

Doublespeak in Five Brand Phone Advertisement as Smart Communication Technology

Dimas Alief Akbar Jatmiko^{1*}, Clara Herlina Karjo¹

¹English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. Various forms of language used in phone advertisements are characterized as Smart Communication Technology. This paper investigated the variety of doublespeak as innovative communication technology in smartphone advertisement. Advertisements will usually be made as attractive as possible to attract consumers' attention. As a result, many ads offer beauty through images and words that can mislead consumers. One way to divert consumers from the real meaning is by using doublespeak. The goals of this research are first to identify what words contain doublespeak in phone advertisements from 2021, and second to identify the meaning and the functions of doublespeak in advertisements. 20 smart phone advertisements from 3 well-known brands were used as the data for this research. The analysis was done qualitatively using William Lutz's theory of doublespeak which consist of weasel word, the rule of parity, unfinished word, and up to claim. The results show that the use of doublespeak is commonly appeared in technology products advertisement. It implied that doublespeak is innovative communication technology used only for the benefit of entrepreneurs so that they can successfully sell their products and survive in world marketing. By reading this research, consumers are expected not to be misled by smartphone advertisements that may use doublespeak.

1. Introduction

Smart communication technology is a digital sign, mobile phones, interactive wayfinding station, and self-service to help keep visitors informed in real-time of relevant information. Moreover, innovative technology means "Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology". This technology provides awareness to objects by using advanced technologies like the internet of things, artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data. According to [1] Information and Communication Technology in an educational point of view supports teaching, learning and a range of activities in education in various way.

In this pandemic, smartphones are more useful devices that connect to other people such as family, friends, co-workers and others. The smartphone is a portable device used for the internet, music, video, cameras, and gaming, but the main functions of a smartphone are voice calls and text messaging. Many smartphone companies provide many features today, so everyone wants to buy their smartphone product. However, the main function of smartphones is to engage effective communication between users. According to [2] effective communication is characterized by the lack of understanding, can cause

pleasure, influence attitudes, improve good social relationships, and ultimately create action.

Promoting smartphones can be done through advertisement, as advertisements have become an important media for people's life in this era. An advertisement is a message that promotes a product or gives information to the public. It is used to give information about a product being sold. Advertisement is the promotion of a product, brand or service to a viewership to attract interest, engagement and sales. Moreover, advertisements come in many forms, from websites, television, and any digital platform. In this era of pandemic, many companies race to make good advertisements, especially smartphone companies. So, everyone who sees the advertisement intends to buy their product. According to [3], advertising is kind of media used to inform people, it is usually intended inform people to do something or buy certain products.

Advertisements usually use doublespeak, which is a language that can be misleading as if it is true, that in reality it is not necessarily true [4]. This paper researches the type of Doublespeak in Smartphone advertisements. To be more precise, the reason for an advertisement's effectiveness in persuading people lies in the wordplay within the advertisement. Instead of promoting its product by using the simple product description and direct

* Corresponding author: dimas.jatmiko@binus.ac.id

persuasion, an advertiser employs the use of a technique called doublespeak. Doublespeak can be divided into four categories, i.e., Weasel word, Up to Claim, Parity Claim, and Unfinished words, that will make the advertisement more convincing.

An advertisement's effectiveness in persuading people lies in the wordplay within the advertisement. Doublespeak is so commonly used, that even in one advertisement alone, we can find its multiple uses of various categories of doublespeak. According to Lutz, doublespeak happens when the word is used to mislead the people who read them. In other words, when using doublespeak, one is making a misleading claim about something [4].

In advertising, doublespeak can be utilized to make something out of nothing, which is the primary job of an advertisement. In other words, doublespeak in advertising has one primary job: putting the product in the best possible light so that customers will be attracted to buy it. Furthermore, despite having the intention of misleading, in the advertising world, doublespeak will be regarded as a "creative license" [4].

It was shown by the data gathered from the questionnaire and the interview that doublespeak is mostly used when the participants are trying to escape a hard situation without the need to face the negative aftermath or trying to convey a heavy and serious message without hurting the receiving end's feeling by using euphemism. Some even used jargon to avoid conflict with the addressee, knowing that they do not understand the actual context of the message. The participants implemented and used doublespeak without any prior knowledge of its existence, and it helped them in a lot of different situations by Tanzarez and Karjo [5].

Doublespeak poses a threat to the United States because it creates a buffer between what organizations say and what people hear. Suppose you are entering into a credit card contract or buying a home, and you understand that your obligation is not based on reality. In that case, that is problematic, for the advertisement can do that to what the advertiser made and what people see or hear is different such as the phone can fast charge only 30 minutes, but in reality, it is not. Because of the battery age, its usefulness can be reduced, so it can be unsuitable for the buyers.

