ambience, followed by customers who interacted with humorous frontline in business casual store and customer who interacted with non-humorous frontline in fun and joyful store. The less impact conditions are from the groups of customer who interacted with non-humorous frontline in business casual store respectively.

The key findings from the research results can be used to help the apparel business in order to develop the strategies for increasing customer satisfaction, creating impulse purchase behavior, and building strong relationship and create customer loyalty. It can also be useful as a guideline for effectively designing a store ambience concept to create positive environment for customers' experiences at the point of purchase.

**Keywords:** Humor, Service encounter, Store ambience, Customer satisfaction, Impulse purchase



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supportive advisor, Prof. Dr. Paul G. Patterson. Ph.D./M.D. for his valuable time, thoughtful comments and a kind encouragement throughout this research. I also would like to thank you all of my friends from MIM-28 for endorsing the report.

In addition, I would like to sincerely thank you Wrangler team who gave me a permission to conduct the field experiment at two of its retail stores and interview customers. This research could not be this successful without their support.

Last but not least, I would like to sincerely thanks to all research participants especially my family, friends and colleagues. This independent study would not be accomplished without your warmth support.

Ms.Thanattha Anuwongpinit

## TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT	(1)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(3)
TABLE OF CONTENT	(4)
LIST OF TABLES	(5)
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Research overview	1
1.2 Research Objectives	2
CHAPTER 2 CONTEMPORARY TOPIC DESCRIPTION	4
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	7
3.1 Exploratory research	8
3.2 Descriptive research	8
3.3 Identification of key research variables	8
3.4 Data collection plan	9
3.5 Data analysis plan	9
3.6 Project timeline plan	10
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	11
4.1 Key findings from secondary research	11
4.2 Key findings from observation and in-depth interview	11
4.3 Key findings from quantitative analysis	12
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
5.1 Conclusions and recommendations	16
5.2 Significance of study	17
5.3 Suggestions for future research	17
5.4 Limitations of the study	17
REFERENCES	18
APPENDICES	22
APPENDIX A	22
APPENDIX B STORE AMBIENCE	26
APPENDIX C Pearson correlation and Independent sample test	288
BIOGRAPHY	29

## LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
4.1 Correlation between pre-enter mood versus customer satisfaction and intention to buy	12
4.2 Correlation between customer's perception toward interaction with store frontline versus overall satisfaction	12
4.3 Correlation between perception towards interaction and intention to buy	13
4.4 Comparison of customers' satisfaction in 4 field experiment.	13
4.5 Comparison of intention to buy in 4 field experiments.	14
4.6 Comparison of customer satisfaction about store ambience in 4 field experiments.	14



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research overview

Humor has been recognized as an effective communication tool (e.g., Bippus *et al.*, 2012; Roloff, 1981) to connect individuals. Many companies use humor in their social medias, advertisings, or TV commercials such as Mueng Thai Life Assurance. For example, the KFC Facebook page admin has been perceived by customers as an entertaining character when he or she interacts with customers. The inquiries are given responses in a friendly manner. Another example can be a fun inflight safety demonstration from Air New Zealand. Accordingly, these show that the use of humor in service encounters could be a new competitive strategy to engage customers' positive experiences, interpersonal relationship and finally lead to purchasing, especially in the service firms. The service encounter is the first and most influential spot for social exchange between frontline and customers (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997; Winsted, 2000). With this, they play a pivotal role in creating overall impressive experiences. The use of humor will help enhance employees' communication (Graham *et al.*, 1992) at point of service. However, such humor could as well cause the problematic and inappropriate at the certain times (Martin, 2010). Therefore, the use of humor should be planned and employed carefully (Beard, 2014, p. 131). This is because only one single bad experience can negatively affect the value of customer forever.

There are many studies revealing that psychological urge has a tremendous influence on decision making when it comes to buying. Human behaviors can be predictable. Many companies invest large amount of money on researches in order to gain advantage of unconscious trigger that makes their customers spend money on their product without planning beforehand and creates repurchase as well as the brand royalty. Humor is also the key variable that increases joy and customer's satisfaction. Understanding unconscious triggers that lead to impulsive purchase would be advantageous for brands in order to plan further marketing strategies to attract customer's attention and increase the number of profit for the company.

