

Optimizing Brands' Message through Utilization of Speech Acts in Company Slogan

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Abstract—This study aims to identify the types of speech act in company slogans and the relation between slogans and the products being advertised. The data were 100 brands' slogans found in product advertisements. The data were collected from the internet searching with the keyword "(name of brand) slogan". The data were then categorized into five types of speech acts as proposed by Searle (1979), which are representative, directive, declarative, expressive, and commissive. The results show that 50 brands use representative act, 33 brands use directive act, 7 brands use commissive act, 6 brands use expressive act, and 4 brands use declarative act. Moreover, 52% of the brands do not indicate their products in the slogans, while 48% of the slogans contain the products' names. That means the message of the brands should be deduced connotatively by the consumers. The findings imply that brands' slogans should represent the companies' or the products' strengths without having to mention the brand names in their slogans. A good brand slogan will surely optimize the brand's message to the consumers.

Keywords—brands, slogan, speech act, brand awareness, message

I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the core elements of a brand identity, a brand slogan is a cue for consumers to identify and recall a particular brand (Suci *et al.*, 2022; Kim *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, constructing brand slogans that are easy to remember and can be associated directly with the products being sold is important.

A good brand slogan can help a company convey its brand image and raise brand awareness. A brand slogan should be able to evoke consumer recall, convey brand strength, and even build and maintain a strong brand identity (Suci *et al.*, 2022). In this way, slogans can help a brand stand out among similar products (Kohli *et al.*, 2007). If managed effectively, slogans can have a direct and positive impact on brand perception, improving brand image, brand recall, trust, and recognition (Tsauro, 2020)

To achieve the desired effects of brand slogans, the company should employ the appropriate speech acts in creating their slogans. Speech act refers to the actions being performed through the use of language (Yule,

2020), in particular the language used in the company slogans. Analyzing the speech act of company slogans may reveal the advertiser's message, thus conveying the real intention of the brand to the consumers. It might also help in increasing brand awareness in the minds of consumers.

This research will focus on the analysis of speech acts in company slogans. The speech acts are divided into five classes: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Searle, 1979). Understanding the speech acts in company slogans is important to get a better understanding of the actual purpose and intention behind the utterances used by the company. Moreover, this study will also analyze the relationship between the slogans and the message through the use of speech acts. In particular, whether the slogans directly or indirectly convey their intent and purposes. These aims are formulated in the two research questions below.

- 1) What are the dominant speech acts employed in a selection of company slogans?
- 2) How do the slogans contribute to the overall message of the brand?

Several previous studies that cover similar topics have been used as references for the present study. Amalia *et al.* (2020) studied the function of illocutionary acts in the tourism industries based on Dell Hymes' (1974) and Searle's (1979) theory. She found 11 data using 4 directives, 4 commissive, 2 assertive, and one expressive. Another study by Nurul *et al.* (2021) who analyzed the illocutionary acts in beauty product advertisements in television broadcasts, showed that assertive is the most used in the advertisements, followed by directive, expressive, declarative, and commissive. Meanwhile, Juliawati (2022) analyzed speech acts in Mc Donald's slogans. She found that representatives serve the most frequent type, followed by expressive and directive in 24 McDonald's slogans.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Importance of Slogans for Brand Recognition

A slogan is "a distinctive catchphrase that serves as a motto for a campaign, brand, or company. It is used across a variety of marketing communication and messages and over an extended period of time" (Moriarty & Wells, 2012). A slogan is the most important element

of advertising that aims at building branding power or recall (Suci *et al.*, 2022; Jangga *et al.*, 2019). A good brand slogan can help a company to stand out among other companies, convey its brand image and raise brand awareness (Kohli *et al.*, 2007)

Slogans are primarily designed to achieve two objectives, namely for promoting brand awareness and for creating, protecting, or changing the image or perception that causes its repositioning (Somayeh & Irandoust, 2013). Brand awareness itself is a company's competitive advantage and is part of a marketing strategy that helps to spread information about the company and its products or services. Brand awareness can be achieved by creating slogans that can make customers remember and recognize a favorite brand every time they see them.