Therefore, in this paper, the writers try to delve deeper into the problem of doublespeak in product advertisements, especially smart-phone products as these are the most widely used gadgets. It is expected that this paper will shed light on how to identify doublespeak in advertising and how to avoid being misled by such advertisements. Thus, besides adding to the current literature on doublespeak, this paper also contributes in creating smarter consumers.

1.1. Objectives

Identifying the use of Doublespeak in smartphone advertisements is very important and beneficial to be understood. In order to understand the use of Doublespeak, this paper will answer these research question: first, what words contain doublespeak in phone

advertisements? And second what types of doublespeak are used in the phone advertisements?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Doublespeak in advertisement

Lutz [4] distinguishes between four kinds of doublespeak: The rule of parity, Weasel word, up to claim, and unfinished word. Lutz stated that doublespeak is a language that can be misleading, as if it is true but in reality, it is not necessarily true.

The rule of Parity: is used by the advertiser to make the consumers believe that his product is superior to others while in fact it is just the same as the others. So, for example there are 3 phone products, the brochure said that 3 of them have wide angle cameras. This is the rule of parity because it indicates the feature that is not available in other products and that it is one of a kind. In fact, this is not true, because other products also have this feature, just like theirs so it is just same as the others, there's no special with wide angel camera.

Weasel word: gives a brief overlook about how advertisers present their products to the public. What many advertisers like to do is using many words along with their product to make it into something that is not true at all. The use of Weasel Words is a powerful tool to draw the attention of the buyer. When the advertisers use the words, such as, "New and Improved," or "Acts fast," it would cause you to buy it without actually knowing what "New and Improved," means, or if it actually, "Acts Fast." This is a huge problem today because the advertisers are using little details to completely manipulate someone into buying their product. There are many examples of how a company can use "Weasel Words," to completely trick someone into buying something. The use of "Weasel Words," is an effective way to buy their product. Example: Tina saw laptop advertisement in brochure said it has "extreme feature" but we don't know what it means, and we would to buy it because the words "extreme" is categorized as a weasel word because, in the advertisement, it creates an image that a product seems to be miraculous, but in reality, it is not. Extreme means or is interpreted as an activity that can trigger adrenaline or, in other words, an activity classified as dangerous, strange, and beyond people's expectations.

Unfinished word: An unfinished word is basically an incomplete comparison. Mainly, it will be a comparison between the condition before using the product and the condition after using the product. The condition before using the product is normally the missing part of the incomplete comparison. The advertisement readers are to complete the incomplete information and determine the condition after using the product is. The consumers will be misled if they do not realize that the comparison in an advertisement is incomplete. They will automatically complete the incomplete part. For example, the word small laptop in the advertisement is "more power" this word is unfinished word because the suitable need to be proven in real life and not only in phrase or word.

Up to claim: The use of up to claim will mislead the consumers if they think the amount that is stated in the advertisement will be counted as much as it is stated. The advertisement may contain an up to claim, especially when there is the word up to then followed by numbers. This type is usually used to attract the consumers' attention. Example, the word "laptop battery can last up to 100 hours" it's up to claim because the product has Up to Claim that the battery can last for 100 hours. Otherwise, the product will give the consumer result in an ideal situation, but the problem is that the consumer will never be in an ideal situation. So, it cannot be proven that the battery can last for 100 hours. Either the laptop is used for playing games for 24 hours or using the laptop for editing and work.

2.2. Types of advertisement

According to [6], type of advertisement in the mass media is classified into two parts, they are:

Commercial Advertisement: means any advertisement which has, as its primary purpose, the promotion of the sale of goods or services by a commercial business or enterprise to the public generally or any significant part. so advertisement recorded on film, video tape, or a digital delivered to attracted consumers or influence consumers feeling toward particular product. For example, Nike paid Neymar to make ads on television about the new shoes, so Neymar wears and play football with new shoes from Nike, so everyone who sees it want to buy the product just from television advertising.

Public Services Advertisement is a message in the public interest disseminated by the media without charge to raise public awareness and change behavior, example in 2019 the Federal Emergency Management Agency partnered with Sony pictures and the Ad council promote FEMA's ready Campaign. The result was a clever zombie themed emergency preparedness ad referencing the movie, "zombieland: double tap".

Meanwhile, according to [7], advertising can be divided into three main categories: (1) Consumer advertising, which is the promotion of some product, (2) trade advertising, in which a sales pitch is made to dealers and professional through appropriate trade publications and media. Moreover, (3) political and social advertising, which special interest groups and politicians use to advertise their platform.