However, only few researches have been done to evaluate how effective humor frontline can be in relevant with customer's satisfaction. Findings about humor are in particular business literature such as advertising research established humor as a tool to create awareness, persuasion (Sternthal and Craig, 1973) and it also increases customer entertainment (Perry et. Al., 1997) and stimulus of purchase intentions. (Spotts et. al., 1997)

If an organization is able to utilize humor appropriately, it is a very useful communication tool as well as a mean to improve company's value. But the use of humor requires "Service triangle" which includes customer's involvement, frontline's involvement and the company's culture. Firstly, customer's personality may affect their reaction on humorous. Secondly, Frontline may use different types of humor depending on their proficiency. And thirdly, a firm can use local humor to represent their brand.

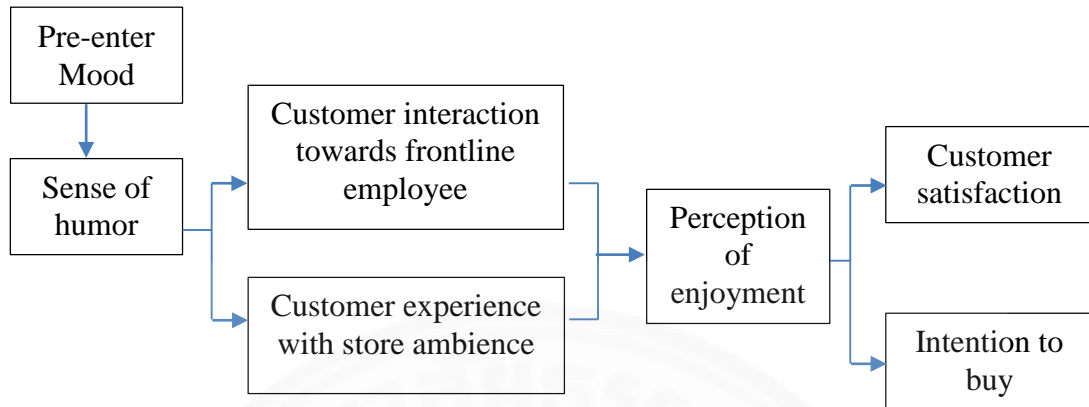
## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The main purposes of this research are mainly to explore consumer behaviors and attitudes toward humor encounter and store ambience. To find out whether humor is the mean creating promising tools to enhance the customer's experience and satisfaction in the service business. The objectives are listed as followings:

1. To assess the effectiveness of frontline employees use of humor to influence customer satisfaction and impulse purchase behavior as well as to study distinct reactions of customer's sense of humor.
2. To examine the impact of a fun and enjoyable store ambience on customer satisfaction and impulse purchase behavior.
3. To develop marketing strategies by using humor encounter and store ambience to influence impulse buying and increase customer satisfaction.

This research will bring useful information to the table which will help apparel business analyse and serve customers their real needs and satisfactions to improve industry profitability.

### 1.3 Research framework



## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEMPORARY TOPIC DESCRIPTION

#### 2.1 Review of literature

##### 2.1.1 Type of Humor

Martin et al. (2003) has classified humors into 4 types according to its characters: positive or negative, and its targets: self-centric or other-centric. The 4 types are affiliative (positive, directed at others), self-enhancing (positive, directed at self), aggressive (negative other-centric), and self-defeating (negative, self-centric):

##### 2.1.1.1 Affiliative humor

Affiliative humor often happens in daily situations such as when people share funny personal amusing or interesting story. For social relation, affiliative humor can reduce personal stress, help the process of getting to know each other and endorse group cohesiveness (Martin et al., 2003). Therefore, this type of humor will help enhancing application of service encounter as it helps building relationship especially when customer value the relational and social benefits of service interaction (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1993). Consequently, people who display affiliative humor tend to be cheerful and extraverted as well as possess emotional stability and high self-esteem.

##### 2.1.1.2 Self-enhancing humor

Self-enhancing humor refers to one of those who maintain good attitude and are able to laugh at little things. The type of humor has the beneficial effects since it prevents depression, enhances self-confident and well-being. (Martin *et al.*, 2003). Humor can be a tool to combat the stressful situation (Martin, 2010) and increase performance of service employees.

##### 2.1.1.3. Aggressive humor

On the contrary, aggressive humor may disparage either on purpose or accidentally. It can be by making it offensive, discriminatory, or insulting. Sometimes this joke occurs when the sender attempts to make an affiliative humor but turns out aggressively in recipient's perspective. (Martin et al., 2003).

