

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

This chapter will discuss about the theories used in analyzing humorous presentation in advertisements. The writer will give explanation on humor theory of incongruity elements which are hyperbole, understatement, polysemy, idiom reanalysis, metaphor, puns, and imagery. The writer will also give brief explanation on advertising and advertising effectiveness.

#### **2.1 Advertising**

According to Wells, Moriarty, and Burnet (2006, p. 5) advertising is about a simple way of sending people a message that you create to have a certain kind of reaction on them. Meanwhile, the modern definition would be a nonpersonal persuasive communication to connect sponsor with a target audience that uses mass media to have large number of audience.

In this analysis the writer only uses printed advertisement as the data. Based on *Contemporary Advertising 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* by Bovee and Aren (1986, p. 262) there are ten key elements of copywriting in printed advertisement. The elements are headlines, illustration, subhead, body copy, captions, boxes and panels, slogans, logotypes (logos), seals, and signature. Since some authors have different classification of elements, the author chooses to use these key elements as the bases of the analysis.

To limit her study, the writer only chooses the advertisements with imaginative approach, which the illustration does 'the attracting and talking'. This advertisement at least contains two key elements, which are illustration and display copy (Lane, King, &

Russell, 2005, p. 494). Display copy according to Wells et al (2006) could be headline, subheads, call-outs, taglines or slogan (p. 360).

### **2.1.1 Headlines**

Headline as the most important element in printed advertisement refers to the words in the leading position of the advertisement. It has six important functions as to attract attention, to select the reader, to lead to the body copy, to present selling idea, to promise benefit for costumer, to present product news of interest. It can also be classified into five categories: benefit, provocative, news/information, question, and command (Bovee & Aren, 1986, pp. 262 – 264).

Wells et all. (2006, p. 361) explained that a headline should have big form or distinct placement to attract the audience. Lane et al. (2005, p. 485) added that there are some factors that should be considered to have an effective headline:

- Use short and simple words
- Provides product benefits and brand
- Contain action verb
- Appeals to main prospect
- Give enough information

### **2.1.2 Subheads**

Subheads can appear above or below the headline, in the body copy, or the text of the advertisement. Subhead used to present key sales points, it should contain important facts and strengthen the headline and theme (Bovee & Aren, 1986, pp. 265 –

266). While a similar idea of subheads presented by Wells et al. (2006, p. 361) as the beginning of another copy which aim is to give clearer explanation to the audience.

### **2.1.3 Body Copy**

Bovee and Aren (1986, pp. 266 – 267) wrote that body copy, text that explains the complete selling idea, should show the benefits of the product or service for the target audience. It is needed to have a technique that provides the greatest sales appeal for the idea presented in the advertisement. Meanwhile, a different term for body copy given by Lane et al. (2005) is amplification. Yet, the sense is the same which is to give emphasis about the features of product or service that have not been mentioned on the headlines (p. 491).

### **2.1.4 Boxes and Panels**

Boxes and panels are generally used in advertisements that contain coupons, special offers, contest rules, and other blanks. ... a box is copy around which a line has been drawn. A panel is an elongated box that usually runs the whole length or width of an ad. ... Boxes and panels are used to draw greater attention to a specific element or message in your advertisement (Bovee & Aren, 1986, p. 274).

### **2.1.5 Slogan**

Wells et al. (2005) defined slogans as 'a distinctive catch phrase that serves as a motto for a campaign, brand, or company' (p. 361). As quoted in *The Advertising Handbook 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Brierley (2003, p. 169) described that 'Some ads don't include

directive, they just have a slogan. The purpose is to put across the brand values and associate the right moods and feelings with the brand.' Meanwhile, Bovee and Aren (1986, p. 274) stated two purposes of a slogan in advertising:

1. To provide continuity for the campaign.
2. To reduce a key theme or idea the company wants associated with its product or itself to a brief, memorable positioning statement.

