

An Analysis of Figurative Language and Implicature in Smartphone Advertisements on Instagram

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ABSTRAK

Iklan pada umumnya menggunakan berbagai strategi untuk mendorong audiens sasaran membeli produk yang ditawarkan. Beberapa strategi tersebut meliputi penggunaan bahasa figuratif dan pelanggaran maksim. Meskipun sejumlah penelitian telah mengkaji kedua strategi tersebut dalam berbagai jenis iklan, masih sedikit penelitian yang menelaah keduanya secara bersamaan, khususnya pada caption Instagram produk *smartphone*. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan mengeksplorasi lebih lanjut penggunaan bahasa figuratif dan pelanggaran maksim dalam *caption* Instagram *smartphone* Samsung. Sebanyak enam *caption* dianalisis dan dipilih secara acak, masing-masing satu *caption* untuk setiap bulan dari Januari hingga Juni 2026. Data dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metafora dan personifikasi merupakan jenis bahasa figuratif yang paling sering digunakan dalam *caption* tersebut. Selain itu, maksim kualitas merupakan maksim yang paling sering dilanggar. Implikatur umum yang ditemukan dalam *caption-caption* yang dianalisis menunjukkan bahwa Samsung berupaya menonjolkan kemampuan kamera pada *smartphone* seri Galaxy. Penelitian ini juga menemukan adanya hubungan antara bahasa figuratif yang digunakan dengan maksim yang dilanggar.

Kata kunci: bahasa figuratif, pelanggaran maksim, implikatur, iklan

ABSTRACT

Advertisements commonly use various strategies to encourage their target audience to buy their products. Some of these strategies include using figurative language and maxim violation. Although several studies have investigated these in various advertisements, few have examined both variables, especially in Instagram captions of smartphone products. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap by further exploring the use figurative language and maxim violation in the Instagram captions of Samsung smartphones. A total of six captions are analyzed and randomly selected, one caption for each month from January to June 2026. The data is analyzed qualitatively. The findings revealed that metaphor and personification are most frequently used in the captions. The maxim of quality is also mostly violated. The general implicature from the analyzed captions is that Samsung would like to highlight the capabilities of the camera in their Galaxy smartphones. It was also found that there is a relation between the figurative language used and the maxims that are violated.

Keywords: figurative language, maxim violation, implicature, advertisement

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the main purposes of advertisements is to encourage consumers to buy the advertised products (Chen & Yang, 2020). Therefore, advertisers have to use language as creatively as possible so that they can influence their target audience. One way in which language can be used imaginatively is by using figurative language (Rosli & Azman, 2024).

In addition to figurative language, advertisements use various other strategies to try and persuade people, one of which is by violating the maxims in Grice's cooperative principle (Grice, 1975). By violating these maxims, the advertisements can become more interesting, which in turn can persuade the consumers to buy the products and in the end improve a particular company's sales. When a maxim is violated, the meaning usually becomes implicit, or in other words, the violation of maxims results in implicatures.

Various studies have been conducted on the use of figurative language in advertisements. For example, the study by Atmaja (2022) which explored how figurative language is used in automotive advertisement slogans, or the study by Hosana et al. (2022) which investigated figurative language use in snack advertising slogans. Another study by Anastari et al. (2024) analyzed the figurative language used in fashion and beauty advertisements.

Furthermore, with regards to maxim violation and implicatures, there are also numerous studies which explore them in various media. For instance, there are studies which investigate implicatures in memes (Nugroho, 2024; Nugroho & Liemantara, 2024; Nugroho & Stardy, 2025). Other studies which examine the violation of maxim in advertisements include the study by Tsojon and Jonah (2016) and Alzahrani's (2023) research.

Although various studies have been done on the topic of figurative language and implicatures, few have tried to combine both, especially in the context of smartphone advertisements on Instagram. Hence, the study attempts to fill this gap by taking a closer look at how Instagram captions of smartphone advertisements utilize figurative language and what kind of implicatures can be inferred from the maxims that are violated in the captions. Based on this background, the researchers formulate the following research questions.