To achieve strong brand awareness, slogans should be easily recognizable (Jangga, 2019) and unforgettable (Yulianti & Ardi, 2013). Slogans should be short and catchy to attract customers' attention and can be understood clearly. A slogan should also help the company reflect its mission statement. Strutton (2018) pointed out that associated brands will deliver slogans that attract attention and inspire lasting impressions and memories about specific attributes or values of the products being sold. In short, brand slogans should contain four characteristics, which are memorability, substance, novelty, and usefulness (Fisher, 1988). Yet according to Silveira & Galvao, 2020 it is essential to ensure that slogans are designed to have the highest potential to be noticed.

To convey the intended message of the slogans, brands could employ linguistic devices such as speech acts in their advertisement, particularly in creating brand slogans in written advertisements.

B. Speech Act

The theory of speech act was introduced by Austin (1962) in his book "How to do things with words." Later, Searle (1979) expanded his theory by classifying the speech act. The speech act itself is the type of utterance that constitutes an action, either from the speaker or the listener/viewer. This theory holds that every utterance contains an action that is intended by the speaker, hence, the term "speech act" is used. The speaker's intention can be directly or indirectly stated in the speaker's utterance. For example, when a person says, "It is raining heavily outside", the speaker's intention might be merely to inform the interlocutor about the weather, or she might want the hearer to lend her an umbrella, or she might be refusing the hearer's invitation to go out because of the rain.

In creating slogans, brands should be able to choose the speech acts that can appropriately reflect the brands' intended message, such as informing, ordering, or warning about the products. Proper use of speech acts can avoid misinterpretation on the part of consumers or viewers. For example, when the advertiser informs viewers about a new whitening product, the viewers feel offended by the sentences used in that ad.

Speech acts are classified into five types, namely: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and

declarative (Searle, 1979). **The representative** act is an act that expresses what the speaker believes is true or a fact. It can be in the form of suggesting, concluding, or stating. Boasting and complaining are also included in the representative act. An example of this act is "You have to take this opportunity; it won't come twice." **The directive** act is used to make someone do something or carry out certain actions. This can be done in a modest way or fiercely. Directive act can be in the form of asking, ordering, commanding, requesting, or inviting. For example, "May I come in?" or "Let me in." **The Commissive** act is the act that commits the speaker to doing something in the future. This type of act shows what the speaker intends to do, such as promise, intent, and favor. For example, "I'll marry you." **The expressive** act is an act that expresses the psychological state of the speaker. It can be used to show happiness, or sadness, to thank, congratulate, apologize, or condole. For example, "I'm sorry for your loss". **The declarative** act is an act that can change something after the utterance is produced. It can be in the form of declaring, resigning, or appointing. The example is, "I pronounce you man and wife."

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the writer used a qualitative approach, particularly document analysis in the form of written advertisements. The source of data for this study were 100 brand slogans. These brand slogans were collected by searching the internet for company slogans. To limit the data, the brands were grouped into six categories: food, fast food restaurants, cars, computers, service, and cosmetics.

To analyse the speech act, the researcher identified the type of speech act of each slogan, based on the five functions namely representatives, directives, commissive, declaratives, and expressive as proposed by Searle (1979). The next step was identifying the relationship (direct/indirectness) of the speech act and the message conveyed in the slogans. This was done by comparing the sentence meaning and the intended meaning of the slogans based on the products sold by the brand.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Types of Speech Acts in Company Slogans

TABLE I. TYPES OF SPEECH ACTS

No	Types of Illocutionary Acts	Freq.	%
1	Representative	50	50
2	Directive	33	33
3	Commissive	7	7
4	Expressive	6	6
5	Declarative	4	4

