

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher provides an overview of the research. This includes the research background, statement of problems, research objectives, research significance, and conceptual framework.

A. Research Background

The use of social media in Indonesia has experienced notable expansion in recent years. According to We Are Social's findings (2022), there has been a steady increase in the number of social media users. Commencing at 150 million users in early 2019, the user base grew to 160 million in 2020, 170 million in 2021, and spiked to 191 million in 2022, indicating a significant 12.6% growth in social media users from 2021 to 2022. Concurrently, in the realm of preferred social media platforms, GlobalWebIndex's recent data highlights that Instagram has surpassed Facebook to secure the second position in global rankings. Although the margin is narrow, with 14.8% of global internet users favoring Instagram compared to 14.5% for Facebook, it signifies a notable shift in user preferences. While, in the 2022 survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Information Association (APJII), it was revealed that 89.15% of the population leverages the internet primarily for social media interactions, with 73.86% engaging in online chat and 21.26% participating in online shopping (Yudha, Alipudin, & Wihartika, 2024). Social media platforms have become not just a space for interaction but a primary shopping hub.

Social media is a helpful tool for shopping because it lets the consumer interact and feel more in control. Consumers gain a sense of empowerment through various features that give them more freedom to choose and act, allowing them to shape their experiences. Social media is recognized as a powerful platform that fosters empowered and interconnected consumers (Yuksel, Milne, & Miller, 2016). Social media has cultivated a digital space that impacts all phases of the consumer decision-making process, encompassing the exploration of alternatives, gathering

necessary information, evaluating various retailers, sharing personal details, and completing the payment process (Sheriff, Zulkifli, & Othman, 2019). Specifically, social media has reshaped consumer behavior by providing conveniences in information search, alternative assessment, and the ultimate decision to make a purchase (Karami & Naghibi, 2014).

Brands, recognizing this shift, are constantly on the lookout for innovative strategies to connect with their digital customers. A key element in this quest is the effective use of social media that requires incorporating essential elements like customer engagement, appealing visual presentation, and, notably, impactful copywriting to maximize their influence on customers during online purchases.

Copywriting, in essence, is the craft of using words to sell, inform, or inspire. Copywriting is a unique fusion of strategic communication and artistic expression, where the copywriter plays the role of both a marketer and a wordsmith to create compelling and effective content (Shaw, 2009). It's not just about stringing words together; it's about evoking emotion, sparking interest, and compelling action. The primary goal of copywriting is to effectively promote the true value of a brand, its products, and services. The appeal of well-crafted copy lies in its attractiveness and ability to grab the customers' attention (Sheriff et al., 2019). On social media platforms, where the competition for attention is fierce, impactful copywriting can be the magnet that draws customers in, influencing their purchasing decisions. The key lies in employing effective writing strategies to captivate potential customers and achieve successful sales by showcasing a brand's exceptional qualities. Among the array of tools available to a copywriter, wordplay stands out as a particularly significant technique. By leveraging wordplay, copywriters can infuse a brand's messaging with personality and charm, making it more relatable and engaging for the target audience. This linguistic creativity contributes to the overall effectiveness of social media content, enhancing the chances of creating a lasting impact and driving the desired customer actions.

Wordplay is a humorous play on words. Some scholars, however, have proposed more detailed definitions. Chiaro (1992) for example tells us that wordplay

is ‘the use of language with intent to amuse’. In a similar tone with Newmark (1988), he states that the purpose of wordplay is to arouse laughter or amusement. Wordplay creates humor, and humor creates attention. Attention is responsible for customers taking a look at the product making it easier to sell the product due to the added humor resulting from the use of wordplay. The advantage of wordplay is also lies in its accessibility, as it can be easily comprehended even by individuals without specific knowledge about the content (Wischmeyer, 2015). This means that the clever and creative use of words can transcend barriers of expertise or background, making it universally understandable. This inclusivity broadens a brand's audience reach and ensures that the messaging resonates with a diverse customer base. Additionally, the positive and amusing nature of wordplay enhances engagement, capturing and maintaining the audience's attention in the competitive online landscape. The memorability associated with clever wordplay further strengthens brand recall, influencing consumer decisions. Moreover, incorporating wordplay showcases a brand's wit and personality, contributing to a positive and approachable brand image. Overall, the use of wordplay in branding offers benefits such as expanded reach, increased engagement, improved memorability, and a positive brand perception.

Wordplay, recognized as a potent branding strategy, encompasses various types and fulfills multiple functions. As delineated by Walter Nash (1985) in “The Language of Humour,” these types include Homophones, Homophonic Phrases, Mimes, Mimetic Phrases, Homonyms, Homonymic Phrases, Contacts, Blends, Pseudomorphs, Portmanteaux, Etymological Puns, Bilingual Puns, and Pun-metaphors. Additionally, the function of wordplay, as per Roman Jakobson's (1960) communication model, encompasses six key aspects: Referential Function, Emotive or Expressive Function, Conative Function, Phatic Function, Metalingual Function, and Poetic Function.