He also pointed out that effective slogan should be short, easy to understand, memorable, and easy to repeat. While Wells et al. (2006, pp. 363 – 364) provided some technique to create effective slogans:

- Direct address
- A startling or unexpected phrase
- Rhyme, rhythm, alliteration
- Parallel construction
- Cue for the product
- Music

#### **2.1.6 Seals, Logotypes, and Signatures**

A seal is the one given by recognized authorities for standards establishment. It provides independent and valued endorsement for the product. A logotype and signature cut, on the other hand, are special designs of the company seal or trademark of the product. The function is to give individuality and quick recognition while purchasing (Bovee & Aren, 1986, p. 274). Lane et al. (2005) added that seals could be an award as a credibility given by authorities (p. 492).

### **2.1.1 Illustration**

The meaning of illustration in advertising is the pictures or drawings in the advertisement. Bovee & Aren (1986, p. 293) explained illustration as a major idea that would bring a success to an advertisement, yet not all advertisements uses illustration, but while it is use it carries some purposes, there are:

1. Capture the attention of the reader
2. Identify the subject of the advertisement
3. Qualify readers by sopping those who are legitimate prospects and letting others skip over the ad if they are so inclined.
4. Arouse interest in reading the headline
5. Create a favourable impression of the product or the advertisers.
6. Clarify claims made by the copy.
7. Help convince the reader of the truth of claims made by the copy.
8. Emphasize unique features of the product.
9. Provide continuity for all advertisements in the campaign through the use of the same illustrative technique in each individual ad.

### **2.2 Advertising Effectiveness**

‘Most advertising tries to persuade or influence the consumer to do something’ (Wells et al., 2006, p.5). Meanwhile, Bovee and Aren (1986) wrote that a good copywriting will persuade customers to take some action to satisfy their needs or wants. They also explained that the objectives of good copy will lead to consumer attention, interest, credibility, desire, and finally action (pp. 259 – 262). While Brierley (2003) suggest to use a combination of ‘effects criteria, recall, usage and attitude, and

involvement models' to have a more enclosed meaning of the advertisement (p. 206). Therefore a creative strategy is needed to create an effective advertisement.

Above all the things mentioned above, the most important thing is to have the advertisement effective is to know who your customers are. 'The more you understand *exactly* who you're talking to, the better your chances of reaching that audience with effective advertising' (Lance & Woll, 2006, pp. 19, 27). One way to know who your customers are by looking at the population's 'personal, social, and economical characteristics' or known as demographics. In *Advertising Principles and Practice 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*, Wells et al. (2006, p. 131) categorized demographics into age, gender, education, income, occupation, race, and family size.

## 2.3 Humor

In his book, *The Language of Humor*, Ross (1999) gave a simple definition of humor as 'something that makes person laugh or smile,' although not all people have the same sense of humor, one may laugh at a humor while others not. He also said that 'humor may be taught of as a peripheral, leisure activity which lacks the more obvious significance of literature, advertising and the media (pp. 1-2).

As quoted in *Language Play, Language Learning*, Cook (2000, p. 74) wrote that 'Many theorists of humour have advanced the view that humour is created by the perception of incongruity: when phenomena seem to be contradictory, or when a new stimulus is inconsistent with past experience.' Sumnicht (2004) divided humor into eight elements, incongruity, resolution, challenge, derision, tension and release, familiar joke themes, familiar joke targets, familiar joke cues and scripts (*Humor Theory*).

In this thesis, the writer uses the element of incongruity to analyze her topic. Meanwhile, McGee's definition of incongruity is (in *Linguistic theories of humor*, 1994):

The notion of congruity and incongruity refer to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectation, and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent elements of an event is incompatible with the normal or expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous (p. 48).

The writer analyze the humor on advertisements based on seven elements of incongruity by Sumnicht (2004), which are hyperbole, understatement, polysemy, puns, metaphor, idiom, and imagery (*Humor Theory*).

### 2.3.1 Hyperbole

Hyperbole, or sometimes called overstatement, means overly exaggerate a fact. It is a language which uses emphasis to what a person really mean. Hyperbole may be used to create humorous or grave, fanciful or restrained, convincing or unconvincing (Kennedy & Gioia, 2005, p. 113). The same definition also brought out by Arp and Johnson (2005) in *Sound & Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*, that "overstatement" is a figurative language which brings effect to emphasize a point and it can also be used for humorous purposes (p. 825).