The data revealed three types of illocutionary acts out of five are found in both male and female beauty product

advertisements: representative, directive, and commissive. This is in line with the types of advertisement: Informative advertisement that gives information about the product, persuasive advertisement that persuades customers to buy the product, and reminder advertisement which will remind and give motivation to the customers to buy it (Nurul *et al.*, 2021). Given the theory, these 3 illocutionary acts represent those functions through the context used, which will be further discussed as follows:

a. Representative

Representative acts are found in 50 slogans. That comprises 50% of all the data. Representative act is an act is an act that expresses what the speaker believes as true or based on facts. The sentences that carry the form of suggesting, concluding, informing, or stating can be included in this act. However, the representative act is not always performed as a verb; thus, boasting and complaining are also part of the representative act [7]. This act is shown in the following samples;

- (1) Honda: One Heart

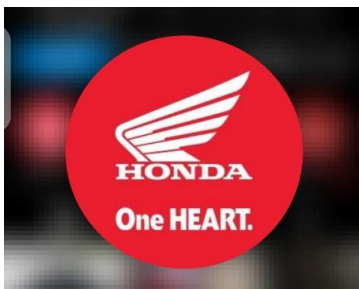


Fig. 1. Honda slogan.

Honda is a Japanese manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles, headquartered in Tokyo. Honda has several slogans, one of which is “one heart” which is specifically used for motorcycle products. This slogan is categorized as the representative act since it shows the company’s claim for its commitment toward quality. The slogan one heart does not relate to the products being sold, but they want to reflect their dedication to give the best product and service to their customers. One heart may be associated with the best service that is given with all their heart.

- (2) Asus: In search of Incredible



Fig. 2. Asus slogan.

Asus is a Taiwan based manufacturer of computers. The slogan “in search for incredibles” is categorized as a representative act since it carries Asus statement that it is always searching for “incredibles”. Incredibles here do not mean strange or mysterious or unsolved. It simply means incapable of being believed. Through this slogan, Asus wants to show that it is a company that is passionate about technology and driven by innovation. They are

always searching for incredible ideas and experiences, and they aspire to deliver the incredible in everything they do.

- (3) Sprite: Freedom from thirst

This slogan emerged in the 2000s in which the social aspiration of that era revolved around the word “freedom”. This slogan is also included in representative act since it is a straightforward statement of the beverage refreshing attribute as thirst quencher. What the advertiser wants to convey in this slogan is that Sprite is the drink that can give physical satisfaction from thirst as well as representing the young people yearning for liberation from old convention, boundaries, and constraints.

b. Directive

Directive act is the second most used speech act in brand slogans. There are 33 brands using this directive act. A directive speech act is used to make the viewers do something or carry out certain actions. This act corresponds to the form of asking, ordering, commanding, requesting, or inviting.

- (4) Toyota: Let’s go places



Fig. 3. Toyota slogan.

Toyota is a Japanese multinational automotive manufacturer headquartered in Toyota City in Japan. Toyota’s slogan is included in the directive act, as it begins with an appeal “let us”. This slogan evokes the forward looking and optimistic momentum of Toyota. The message that wants to be conveyed is an invitation for the consumers to go on a journey to see new places, discover new possibilities and dream big dream together. All of these can be achieved by riding in a Toyota car.

- (5) Revlon: Love your life, love yourself. Love is on.

Revlon is an American multinational company specializing in producing beauty products. The slogan “love your life, love yourself” is a directive because it commands its users to love themselves. The basic idea of Revlon’s slogan is the word “love”, which is a mnemonic reshuffling of the letters in Revlon. The idea of “love is on” grew from their quest to find a universally inspiring emotion, because love is the most powerful and most positive emotion. Love is chosen to evoke positivity with their brand.

- (6) Skittles: Taste the rainbow

Skittles is one of the products of Wrigley company in England. Skittles produce chewy fruit flavored candy in rainbow colors. Their original flavors were lime, lemon, grape, orange, and cherry. Consequently, the candies come in various colors such as green, orange, yellow, purple, and red. Although not all the colors of the rainbow are represented in Skittles, its slogan wants to convey the message that it is possible to taste the rainbow.