#### **2.1.1.4 Self-defeating humor**

Lastly, self-defeating humor is the degrading jokes that senders make about themselves, often considered sarcasm. Mostly, people who use this type of humor exhibit low-confidence and urge for appreciation (Martin et al., 2003). Thus, self-defeating humor may be used by service employees to increase the level of emotional labor.

#### **2.1.2 Humor Research in a business context**

For interpersonal relationship, people are willing to interact with other people who share same behavioral expectations (Richerson, 2003) and similar sense of humor (Martin, 2010). Shared appreciation for humor has positive effect on co-operation and is likely to affect emotional altruism and closeness among friends (Curry and Dunbar, 2013a). Conclusively, humor elicits positive emotions (e.g. Martin, 2010) arouses laughing and liking among individuals (e.g. Treger et al., 2013).

Humor is an effective persuasion method (Sternthal and Craig, 1973) which provides customer enjoyment and motivates positive behavior. Using humor as a communication tool can unite and divide communication. It could, for instance, increase credibility between groups or might initiate social conflicts. The effect of humor also depends on the perspective and the degree of agreement of audiences and topic familiarity. Moreover, humor also increases psychological well-being, say, it makes other feel good and reduces customer's tension or anxiety. Thus, it decreases barrier of customer to purchase (Vuorela, 2005)

Since services are intangible, the customer will evaluate the quality of service by using physical evidences or surroundings, service provider knowledge or interpersonal exchange in service encounter (Bitner, 1990) which is an interpersonal exchange between employees and customers (e.g., Bettencourt and Brown, 1997) to make the customers satisfied. It can be said that successful interaction mostly depends on employees' communication style (Webster and Sundaram, 2009)

#### **2.1.3 Antecedents of humor**

Humor stems from complex biological processing in our brain and nervous system. The experience of humor will change emotional system and will trigger people to smile and laugh (Matin, 2010).

In psychological research, the origin of humor has been categorized into three basic theories: incongruity, relief, and superiority theory (Lynch, 2002).

Incongruity theory focuses on cognitive processes (Schopenhauer, 1819). Humor primarily results from reality of the ideal situation which implies that humor can occur where the situation offers reality, or where the sender and receiver possess the sense of humor (personality trait) to embrace the humor potential.

Relief theory can be applied as a release for mental power that might be used to control feelings related to illness, poverty, or sex (Freud, 1960). Humor under this perspective is an unpleasant situation filled with negative feelings.

Finally, superiority theory suggests that humor is based on the belief that interpersonal interactions exhibit daily competitions. Humorous occurrences are contests enjoyed mainly by the winners (Gruner, 2000) according to satisfaction they get from receiving what they want from interaction.

#### **2.1.4 Store Atmosphere**

Store's ambience is a crucial element that can enhance customer satisfaction. (Terblanche' and Boshoff, 2006) Also, it induces comfort and pleasant mood which help the customers in making decisions to purchase products in the store. (Sway, 2007) Image of the store also influenced customer's choices of purchase. (Stern et al., 2001). Buying environment is designed to produce specific emotion which increases the purchase possibilities. In shopping environment, many cues can be used to influence customers such as color, music and other scent. (Kotler, 1973)

Environmental cues can be either surrounding factor, design factor, or social factor. For ambience factor such as music, air quality or scent may not motivate purchase decision but can create customer satisfaction. However, the very high or low temperature can lead to avoidance behavior and if it exceeds the extreme level, it may affect the consumer behavior like an attractive fresh bread scent from a bakery. (Baker, 1987). For the design factor either aesthetic or functional, aesthetic factors are physical cues which customers see such as color, architecture, style, material etc. that impact the pleasure of customer experiences. (Aubert-Gamet, 1997) While functional factors facilitate customer's behavior in service scape such as layout and signage .Baker, 1987) Lastly, social factors are influenced by a person who is present in the customer environment which impact behavior of customers. (Baker, Levy and Grewal, 1992)

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research comprised a field experiment of customer's reactions to humor, conducted at two Wrangler stores to evaluate the impact of 1. The humorous frontline 2. The store ambience with support from the store frontline's employee. The two selected branches have similar characteristics as follow:

1. Amount of monthly sales volume
2. Average spending per bill
3. Conversion rate
4. Target segment of customer

**Study 1: The reactions to humorous frontline** which were interactive with customers' experiences in service encounter. (Blackstone, 2012)