Whatever the kind is, advertising is identifiable and persuasive communication that is presented via the mass media and designed to develop product demand and to create a favorable image for a company [8]. So, the main objective of advertising is to induce immediate action, to create liking and preference for a product or organization, and to create awareness about a product or service [9].

To induce action in the part of the consumers, advertisement should achieve effective communication. Tubbs & Moss in Vhardani [10] mention that effective communication required the communicator to convey what is meant in which messages are delivered and intended by the sender of source. The communicator in this case, is in form of good advertisement. Moreover,

effective communication has three elements namely, speed, accuracy, and conciseness. These means (1) The message is received and understood by the sender, (2) The message is approved by the recipient and followed up with the action desired by the sender, (3) There are no obstacles to doing what should be done to follow up on the message sent, as stated by [11].

3. Methods

The researcher used the qualitative method for this paper. Qualitative research provides natural language, utilizes small samples, and is frequently focused on specific individuals, events, and contexts, allowing for an idiographic form of analysis [12]. The data for this study were taken from words or phrases on smartphone advertisements from 5 brands. There are Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo, Oppo, and Asus.

4. Data Collection

In order to fulfil the data collection procedure, the researcher needs to do it correctly. First, the researcher found five smartphone brands in 2021, which are Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo, Oppo, and Asus. From each brand, the researcher took 4 magazine advertisements to be used as the data source. Second, the researcher identified and categorized the words/phrases for each brand in the advertisements. Third, the researcher identified the use of doublespeak in each brand, following the theory by William Lutz [4] to fulfil the research purposes. Finally, an analysis of the comments is done by identifying the process of these Doublespeak theory choices, as detailed by William Lutz [4].

5. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are divided into two parts, following the research question. Discussion for each part follows suit as the data is presented. There are five phone advertisements, each of them has doublespeak, and each brand minimum has four brands: Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo, Oppo, and Asus. These ads talk about the phone brand and try to sell it to people, and each brand has its doublespeak type, such as weasel words, the rule of parity, Unfinished words, and up to claim.

5.1. Doublespeak on the Phone Advertisement Word/Phrase.

To identify doublespeak in the data, it is crucial to identify the data as a complete text. In the phone advertisement, various words/phrases can have particular meanings. This section shows the continuous process of the doublespeak choices of 20 phone advertisements from the 2021 period. The choices of doublespeak are categorized into four groups. They are as explained below:

1. Weasel word
2. The rule of parity

3. Unfinished word
4. Up to claim

The example of the type of doublespeak can be seen from the figure:

1. Weasel word



Fig.1. Vivo X60 Pro 5G

The word *Extreme* is categorized as a weasel word because, in the advertisement, it creates an image that a product seems to be miraculous, but in reality, it is not. So, the phrase “Extreme Night Vision” is a hyperbolic word because *Extreme* means or is interpreted as an activity that can trigger adrenaline or, in other words, an activity classified as dangerous, strange, and beyond people’s expectations. Moreover, the word *Extreme* is related to “Night Vision”, so everyone who reads the magazine can easily understand that it has “Night vision”.

2. The rule of parity



Fig.2. Galaxy A12



Fig.3. Poco M3 Pro 5G

The advertiser uses the rule of parity to make the consumers believe that his product is superior to others while it is just the same as the others. So, from Figure two

and figure 3, the word *Fast Charging* is The Rule of Parity. Because in the data research, most of the product has *Fast charging*. So that is why in 2021 brochure it has so much fast charging. They believe their product is superior to the others, but in fact it is similar to the others.

3. Unfinished word



Fig. 4. Galaxy M52 5G

The unfinished word is to let the consumers think better result which is right according to them. The product does not say anything, nor is it better than other products. The word “megang banget” or “Very handy” is an Unfinished word because the suitable need to be proven in real life and not only in phrase or word. It needs to befit in hand, not be too big or too small, readers need to think of better result which is right according to Magazine. Moreover, the product does not say anything about what makes it ‘megang banget’, nor about whether it is better than other products.

4. Up to claim



Fig.5. Poco M3 Pro 5G

Up to claim. Illustrate an ideal situation, and the product gives the idea result in an ideal situation. However, the problem is that we will never be in an ideal situation. The word 2+ day battery is an Up to Claim because the product has Up to Claim that the battery can last for two days. Otherwise, the product will give the consumer result in an ideal situation, but the problem is that the consumer will never be in an ideal situation. So it cannot be proof that the battery can last for two days. Either the phone is used for playing games 24 Hours or using the phone for entertainment.