The company also wants the consumers to associate their products with the rainbow because of their colorful candy. Thus, the slogan “taste the rainbow” is a directive act commanding the consumer to taste “the rainbow” in their products.

c. Commissive

Seven slogans are included in commissive acts. A commissive act is used by the speaker to make themselves commit to doing something in the future. In advertising, usually, this act is shown by a promise, intention, or favor. Below are two examples of slogans that use commissive acts.

- (7) Pringles: Once you pop, you can't stop



Fig. 4. Pringles slogan.

Pringles is an American company producing potato chips with saddle shapes. The slogan “once you pop, you can't stop” is a commissive act in which the brand made a promise that when someone pops the Pringles can, they can never stop eating until all the chips are consumed. This slogan is perfectly aligned with the brand narrative, and it symbolizes the addictive quality of the product. This slogan is part of the “mind-popping” campaign about the theory of evolution. In this ad, Pringles tickled the consumers' minds that the universe is formed into the shape of Pringles chips and that humans have opposable thumbs to pop the can and to find the specially shaped Pringles chips.

- (8) BCA: will always be on your side

BCA is an Indonesian well-known banking company founded in 1957. The slogan “will always be on your side” is a commissive act shown by the modal verb “will” that indicates future commitment. Yet, the message that is conveyed by the bank is that BCA will always be ready to accompany its consumers. This is shown by the bank's commitment to open its operational offices all over Indonesia every day of the year without having a break for national holidays. Thus, the Bank wants to transmit the message that it will be present whenever and wherever it is needed.

d. Declarative

A declarative act refers to an act of uttering words that can change something after the utterance is produced. The speakers utter the words that can change the world for example by declaring, resigning, appointing, sentencing, and naming. There are four samples of declarative acts in the brand slogan data, and one of them is discussed here.

- (9) Lamborghini: We are not supercars, we are Lamborghini

Lamborghini is an Italian manufacturer of luxury supercars and sports cars based in Bolognese, Italy. In its slogan Lamborghini declares that they are not supercars, instead, they are just Lamborghini. This slogan is a declaration that Lamborghini is different from other cars. They presuppose that people already know what Lamborghini is without having to boast about their excellent quality. The brand wants to convey the value of a creative and free-living style, and more specifically the underlying meaning of attitude toward life through its slogan.

e. Expressive

The **expressive** act is the last speech act found in the company slogans. There are 6 slogans using this act. Expressive act is an act through which speakers (brands) express their feelings by making their world fit their internal psychological world. Expressive acts can be used to show happiness, or sadness, to thank, congratulate, apologize, or condole. Here are two samples of expressive acts found in fast food slogans.

- (10) McDonalds: I'm loving it

Theoretically, expressive acts should show the speakers, in this case the brands, expressions of feeling. But, in this case McDonalds uses the pronoun I, which represents the customers' voice about the product. So, the slogan “I'm loving it” is supposed to be expressed by the customers after they have McDonalds' products. The “I” voice in this slogan is in line with McDonalds' brand attitude that customers did want to be told what to do and how to feel.

- (11) KFC: It's finger lickin' good



Fig. 5. KFC slogan.

Similar to McDonalds' slogan, KFC slogan expresses the feeling after someone eats KFC fried chicken. It implies that the chicken is so delicious that people have to lick their fingers after eating, hence the slogan “finger lickin' good” came up. This phrase was familiarized by Dave Harman, who was licking his fingers while filming the ads for the product. The company wants to persuade their customers to buy KFC chicken because it is so good that the flavor stays in their fingers.