**Study 2: Customers' experiences with fun and joyful ambience**

The first store (store A) was set in business casual mood and tone (see appendix B) while the second store (store B) was set in fun and joyful atmosphere by using fun and exciting decoration, product shelf talk, creative signage to communicate product attributes etc. (see appendix B)

The research was conducted mainly through observation and quantitative research at Wrangler Jeans stores in Bangkok. The methods were effective as they endorsed the study and provided necessary information starting from exploratory research of secondary research followed by observation and quantitative survey. The customers would be approached and asked to participate in the study immediately after the encounter with specific humorous interaction with the frontline. A questionnaire started from measuring their pre-encounter mood, sense of humor, and evaluation of the extent of service's satisfaction after they were approached with the entertaining service. .

In the study, other factors in the store were strictly controlled. No other special promotions were held in the stores, usual sets of product categories etc. The research was conducted in two studies in order to establish clearer understanding toward the

effects of humor encounter and store ambience on customers' reactions of satisfaction and the motivation of impulse purchase.

### **3.1 Exploratory research**

#### **3.1.1 Secondary Research**

Sources of information comprised with academic journal books, related research studies and articles mostly from both online and offline. These information helped provided the overview to develop questionnaire for the market survey.

#### **3.1.2 Observation**

Observation is a qualitative research method which allows researchers to study the insights of consumer behaviors and consumer decision making factors which provided richer information in order to analyze and understand the results from the quantitative survey.

### **3.2 Descriptive research**

#### **3.2.1 Quantitative Research**

Questionnaire survey was designed based upon the information from exploratory research using conveniences sampling method, recruited 215 respondents. Target respondents were Thai men and women who purchased apparel products for finding information on the effects of humor and store ambience on customer satisfaction and impulse purchase behavior. Respondents were approached and requested to participate the research. The questionnaire was used to measure their mood before entering the retail store. The taste of humor, their perception of enjoyment, the service satisfaction, and their intention to buy will also be measured.

### **3.3 Identification of key research variables**

The key variables of this study were:

- 1) Independent variables:
  - a. Humor used by frontline employees
  - b. Store ambience
- 2) Dependent variables are:
  - a. Customer satisfaction
  - b. Impulse purchase



### 3.4 Data collection plan

Data were collected from customers who visited Wrangler retail stores in Bangkok during four weeks period. At first, participants were asked whether they were interested in participating in the short questionnaire survey which would take 5 to 10 minutes to finish. Then, they received a special discount coupon for any purchase at Wrangler retail store when completed the survey. The investigator randomly asked questions to some respondents to be more insight.

#### 3.4.1 Research Sample

The respondents were categorized by convenience sampling which separated them into 4 groups;

**Table 3.4.1 Research sample**

	Number of Participants (people)	
	Store A Business Casual store	Store B Fun and joyful ambience
Experienced humor frontline (Group 1)	Group A1 : 54	Group B1 : 49
Experienced non-humor frontline (Group 2)	Group A2 : 65	Group B2 : 47

### 3.5 Data analysis plan

The observation was interpreted and analyzed to gain consumer insight into key findings. A questionnaire survey will be interpreted by SPSS.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Key findings from secondary research**

Humor is an effective communication tool to enhance customer satisfaction. It drives positive behavior, helps facilitate conversation, and decreases barrier between customer and frontline employee. Thus, many firms recognize and use it as a competitive advantage in their marketing strategy. However, the effect of humor also depends on perspective of audience and individual preference.

Moreover, store ambience has a powerful impact on inducing comfort and pleasant mood which could motivate customer satisfaction and influenced customer's choices of purchase.

#### **4.2 Key findings from observation and in-depth interview**

Observation had been conducted along with the questionnaire survey. Also, random sampling was used for an in-depth interview with some respondents which was open for discussion to gain more understanding of customer's responses to humor frontlines and store ambiances. The key findings are summarized as follow:

4.2.1 Customers who entered Store B (Fun and joyful ambience) averagely spent longer period of time shopping in the store while customer who entered store A (Business casual mood and tone) mostly went directly to the products that they planned to buy before entering the store.

4.2.2 Customers in group 1 who were given service with humor frontline were more opened for a conversation and gave the store attendants opportunity to offer the new arrival products and indicate product attributes which match the customer's needs.