The Indonesian beauty brand SOMETHINC exemplifies the effective implementation of wordplay. Launched by Irene Ursula in May 2019, SOMETHINC has secured its place among the 50 most popular, memorable, and

preferred local brands in Indonesia for 2020 (Katadata.co.id, 2020). This recognition is attributed to the brand's emphasis on natural ingredients, exceptional sales service, and easy accessibility. SOMETHINC has also successfully penetrated the competitive realm of e-commerce. According to research from Compass Dashboard (2022), SOMETHINC has emerged as the top-selling beauty brand in e-commerce, a distinction potentially influenced by their adept use of wordplay in their branding and marketing efforts. This linguistic creativity likely contributes to the brand's distinctiveness, making it more memorable and engaging for consumers, especially on social media platforms.

Based on the provided information, the focus of the research lies in analyzing SOMETHINC's copywriting specifically on their Instagram platform, @somethincofficial, from 2022 to 2023. The reason behind selecting SOMETHINC as the subject of the study stems from its noteworthy position as one of the leading Indonesian beauty brands known for its proficient utilization of wordplay. Given that SOMETHINC incorporates English language elements into its social media content, particularly on Instagram, it presents an ideal case study for exploring the interplay between linguistic creativity and brand engagement in the context of the Indonesian beauty industry.

B. Statements of Problems

Based on the background research presented, there are various types of wordplay employed by brands to influence consumers regarding the products they offer. Given this issue, the research question is formulated as follows:

1. What types of wordplay are employed by SOMETHINC in their Instagram copywriting?
2. What functions of wordplay are served in SOMETHINC's copywriting to engage and persuade their target customer on Instagram?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

1. To find out the types of wordplay employed in SOMETHINC's Instagram copywriting.
2. To analyze the functions of wordplay served in SOMETHINC's copywriting to engage and persuade their target customer on Instagram.

D. Research Significance

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the study on SOMETHINC's use of wordplay in Instagram copywriting offers significant contributions to the broader academic discourse on digital marketing and linguistics. By exploring the specific types and functions of wordplay employed by a contemporary beauty brand on a globally-renowned social platform, this research can refine and expand existing theoretical frameworks. Such a focus can pave the way for understanding the linguistic dynamics at play in modern e-commerce-based businesses, thereby updating and enriching the academic literature on the subject.

From a practical standpoint, insights from this study can be immensely valuable to brands, advertisers, and digital marketing professionals. As businesses continually seek effective strategies to connect with their audiences in an ever-crowded digital landscape, understanding the nuanced application and impact of wordplay can serve as a valuable tool. For brands operating on platforms like Instagram, the findings can offer actionable guidance on crafting compelling copywriting that resonates with their target demographic. Moreover, given the proven success of SOMETHINC in the Indonesian e-commerce scene, such insights could be especially beneficial for brands operating in similar markets or those looking to expand into them.

E. Conceptual Framework

The research aims to investigate two important aspects: the types of wordplay used and the function of wordplay in SOMETHINC's Instagram copywriting. To determine the types of wordplay used in SOMETHINC's Instagram copywriting, the research employs Walter Nash (1985) theory of wordplay from his book titled "The Language of Humour". In this book, Nash categorizes wordplay into

Homophones and Homophonic Phrases (are pairs (or more) of words having the same sound but different meanings), Mimes and Mimetic Phrases (phonetic similitudes, usually rhymes, with the appeal of homophones), Homonyms and Homonymic Phrases (contain two words that sound the same and have a different meaning, also share their spelling), Contacts and Blends (echo[es] other idioms and take[s] a color of meaning from them; there is a casual contact of ideas, or a blending of semantic components), Pseudomorphs (that uses false morphemes, invented to make a homonymic pun), Portmanteaux (the spelling of two words is combined to coin a neologism), Etymological Puns (containing words that are of classical descent, i.e. Greek or Latin,) , Bilingual Puns (a foreign word is made to bear the sense of an English word), and Pun-metaphors (when metaphor is used to create a joke). By applying this framework, the study aims to identify and categorize the different types of wordplay present in SOMETHINC's copywriting on Instagram.

To understand the function of wordplay in SOMETHINC's copywriting on Instagram, the researcher applies Roman Jakobson (1960) communication model theory. Jakobson identified six main functions of communication: Referential Function (Context), Emotive or Expressive Function (Addresser), Conative Function (Addressee), Phatic Function (Contact), Metalingual Function (Code), and Poetic Function (Message).

By combining Nash's theory of wordplay and Jakobson's communication model, the research seeks to: Identify and categorize the distinct types of wordplay that SOMETHINC employs in their Instagram copywriting, contributing to the broader understanding of linguistic creativity in digital advertising; understand the functions of these wordplay types on audience engagement and interest, shedding light on the persuasive mechanisms at work in effective digital copywriting; and provide a comprehensive analysis that bridges the existing theoretical discourse with practical insights, enabling brands and marketers to leverage wordplay effectively in their own digital strategies.