B. Relationship between Slogans and Products

Some slogans may have a direct or indirect relationship with the products being advertised. Directness here refers to the inclusion of the line of product or the indication of product name in the slogans. For example, a fast-food restaurant serving chicken includes the word “chicken” in its slogan. Otherwise, the relation is considered indirect if no specific mention of the products occurs in the slogan, and the connection

between the slogan and the product should be interpreted by the consumers themselves.

a. **Direct**

(12) Spotify: Music for everyone

Spotify is a music streaming service based in Stockholm, Sweden. Its main service is providing digital access to millions of songs to its subscribers. The slogan of Spotify says, “music for everyone” clearly indicates the main product of this company, which is music. This slogan is a representative act in which Spotify states the fact that it provides music for everyone who wants to subscribe to the company.

(13) Pantene: Hair so healthy it shines

Another sample of the direct relationship between the slogan and the product is shown by Pantene. Pantene is one of the companies under Procter & Gamble which mainly produces hair treatment products such as shampoos, conditioners, styling products, etcetera. The products can be directly inferred from its slogan which says, “Hair so healthy it shines.” This slogan contains the word “hair” which is the target of Pantene’s products. The intended message of this slogan is that by using Pantene shampoo, you can get healthy and shiny hair.

(14) Nescafe: It all starts with Nescafe

The last sample of slogans that provides a direct connection with its product is Nescafe. Nescafe is a brand of instant coffee made by the Vevey-based company Nestle. As the brand itself contains the word café which means coffee, people will directly associate it with coffee with Nescafe brand. The message of the slogan is that everything (your day, your activity) should be commenced by drinking a cup of Nescafe coffee.

a. **Indirect**

(15) Prudential: Always listening always understanding

Prudential is an insurance company based in New Jersey, USA. Its slogan, “always listening always understanding” does not give a direct clue about the product or service offered by the company. However, the meaning contained in the slogan can be clearly understood from the sentence. The slogan implies the company’s willingness to listen and to understand its customers. As an insurance company, the readiness to listen to its customers is a must.

(16) Nike: Just do it

Nike basically sells shoes or sports apparel. Its slogan says, “Just do it”. This slogan is categorized as a directive act as it asks the viewer to do something. It is not clear, though, what is supposed to be done. But the message implies that if you are wearing Nike shoes, you can start doing it, whatever it is. The word “just” is a persuasive word that suggests immediacy and implores people to act right away without hesitation or delay. However, there is no direct connection between the product sold (shoes) and the brand slogan since the slogan does not contain any clue about the product. Therefore, it depends on the readers to interpret the message of the slogan.

V. CONCLUSION

This research is done with two research questions, the first being the type of speech act in brand slogans and the second is the relationship between the speech acts of the slogans and the products of the brands.

From 100 samples of brand slogans, the findings show that 50 percent of the brands use representative acts in their slogans, 33 percent use directive acts, 7 percent use commissive acts, 6 percent use expressive acts, and 4 percent use declarative acts. The findings of this study suggest that brand slogans are mostly used to inform their customers about the brands or the products. They can make claims, statements, or suggestions about their products to make their brands more memorable in the consumers’ minds. The next most used speech act is the directive act, which suggests that some brands find it necessary to persuade their consumer to use their products.

However, the second finding shows that 52% of the slogans have no direct relation with the products sold by the brands. For example, Nike’s slogan “Just do it” does not imply that they are selling shoes. The result implies that slogans do not have to be directly related to the products being sold. Consumers can draw their interpretation of the message contained in the slogans.

The researcher expects that this research will be useful for the readers, particularly the advertisers in comprehending how the speech acts play an important role in creating brand slogans. Well-phrased slogans will stay in the minds of the consumers and eventually, they will enhance brand awareness. Moreover, slogans do not necessarily contain the product line or product names, yet the messages of the brands can be appropriately transferred to consumers.

However, the present paper is limited in several ways. First, the data were only taken from printed advertisements. Secondly, the speech acts discussed were only taken from one side, that is from the brands' or companies' point of view. Therefore, future researchers can expand the analysis by compiling data from multimodal sources such as video advertising. Additionally, the researchers can also take the consumers’ responses toward certain kinds of slogans. This will be a fruitful area of research in language and e-business.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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