4.2.3 Some respondents indicated that they like to have sense of humor added in to service or enjoy being around entertaining people but still, expect the professional service from the frontlines instead of only being humorous. Therefore, even humorous frontline might enhance customer satisfaction; this strategy is not suitable for every company. The companies themselves need to adjust their strategies according to their brand value. The wise and careful use of it can avoid disturbing or annoying some prospect customers.

### 4.3 Key findings from quantitative analysis

Total respondents of the questionnaire survey are 215 people. Key findings will be presented with significant testing by using correlation and compare means. The statistic approach used to test hypothesis is t-test, the standard 95% confident level is used for all significant testing.

Key findings are summarized as below:

**Table 4.1: correlation between pre-enter mood versus customer satisfaction and intention to buy**

Pre enter mood	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2-tailed)	Strenght of relation
Overall Satisfaction	-.023	.733	-
Intention to buy	.085	.212	-

Table 4.1 shows no correlation between pre-enter mood versus customer satisfaction and intention to buy. So customer's mood before enter the store has no effect with customer's experience in store.

**Table 4.2: Correlation between customer's perception toward interaction with store frontline versus overall satisfaction**

Perception towards interaction	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2-tailed)	Strenght of relation
Friendly frontline	.688**	.000	high
Funny frontline	.224**	.001	low
Amusing frontline	.440**	.000	medium
Professional frontline	.645**	.000	high
Polite frontline	.688**	.000	high

Table 4.2 shows that there are strong correlations between overall satisfaction and customer's perception of friendly, professional and polite (.688, .645, .688) while correlation of perception towards amusing is medium and funny is low respectively.

**Table 4.3: Correlation between perception towards interaction and intention to buy**

Perception towards interaction	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2-tailed)	Strenght of relation
Friendly frontline	.227**	.001	low
Funny frontline	.175**	.010	low
Amusing frontline	.264**	.000	low
Professional frontline	.055	.426	-
Polite frontline	.156*	.022	low

Table 4.3 shows that there are small, but statistically significant, correlations between intention to buy and perception of friendly, funny, amusing and polite that customer perceived with store frontline (.227, .175, .264, .156) respectively while there is no correlation between perception of professional frontline and intention to buy.

#### **Study 1: Customers' satisfaction with humor frontline**

**Table 4.4: Comparison of customers' satisfaction in 4 field experiment.**

	Group A1 business casual store with humor frontline		Group B1 fun joyful store with humor frontline		Group A2 business casual store with non-humor frontline		Group B2 fun & joyful store with non-humor frontline	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
I enjoyed interacting with the person who served me.	3.52	.72	3.78	.62	3.03	.95	3.17	.94
creates a feeling of "warmth" in our relationship.	3.59	.69	3.76	.80	2.95	.99	3.06	.99
He/she relates well to me	3.85	.71	3.96	.68	3.45	.97	3.72	1.02
Harmonious relationship	3.70	.74	3.67	.63	3.20	.92	3.26	.94
Good sense of humour	3.20	.45	3.20	.50	1.98	.70	1.96	.75
Comfortable interacting with this person	3.50	.72	3.61	.64	2.92	.91	3.13	.99
Overall satisfaction with store frontline	3.78	.74	3.94	.92	3.35	1.01	3.38	.90

Table 4.4 shows that comparing between 4 experiments, mean of customer satisfaction from group B1 (fun & joyful store with humor frontline) is highest in every dimensions such as customer enjoy interacting with frontline most and also feel warm and comfortable with the employee who served them. Next group are customers from group A1 (business casual with humor frontline), then customer from group B2 (fun & joyful

store with non-humor frontline) and customer from group A2 (business casual store with non-humor frontline respectively).

**Table 4.5: Comparison of intention to buy in 4 field experiments.**

	Group A1 business casual store with humor frontline		Group B1 fun joyful store with humor frontline		Group A2 business casual store with non-humor frontline		Group B2 fun & joyful store with non-humor frontline	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intention to buy / Impulse purchase behavior	2.22	.60	2.20	.68	2.11	.56	2.17	.56

Table 4.5 shows that means of intention to buy of 4 customer groups in field experiment are similar between groups.