- 1) What kind of figurative language can be found in the Instagram captions of Samsung Galaxy advertisements?
- 2) What maxims are violated in the Instagram captions of Samsung Galaxy advertisements and what implicature can be inferred from the violations?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Figurative Language

Figurative language is a form of language in which the meaning is not the literal one. It has several functions such as strengthening meaning or reviving a non-living object. It may involve analogies to similar concepts or may even involve exaggerations (Siswantoro, 2002). When comparisons are made in figurative language, it is usually done to make something more interesting. However, since figurative language cannot be understood literally, the meaning can be ambiguous and difficult to understand (Jay, 2003).

There are various types of figurative language proposed by numerous experts. One classification of figurative language that is often used in studies is the one proposed by Perrine (1978). He proposes twelve types which include metaphor, simile, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy,

symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

According to Grice (1975), in order for communication to be successful, people have to follow certain maxims, namely the maxim of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. Each maxim is concerned with specific points. For example, the maxim of quality deals with telling the truth, while the maxim of quantity is related to the amount of information that is given in an interaction. The maxim of relevance describes that when people communicate, the utterances should be related to the previous one. Lastly, the maxim of manner deals with how we provide information in a way that should be clear and not ambiguous.

Nevertheless, in daily conversation, people do not always follow these maxims. In fact, people violate or flout the maxims deliberately. However, they do so with certain purpose in mind. For example, someone may flout the maxim of quality or lie with the purpose of protecting the hearer's feelings because if the person were to say the truth, they might end up hurting their feelings.

Lastly, when people violate the maxims, the meaning conveyed behind the utterances usually become implicit. In other words, we cannot try to understand the utterance literally. This violation gives rise to implicature. With implicature, people have to go beyond the literal meaning of the words and try to deduce the hidden additional meaning behind an utterance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative approach since the data is not analyzed using specific calculations and does not involve mathematical formulas. Instead, the data is analyzed based on the researchers interpretation based on the

existing framework related to figurative language and implicature.

The source of data is taken from the Instagram posts in the *samsungwithgalaxy* account. This account is the official Instagram account from Samsung but focuses on the Galaxy lines of smartphones. The data is collected using purposive sampling. More specifically, not all posts in this account are analyzed. The study limits to only randomly taking 1 post from each month starting from January until June 2026. The post must include figurative language and has at least one maxim that is violated, which will lead to an implicature. Therefore, a total of 6 data are analyzed in this study. Moreover, the analysis is limited to only the captions without taking into account the images or other modes found in the posts.

Lastly, the data is analyzed using the figurative language classification from Perrine (1978) and the maxim and implicature from Grice (1975). Each post is analyzed in terms of what kind of figurative language is used, what maxims are violated, and what is the implicature that can be inferred from the violation of the maxim. The results are also briefly analyzed in terms of the relation between the type of figurative language and the violation of the maxim along with the implicature.

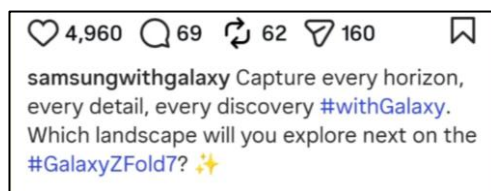
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

There are six posts that are analyzed in this study. This section describes the findings related to each of the six posts.

Post 1: 3 January 2026

The first that is examined is posted on 3 January 2026. The caption is as follows:

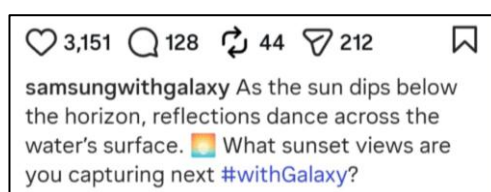
Figure 1. Screenshot of Caption 1

From the caption above, it can be seen that the figurative language used is hyperbole because it is impossible to actually capture every horizon, every detail and every discovery. In other words, this is an exaggeration.

Additionally, in terms of the maxim that is violated, it can be said that this post violates the maxims of quality and manner. It violates the maxim of quality because it is a lie to say that we can capture every horizon and the others mentioned in the post. Moreover, it violates the maxim of manner because it is ambiguous in the sense that it is not clear what is meant by horizons, details, and discovery. What can be considered as a horizon or a discovery? As for the implicature, it can be interpreted that Samsung would like to emphasize on the quality of their camera which is so sophisticated that it is able to capture all of the things stated in the post.