Examples of hyperbole:

- There were *milllions of people* at the beach.
- Somewhere *ages and ages* hence (Frost, *The Road Not Taken*, p. 90)

Meanwhile, according to Forceville (1998, pp. 57, 60) rhetorical figures – 'a way of saying something other than the ordinary way' (Arp and Johnson, 2005, p. 70) – can

be applied to the image in advertisement. According to Barthes, in interpreting a pictorial message, we need to understand the pictorial context, verbal context, and the 'different kinds of knowledge invested in the image (practical, national, cultural, aesthetic knowledge)' (In *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertisement*, 1998, p. 61).

### 2.3.2 Understatement

Understatement, the opposite of overstatement, according to Kennedy and Gioia (2005, p. 826) means 'implying more than is said'. While Arp and Johnson (2005, p.114) defined it as 'saying less than one means.' Another definition presented by Nordquist as 'a figure of speech in which a writer or a speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is' (2008).

Example of understatement:

- "This looks like a nice *snack*," (where the plate is loaded with food)

### 2.3.3 Polysemy

According to Fromkin and Rodman (1983, p. 173) polysemy or polysemous word is word(s) 'that have many semantic features in common but that are not synonyms or near synonyms.' Meanwhile, Hurford and Heasley (2004, p.123) described Polysemy as 'one where a word has several very closely related senses'. Or clearly stated by Finegan (1999, pp. 197-198) as words that have same form, more than one meaning with related senses.

Example of polysemy:

- I wish I have the *power*



According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005, p.1180) power as a noun has more than one meaning:

Sense 1: I wish I have the *ability*

Sense 2: I wish I have the *authority*

Sense 3: I wish I have the *energy*

#### 2.3.4 Idiom Reanalysis

In *Introduction to Language 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, Fromkin and Rodman (1983) introduce idioms as word(s) combined into phrase which meaning can not be interpret one by one (individually) instead as one unit. They also said that idioms 'must be entered into one's mental dictionary as single "items," with their meanings specified, and one must learn the special restrictions on their use in sentences' (pp. 181-182).

Examples of Idiom:

- *Bite one's tongue*, means to hold back (as from a reluctance to offend) a remark one would like to make (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, )
- *Get one's goat*, means to make one angry or annoyed (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, )

#### 2.3.5 Metaphor

A simple definition of metaphor presented by Nordquist is 'an implied comparison between two unlike things that actually have something important in common' (2008). While Arp and Johnson (2005) stated that metaphor is a figure of speech which compares things that are essentially unlike. 'In metaphor the comparison is not expressed but is created when a figurative term is substitute for or identified with the

literal term' (p. 70). In *Mastering English Literature 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Gill (1995) said metaphors are 'features of everyday speech.' He also conveyed that metaphor is 'economical' and 'immediate' (p. 24 – 25).

Examples of metaphor:

- *Walls have ears.* (Cervantes)
- *Our doubts are traitors.* (Shakespeare)

### 2.3.6 Puns

*Paronomasia* or better known as pun, figure of speech which means one (or more) words with same sound but different meaning (Kennedy & Gioia, 2005, p. 827). A more complete meaning delivered by Nordquist as 'play on words', which might occur when one word have more than one meanings or some words have same meaning or sound (2008).

Example of puns:

- Lines by E. E. Cummings:

the bigness of cannon  
*is skillful,*

‘*is skillful* becoming *is kill-ful* when read out loud’ (Kennedy & Gioia, 2005, p.828)

### 2.3.7 Imagery

In *Literature: an introduction to fiction, poetry, and drama*, imagery in poetry means ‘a word or sequence of words that refers to any sensory experience’ (Kennedy & Gioia, 2005, p. 790). Meanwhile, Arp and Johnson (2005) defined imagery as

'representation through language of sense experience.' He also categorized imagery into seven types of image representation, which are through sight (visual imagery), sound (auditory imagery), smell (olfactory imagery), taste (gustatory imagery), touch (tactile imagery), internal sensation (organic imagery), and movement or tension (kinesthetic imagery) (p. 55).

Example of imagery:

- Ezra Pound (*In a Station of the Metro*, 1916)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petal on a *wet, black* bough.

The word wet refers to touch experience which is categorized as tactile imagery, meanwhile black represent sight which is visual imagery.