## Study 2: Customers' experience with fun and joyful ambience

**Table 4.6: Comparison of customer satisfaction about store ambience in 4 field experiments.**

	Group A1 business casual store with humor frontline		Group B1 fun joyful store with humor frontline		Group A2 business casual store with non-humor frontline		Group B2 fun & joyful store with non-humor frontline	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
I enjoy shopping in the store.	3.02	.88	4.00	.41	2.83	.72	4.02	.49
I spent more time as I planned browsing in this store.	2.63	.81	3.88	.63	2.65	.86	3.89	.37
I planned to repeat shopping in this store more frequency	2.69	.67	3.51	.58	2.51	.66	3.51	.66
Store ambience encourage me to looking around and exploring the environment	2.80	.96	4.29	.46	2.98	1.02	4.04	.36
Store ambience made me feel friendly and not afraid to talk to a stranger	2.63	.81	3.84	.62	2.72	.82	3.74	.61
I ended up spending more money than I originally set up to spend	2.50	.75	3.61	.67	2.31	.73	3.49	.66
Overall experienced satisfaction	3.80	.68	3.90	.74	3.38	.84	3.55	.88

Table 4.6 shows that customer satisfaction of customer who enter fun & joyful store is higher than those who enter business casual store. However customer who was served by humor frontline and non-humor are similar in some aspects such as enjoying shopping in store, spending more time as planned and planning to repeat shopping more frequently. Moreover fun and joyful store encourages customer to look around, explore the environment and end up spending more money than originally set up to spend almost twice of business casual store.

For overall satisfaction of customer experience, customer satisfaction from group B1 (fun & joyful store with humor frontline) is still the highest, then the following groups are customers from group A1 (business casual with humor frontline), customer from group B2 (fun & joyful store with non-humor frontline) and lastly customer from group A2 (business casual store with non-humor frontline respectively).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusions and recommendations**

According to the field experiment, the store manipulated by humor frontline in fun & joyful store has the highest rate of customer satisfaction. The following groups are store also manipulated by humor frontline in business casual store, store that is manipulated by non-humor frontline in fun & joyful store ambience and lastly in business casual store manipulated by non-humor frontline respectively.

From the research analysis, pre-enter mood of customer has no effect to customer experience in the store. But the influence of humor frontline and store ambience has been recognized by the survey. The result suggested that marketers should employ natural humor frontline because the effectiveness of humor usage in service encounter should enhance customers' satisfaction because customers evaluate their experiences during the process of receiving a service and it has a significant impact on repurchase intention (Patterson et. Al., 1996) and customer retention. (Patterson, 2004) Moreover, humor is an effective communication tool to connect frontline employees with customers and it could be a competitive strategy to engage customer's experience.

Besides, store ambience is an amazing arousal that cans impulse intention to buy and motivate customer to spend more time in the store than they have planned. Even marketers of every brands have store image to consider, fun and enjoy ambience is also an effective tool to increase customer's satisfaction. So marketers should work closely with visual merchandising team to ensure that brand is able to create the right layout, lighting, color, music and etc. for enhancing the ultimate in-store experience.

Service organizations may apply this knowledge to build on strong relationships between frontline employee and customer. Beside professional and service-minded which are minimal requirements, employee should be able to perform in service firm and sense of humor might also be an advantage.

For further research, companies should create healthy work environment such as creating a fun and creative ambience in their workspace and encouraging amusing conversation to shape positive motivation and to reduce stress in workplace which



might cause the low productivity or turnover because employees are company best's assets. (Stambor, 2006).

### **5.2 Significance of study**

The results of the study will help the apparel business develop the strategies to increase customer satisfaction, build strong relationship, and create customer loyalty. Also, it is useful to use them as a guideline to effectively design the store concept to create positive mood to customers' experiences at the point of purchase. Keep update innovative communications in the store such as launch interactive screen, keep changing new window display, set up new collection area to introduce new product of the month. Update new trend and changing clothes at mannequins. So every time that customer come to department store, the newness of the store will attract them to buy, moreover it will help to build customer's engagement, increase rate of return, average per bill, and finally turn customer into royalty one.

### **5.3 Suggestions for future research**

This research has the study duration of only two months to collect data from two Wrangler branches in Bangkok. Therefore, the brief amount of time and limited field of business are shown to be inadequate to represent the reaction of the gross population. Further research should be conducted longer with more business diversity to evaluate the reaction from variety of different business categories beside apparel.

### **5.4 Limitations of the study**

- The location of study takes place only in Bangkok so the research finding cannot represent entire population in Thailand.
- Due to the limited time and budget, there were only 215 participants completed the questionnaire which might not be able to represent the entire population.
- The two locations of the field study were selected by the similar target segment and sales volume. However, there are still some gaps between two locations that might affect the study.