Post 2: 14 February 2026

The second post that is investigated is posted on 14 February 2026 with the following caption:

Figure 2. Screenshot of Caption 2

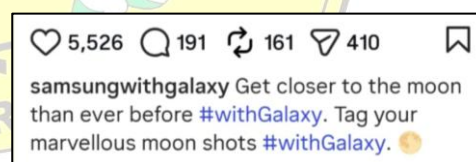
There are two figurative language used in this post. The first is metaphor in the part "... the sun dips below the horizon ...". The word "dip" here cannot be understood

literally but instead it means the sun is setting. As for the part of the caption "... reflections dance across the water's surface," it can be considered as a personification because it gives a human attribute to the non-living thing, namely "reflections." In other words, it is impossible for a reflection to actually dance.

In terms of the violated maxim, this post also violates the maxim of quality since it is not true that the sun can dip and reflections can dance. Moreover, it violates the maxim of manner again because it is also ambiguous what it means by dancing across the water's surface. The implicit hidden meaning that can be deduced is that the camera of the smartphones is so good and advanced that a picture taken using the phone can produce images that is so detailed that it gives the impression of the reflections dancing on the water.

Post 3: 7 March 2026

The third post is dated 7 March 2026. It has the following caption:

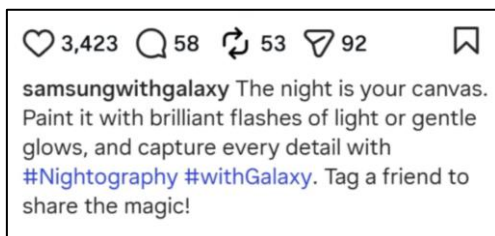
Figure 3. Screenshot of Caption 3

From this post, it can be seen that the figurative language that can be found here is hyperbole because it is an exaggeration to say that we can get closer to the moon using just the camera in the smartphone.

Furthermore, the maxim that is violated is still the maxim of quality since it cannot be true that we can get closer to the moon using our smartphone camera. From this violation, the implicature that can be interpreted is that the zooming capabilities of the camera is so advanced and sophisticated that we are able to see the moon in such detail as if we were actually close to the moon.

Post 4: 9 April 2026

This post is posted on 9 April 2026 with the following caption:

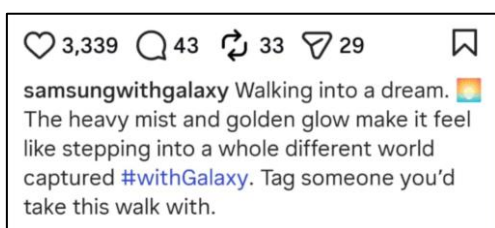
Figure 4. Screenshot of Caption 4

From the caption above, it can be said that metaphor is used since it compares between the night and a canvas, something that you can actually paint on. Besides metaphor, personification is also used here because the word "gentle" which is commonly a living being's attribute is added to the word "glow".

With regards to the maxim that is violated, it can be seen that both the maxim of quality and manner are once again violated. It is impossible to treat the night as a canvas, so it is a lie. Moreover, it is actually unclear or ambiguous what it means to paint the night. The brilliant flashes and gentle glows are also ambiguous. Nonetheless, from the caption it can be concluded that Samsung wanted to highlight the ability of their smartphones' cameras to be able to capture every detail, even though the photos are taken at night.

Post 5: 29 May 2026

The next post which was uploaded on 29 May 2026 contains the caption below:

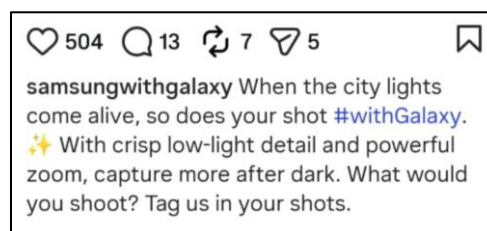
Figure 5. Screenshot of Caption 5

Based on this caption, it can be said that the figurative language used here is metaphor for the expression "walking into a dream". The dream here is not the literal dream since you cannot walk into one, so most likely it is something that can be associated with a condition that is so 'unreal' that it feels like a dream. Simile is also used here in the expression "... making it feel like stepping into a whole different world ..." since it uses the word like to make a sort of comparison.