5.2. Impact of doublespeak in smart communication advertisement

Table 1. Result type of Doublespeak

Type of Doublespeak	Frequency	Percentage
The rule of parity	48	46.15%
Weasel word	35	33.65%
Unfinished word	17	16.35%
Up to claim	4	3.85%
All TOTAL	104	

As we can see from the table above, the most frequently used doublespeak is the rule of parity. The rule of parity type in the advertisements indicates the advertiser claims the smartphone product is superior to other products. This rule suggests that the stated feature, such as wide angled camera, is not available in other similar products, and that their products are the only ones which have it. The rule of parity does not necessarily suggest that one product is better than the other. In fact, all products which use this rule are equal. The second mostly used type of doublespeak is weasel words. This involves the use of inflated, hyperbolic words or phrases to attract readers' attention, so that they will finally buy the product. The use of these two types of doublespeak in most magazine' advertisements indicates that these types of doublespeak are quite effective in attracting customers' attention. However, since the claims used by the advertisers are not necessarily true, potential customers should be more careful and prudent in reading the advertisements before deciding to buy the products.

6. Conclusion

So, this research concludes that every advertisement used as data contains various kinds of doublespeak. We could find the unfinished word, weasel words, up to claim, can claim, puffing, and jargon. Furthermore, among these kinds of doublespeak, the rule of parity and weasel words is the most frequent. Every single advertisement uses various kinds of this doublespeak. The examples are the word "Fast charging" this the rule of parity is found in every product in the advertisement because every single brand has "Fast charging", so we can conclude that every product that they have is not particularly brand new because another product has "Fast charging". And the example of an ultra-wide, intelligent, exclusive, super screen, and others. This Weasel word is found in every brand advertisement brochure. So other brands used this kind of thing to invite the consumer to buy the product because it is new and different from others, although this gives the illusion that the product has a new feature and others do not.

Unfortunately, these supposedly new features are not unique because the features in question are widespread being shrouded in the tagline fast charging. Take the word from Figure 2 and 3. They have the same feature. This word makes the product look amazing by claiming the product has fast charging technology. Because in 2021, the other competitors will know how to make the fast charge in their smartphone. So it is a common thing for the smartphone and is not a new feature because the advertiser competes to make his/her advertisement look

attractive. The most crucial factor is how the advertiser tries to communicate with the consumers through advertisement. However, he/she uses particular words to sell the product. That is why doublespeak is often found. However, to avoid being misled, it is crucial for consumers to understand the literal meaning of every word, and we have to look closer to check what the advertisement promise.

This paper only discusses the object or the product, and most likely other smartphone products also use the doublespeak technique in their advertisement. So this paper talk about using doublespeak in smartphone advertising, so hopefully, the readers know how the use doublespeak. For the future study, hopefully, the next researcher who researches this can analyze products not only electronic products but other products to see if doublespeak can be used in other products.

References

1. N. Kent and K. Facer, "Different worlds? A comparison of young people's home and school ICT use," *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, vol. 20, no. 6, pp. 440-455, Nov. 2004.
2. H. A. Suprpto, "Pengaruh Komunikasi Efektif untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Mahasiswa," *J. Ilm. Kependidikan*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 17, 2017.
3. N. Juliantari, "Semiotic analysis of 'the conjuring' movie poster advertisement," *Journal of Humanis*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 1-7, 2014.
4. W. Lutz., *Beyond Nineteen Eighty-Four: Doublespeak in a Post-Orwellian Age*, 222P, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana,1989.
5. C.H., Karjo, and S. Tanzarez, *A Sociolinguistics Analysis Study: The Usage of Doublespeak by University Students*, *Journal of English Education*, Conference Icomsett, 2021.
6. W. Kuswandi, "Komunikasi Massa Sebuah Analisis Media Televisi," Rineka Cipta, Jakarta, 1996.
7. M. Danesi, "Messages, signs, and meanings: A basic textbook in semiotics and communication," vol. 1, Canadian Scholars' Press, 2004.
8. T. Khalifa, *Doublespeak: the empowerment of the Self and the Dis-Empowerment of the other*, University of gafsa,2019.
9. C. O. Daramola, "Education and society: What type of relationship?," in DR. SOFOLUWE, AO, 2003, pp. 81.
10. N. Vhardani and A. S. P. Tyas, "Strategi Komunikasi dalam Interaksi dengan Mahasiswa Pertukaran Asing," *J. Gama Societa*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 10, 2018.
11. E. Lestari, "Komunikasi yang Efektif," Jakarta: LAN, 2006.
12. J. Gerring, "Qualitative methods," *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 20, pp. 15-36, 2017.