## REFERENCES

- Aubert-Gamet, V. (1997), "Twisting servicescapes: Diversion of the physical environment in a re-appropriation process", *Journal of Service Management*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp.26-41
- Baker, J. (1987), The role of the environment in marketing services: the consumer perspective In J. Czepiel, C. A. Congram, & J. Shanahan, eds. *The Services Challenge: Integrating for Competitive Advantage*. Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 79-84.
- Baker, J., Levy, M. & Grewal, D. (1992), "An experimental approach to making retail store environmental decisions", *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 68, no. 4, pp.445-460
- Beard, A. (2014), "Leading with humor", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 92 No. 5, pp. 130-131.
- Bettencourt, L. A. and Brown, S. W. (1997), "Contact employees: Relationships among workplace fairness, job satisfaction and prosocial service behaviors", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 73 No. 1, pp. 39-61.
- Bippus, A. M., Dunbar, N. E. and Liu, S.-J. (2012), "Humorous responses to interpersonal complaints: Effects of humor style and nonverbal expression", *The Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 146 No. 4, pp. 437-453.
- Bitner, M. J. (1990), "Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses", *The Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54 No. 2, pp. 69-82.
- Blackstone, A. (2012), *Principles of sociological inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative methods* Available online).

- Curry, O. and Dunbar, R. I. (2013a), "Do birds of a feather flock together?", *Human Nature*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 336-347.
- Development of the humor styles questionnaire", *Journal of Research in Personality*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 48-75.
- Freud, S. (1960), *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*, trans, James Strachey, W. W. Norton, New York.
- Graham, E. E., Papa, M. J. and Brooks, G. P. (1992), "Functions of humor in conversation: Conceptualization and measurement", *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)*, Vol. 56 No. 2, pp. 161-183.
- Iacobucci, D. and Ostrom, A. (1993), "Gender differences in the impact of core and relational aspects of services on the evaluation of service encounters", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 257-286.
- Kotler, P. (1973), "Atmospherics as a marketing tool", *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp.48-64
- Lynch, O. H. (2002), "Humorous communication: Finding a place for humor in communication research", *Communication Theory*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 423-445.
- Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J. and Weir, K. (2003), "Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being:
- Martin, R. A. (2010), *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach*, Academic Press.

Patterson, P. G. (2004), "A contingency model of behavioural intentions in a services context", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 38 No. 9/10, pp. 1304-1315.

Patterson, P. G., Johnson, L. W. and Spreng, R. A. (1996), "Modeling the determinants of customer satisfaction for business-to-business professional services", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 4-17.

Perry, S. D., Jenzowsky, S. A., Hester, J. B., King, C. M. and Yi, H. (1997), "The influence of commercial humor on program enjoyment and evaluation", *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 74 No. 2, pp. 388-399.

Richerson, P. (2003), "Shared norms and the evolution of ethnic markers", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 122-130.

Schopenhauer, A. (1819), *Die welt als wille und vorstellung, ed, Zweiter Band*, Leipzig.

Scott, C., Klein, D. M. and Bryant, J. (1990), "Consumer response to humor in advertising: A series of field studies using behavioral observation", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 498-501.

Spotts, H. E., Weinberger, M. G. and Parsons, A. L. (1997), "Assessing the use and impact of humor on advertising effectiveness: A contingency approach", *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 17-32.

Stambor, Z. (2006), "Employees: A company's best asset", *Monitor on Psychology*, Vol. 37 No. 3, p. 28.

Sternthal, B. and Craig, C. S. (1973), "Humor in advertising", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 12-18.

- Stern, B., Zinkhan, G. M., & Jaju, A. (2001). Marketing images: construct definition, measurement issues and theory development. *Marketing Theory*, 2(1), 201–224. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/147059310100100203>
- Sway, R. (2007). From the Editor: The sweet smell. *Display&Design Ideas*, 19(2), 1–2.
- Terblanché, N. S., & Boshoff, C. (2006). A generic instrument to measure customer satisfaction with the controllable elements in-store shopping experience. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 3(3), 1–15.
- Treger, S., Sprecher, S. and Erber, R. (2013), "Laughing and liking: Exploring the interpersonal effects of humor use in initial social interactions", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 43 No. 6, pp. 532-543.
- Vuorela, T. (2005), "Laughing matters: A case study of humor in multicultural business negotiations", *Negotiation Journal*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 105-130.
- Webster, C. and Sundaram, D. (2009), "Effect of service provider's communication style on customer satisfaction in professional services setting: The moderating role of criticality and service nature", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 103-113.