As for the maxims that are violated, it can be argued that quality is once again violated because it is not true that someone can actually walk into a dream. Furthermore, the maxim of quantity is also violated because the information shared is not sufficient. What does "a whole different world" actually mean? The information in the post does not make it easy to fully understand the message behind the utterance, or it can be said that there is not enough information in the post to help make sense of the meaning of the utterance. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that Samsung is trying to emphasize that even in foggy weather, especially in the afternoon when the colors more or less turn somewhat orange, the camera is able to capture every detail in such a way that the image looks surreal as if we just stepped into a dream or in another world. Simply put, the camera is very advanced and sophisticated.

Post 6: 26 June 2026

The final post analyzed in this study is posted on 26 June 2026. The caption for this post is as follows:

Figure 6. Screenshot of Caption 6

In the post above, personification is employed as it gives living attributes to things that are not supposed to be alive, namely city lights and shots. More specifically, it is impossible for lights or shots to actually “come alive”.

As for the violated maxim, just as before, the maxim of quality is flouted since it cannot be true that lights and shots can come alive. It can also be said that this post violates the maxim of manner since it is unclear or ambiguous what it means by “come alive.” Does it mean that the lights are on because it is already night time? How about the shots? In what way can it come alive?

Discussion

After all of the data have been analyzed, the findings can be summarized in the tables below.

Table 1. Summary of Figurative Language

No.	Figurative Language	Frequency
1	Hyperbole	2
2	Metaphor	3
3	Personification	3
4	Simile	1

Table 2. Summary of Violated Maxim

No.	Violated Maxim	Frequency
1	Quality	6
2	Quantity	1
3	Relevance	-
4	Manner	4

The tables above show that in terms of figurative language, out of the twelve proposed types, only four of them were found in the six posts under study. The most frequent is metaphor and personification. This finding is different with the findings from the research by Anastari et al. (2024) since they found that hyperbole was the most frequently used in

the beauty advertisements. Similarly, Atmaja (2022) also found that hyperbole was the most frequently used figurative language. Nevertheless, the current findings are partly supported by the results of the study by Hosana et al. (2022) as they also found metaphor to be the most frequent.

Next, in terms of the maxims that are violated, out of the four maxims, only the maxim of relevance is not found in the analyzed Instagram captions. This is probably due to the fact that relevance maxims are more commonly violated in conversations where the response of the second person does not match with the utterance from the first person. Since the data here is not in the form of conversations, it would be logical that this maxim is not violated. The maxim that is violated the most is the maxim of quality, in which all 6 data contains this violation. In other words, it can be concluded that advertisements in general tend to not entirely say the truth. This finding does not align with the results of Alzahrani's (2023) research since it was found that quantity was mostly violated here. Nevertheless, in both studies, the maxim of quantity is violated in terms of the amount of information that is shared which is not sufficient.

Last but not least, with regards to the implicature deduced from the posts, in general, all of the implicature from all six posts seem to suggest that Samsung would like to highlight the capability of the camera in their phones which are very sophisticated and can take excellent and detailed photos, no matter the condition, be it during the day or even in the evening. As for the relation between the figurative language and violated maxims, it can be seen that every time a figurative language is used, the maxim of quality is always violated. Meaning that when advertisers use this kind of language, they are basically not telling the whole truth. This is understandable as they should try to convince consumers to buy their products,

and it may not be as effective if they try to be truthful or describe their products in accordance with their actual capability, which may be good, but not as sophisticated as they make it out to be.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Advertisements commonly use various strategies to persuade and encourage their target audience to purchase their advertised products. These strategies include using figurative language and maxim violation. Based on the findings of the current study, it was found that only four types of figurative language was used in the captions of the Samsung Galaxy products, with metaphor and personification being the most frequent. As for the maxims that are violated, none of the captions violated the maxim of relevance and the quality maxim was most frequently flouted. The general implicature that can be inferred from the six posts is that Samsung would like to highlight the performance and capabilities of the camera in their smartphones which can take beautiful and very detailed photos in various conditions.

Lastly, this study is limited in various aspects. It is hoped that future studies can develop this topic further. For instance, future research can analyze a much larger amount of data. They can also try to compare between different brands or even different products to see whether they use similar or different figurative language or if they violate similar or different maxims.

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