

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The topic of my thesis is Analysis of Doublespeak in Computer Product Advertisements, in which I will discuss the elements of doublespeak in some advertisements of the computer products. Before moving on, I will first state the background of the study, which will contribute to the significance of the thesis.

I choose to discuss this topic mainly because of my interest in advertising, which presents skilful use of words to attract people, and in the advances in information technology, which plays a significant role in the world of advertising itself. These two aspects benefit from each other; technology is helped by being promoted by advertisements, and advertising, in return, gains more medium in which to publish it. This makes it interesting for me to study the relation between advertising and technological advances.

Advertising, simply put, is an act of calling the public's attention to a product or service without person-to-person selling; a form of salesmanship that distributes a selling message to many people at a time (Strouse 27). Particularly in the world of marketing, nothing is as indispensable as an advertisement in promoting a product. Without advertisement, no one would know that a product

exists, and accordingly, no one would buy it. Yet, the function of advertisement is not restricted only to letting everyone know that a product exists. By informing people of a product, it also persuades them to buy the product being advertised.

Advertisement is very old, and has been known to exist for as long as there is trade and the medium in which to publish it. In ancient Greece, Rome, Babylonia, and Egypt, there were signs on walls, along roads, and over shops as a form of advertisement for promoting wares, services, circuses, and gladiatorial combats (Lusk 79). Moreover, walls or rock paintings as a form of ancient commercial advertising can be found in many parts of Asia, Africa, and South America (Taylor). These findings show just how prominent the role of advertising in civilization is, and this role is further heightened in this age of globalization.

The effectiveness of advertisement is due to the very nature of the consumers themselves. Logically speaking, rather than trying to find the information about a product themselves, consumers tend to like it better if the information is fed to them, in this case, through the advertisements. This fact enables advertisers to post any information about a product as they see fit. This liberty of information is, of course, regulated by law governing the place where the product is being advertised (Lusk). Yet, even the law cannot outwit the more subtle trick that advertisers use to promote their products.

The other, and apparently more precise, reason for the effectiveness of an advertisement in persuading people lies in the word play within the advertisement. Instead of promoting its product by using the product's raw description and direct persuasion, an advertiser employs the use of a technique called *doublespeak*, the art of bending a word meaning so much so that it would mislead people's thinking without actually deceiving them. Doublespeak is so effective, not to mention it is so commonly used, that even in one advertisement

alone, we can find its multiple uses in the various kinds of doublespeak such as *jargon*, *parity claim*, *weasel words*, and *up to claim* that make the advertisement even more convincing (Lutz 2-7).

As I have stated before, we are now in the state of globalization which almost entirely eliminates the boundaries between many people from across the globe. This elimination of boundaries occurs because of the invention of a medium that makes such feat possible: the Internet. The Internet is now so advanced that we can even connect with other people without physical presence, by means of a device called computer. Such capability inevitably leads computer to its popularity as we see nowadays, and this popularity causes the emergence of the many brands of computer products that compete with one another to sell their products the most. This, of course, inevitably leads them to use doublespeak in their advertisements in order to achieve this goal. This use of doublespeak, coupled together with people's enthusiasm over information technology and computer products, makes this data source interesting for me to work on. Moreover, with the inventions of technology, along with the products that use them, occurring literally in days, the supply of data that can be found and analysed is virtually limitless.

Moreover, the Internet is, in my opinion, the most effective medium that publishes advertisements. The Internet is very versatile and accessible; it can be used for many purposes, and can be accessed virtually by anyone at any time. The Internet is also future-proof; many devices, such as laptop computers and cellular phones, support the use of the Internet access, and the number of people who can afford one is increasing with each passing time (Wahyudi and Wahono).

The significance of this analysis lies in the fact that the majority of people in Indonesia, even those living in major cities such as Jakarta and Bandung, are

not computer literate. With the bombardment of many computer brands which employ doublespeak in almost all of their advertisements, the people of Indonesia are prone to being misled. Thus, this thesis can help them to identify doublespeak in advertisements and understand what doublespeak is.

The general benefit of being able to identify doublespeak remains the same among similar researches. By identifying the doublespeak in computer product advertisements, we can also gain knowledge about the development of the computer technology itself, and the market it is targeted for. For example, by identifying jargon in the technical specification of a computer product, we will know the state of technological development that a product has if compared to other products that are also being analysed. It is also important to note that despite the numerous kinds of laptops out there in the market, based on my observation, there are roughly only two segmentations of laptop market; the general use and the enthusiast laptops. The general use laptops, which I will be discussing, are what we call “average” laptops, the use of which is mostly limited to everyday computing such as typing, browsing, watching videos, and so on. The enthusiast laptops, on the other hand, are high-performance machine with the capability of doing heavy tasks such as media editing and processing, transcoding (converting one kind of media into another), playing high-end games, and other tasks with high requirements.

By today’s standard, what determines whether a notebook is good or not is its processing power, battery lifetime, and portability, and all those aspects are important for a notebook to be successful. However, one product cannot have all those advantages, not only because of the restrictions of the current technology, but also because of marketing strategy that limits the advantages of one product at a time. As such, one manufacturer will have to compromise between

processing power and battery life, between portability and features, or between any of them. Because of this, doublespeak will have to come to play to divert the reader's attention from the product's demerits.

Word count: 1.182 words

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In doing the analysis there are three problems that I would like to solve:

1. Which words or phrases in the advertisements contain doublespeak?
2. What kind of doublespeak do those words or phrases use?
3. How does doublespeak mislead the readers?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

By solving the problems above, I would like to accomplish these purposes:

1. to identify which words or phrases in the advertisements contain doublespeak.
2. to identify what kind of doublespeak those words or phrases use.
3. to show how doublespeak misleads the readers.

1.4. Method of Research

The first step in doing this research was to understand the meaning of doublespeak itself. The theory that I used was derived from William Lutz' *Doublespeak* as the most comprehensive source that I could find. Next, I looked for the data that best represented the subjects in which I was most interested, in this case, computer advertisements. After that, I analysed the data based on the main theory that I used. The final step was writing the research report.

1.5. Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organisation of the Thesis. After the introduction is Chapter Two, Theoretical Framework, which consists of the theories of General Doublespeak and Advertorial Doublespeak. Chapter Three, the analysis, follows this chapter, and then there is Chapter Four, the conclusion. The last two parts are Bibliography and Appendix.