## APPENDICES






### APPENDIX A

#### Questionnaire: A Study of customer response to humor

The purpose of this survey is to examine consumers' service encounter experiences when interacting with a service employee in a humorous manner, and in fun and humorous retail store to see how this affects consumer enjoyment and satisfaction with the service encounter.

Section 1: Your experiences with the service employee

1. How would you rate your mood today before you walked into the store? Please **circle** one number.

				
1	2	3	4	5

2. Please read through each of the statement below, and rate how much you agree or disagree as it describes you?

Please indicate your opinion using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Write one number for each statement below)

I like people who tell jokes.	↓
I can say things in such a way as to make people laugh.	
I like a good joke.	
Humour helps me cope.	
People who tell jokes are pleasing.	
Other people tell me that I say funny things.	

I appreciate those who generate humour.	
---	--

**3. My interaction with the store frontline person today was.....**

(Please circle one number for each statement below.)

Not friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Friendly
--------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------

Not funny	1	2	3	4	5	Funny
-----------	---	---	---	---	---	-------

Not amusing	1	2	3	4	5	Amusing
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---------

Unprofessional	1	2	3	4	5	Very professional
----------------	---	---	---	---	---	-------------------

Somewhat rude	1	2	3	4	5	Courteous
---------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------

**4. Now, please think about the employee who just served you. How far do you agree or disagree with each statement?**

Please indicate your opinion using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Write one number for each statement below)

This employee laughs or jokes around a lot with people.	
This employee usually uses humorous remarks to cheer himself/herself up.	
He/she enjoys making people laugh.	
I found this employee funny/amusing.	

5. **And what do you think about the store atmosphere. How far do you agree or disagree with each statement?**

Please indicate your opinion using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Write one number for each statement below)

I enjoy shopping in the store.	↓
I spent more time as I planned browsing in this store.	
I planned to repeat shopping in this store more frequency	
Store ambience encourage me to looking around and exploring the environment	
Store ambience made me feel friendly and not afraid to talk to a stranger	
I ended up spending more money than I originally set up to spend	

6. **Based on today's experience at the store, how satisfied were you with the interaction with the employee you death with?**

(Please circle one number.)

Somewhat satisfied                      1      2      3      4      5                      Delighted

7. **Please think about today's experience at the store.**

Please indicate your opinion using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

(Write one number for each statement below)



I enjoyed interacting with the person who served me.	↓
He/she creates a feeling of “warmth” in our relationship.	
He/she relates well to me.	
I had a harmonious relationship with him/her.	
He/she has a good sense of humour.	
I was comfortable interacting with this person.	

- 8. Now think about your overall experience at the store today, how satisfied are you with today shopping experience?**

(Please circle one number.)

Somewhat satisfied                      1      2      3      4      5                      Delighted

Section 2: Personal background

- 9.** What is your gender?

Male             Female

- 10.** What is your age?

Below 20  21-35  36-50  51-64  65 and above

- 11.** How often you visit the store?

First time       Once a month  Once in two mont  Rarely visit

- 12.** Before you enter the shop, you planned to buy

---

Product that you actually ended up purchase today

---

## APPENDIX B STORE AMBIENCE

Store A : Business casual mood & tone store



**Store B : Fun & Joyful store ambiance**



## APPENDIX C

### Pearson correlation and Independent sample test

#### Group Statistics

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Friendly - Not Friendly	FunnyPC	103	4.0971	.82265	.08106
	NormalPC	112	3.5982	1.02632	.09698
Funny - not funny	FunnyPC	103	2.7864	.93568	.09220
	NormalPC	112	2.0000	.96796	.09146
Amusing - Not amusing	FunnyPC	103	3.0291	.87958	.08667
	NormalPC	112	2.4911	.83823	.07920
Professional - Not professional	FunnyPC	103	3.9223	.80060	.07889
	NormalPC	112	3.6964	.95709	.09044
polite - not polite	FunnyPC	103	4.1553	.83733	.08250
	NormalPC	112	3.9464	.97574	.09220

**BIOGRAPHY**

Name	Miss Thanattha Anuwongpinit
Date of Birth	June 27, 1986
Educational Attainment	Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Psychology, Thammasat University