The following flowchart provide a visual representation in a linear sense the mapping of conceptual framework.

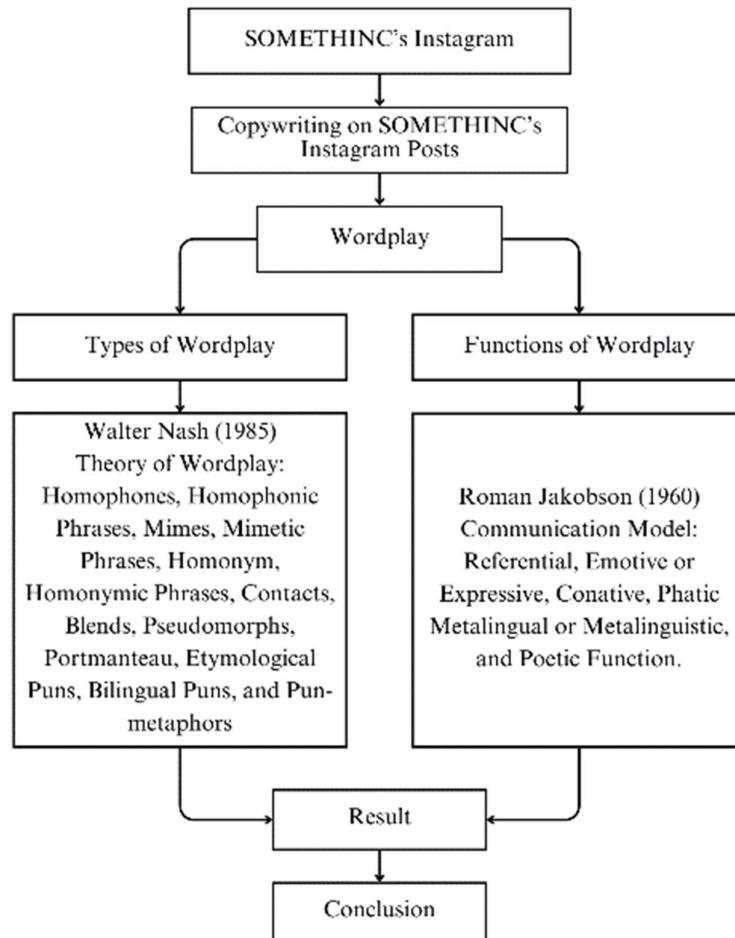


Figure 1.1 *Flowchart of Conceptual Framework*

F. Previous Studies

Since the inception of the study on wordplay in advertising copy, numerous investigations have explored its application in various platforms. Among these, the initial study conducted by Sara Laviosa (2005) entitled “Wordplay in Advertising: Form, Meaning and Function” that analyzes the play on words contained in a sample of advertisements. This result is that wordplay has been shown to be an effective means of fulfilling the persuasive function of promotional language in

business communication by capturing and holding the reader's attention. The second is Marc G. Weinberger, Charles S. Gulas, & Michelle F. Weinberger (2015) examined the evolving acceptance and use of humor in advertising over the past century. The title of this study is, "Looking in through outdoor: a socio-cultural and historical perspective on the evolution of advertising humor." The results reveal the contextual interplay that led to changes in the acceptance of humorous advertisements as well as the evolution of humor styles and elements. Also, Khaitboevich's (2023) work entitled, "Stylistic Functions of Puns in Advertising Texts" show that the word game can attract the consumer's attention to the advertised object or product, in the mind of the consumer, the word game "screams" about something and "demands" to buy the product. In the other hand, Silfitri and Hermawan's (2023) study titled, "Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness Local Indonesian Cosmetic SOMETHINC", delves into the nexus between social media marketing and SOMETHINC's brand awareness, revealing pivotal insights. This study has found that social media marketing indeed has an impact on the brand awareness of SOMETHINC.

However, despite these rich contributions, there's a gap in the specific analysis of how beauty brands, especially those in emerging markets like Indonesia, utilize wordplay on social media platforms. The dynamics of Instagram, which is visually focused yet offers a significant textual component for brands to showcase their voice, seems to be underexplored in the existing literature. Specifically, how these brands, such as SOMETHINC, employ wordplay in their copywriting strategy to navigate the competitive landscape of beauty brand industries remains unclear.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher chose the title *The Use of Wordplay in SOMETHINC's Instagram Copywriting from 2022 to 2023* to accurately reflect the scope of the study, seeks to delve into the nuances of SOMETHINC's Instagram copywriting, specifically examining the types and functions of wordplay they employ.

Thus, the exploration into SOMETHINC's copywriting on Instagram seeks to bridge this gap by offering a more nuanced understanding of wordplay application

in the beauty industry's digital marketing strategies, especially on platforms like Instagram. This approach not only complements the existing research but also provides a fresh, industry-specific perspective on the efficacy of wordplay in digital advertising.

