

Figurative Language in *Love and Deepspace* Instagram Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the use of figurative language in Instagram advertisement posts by the official *Love and Deepspace* account. The aim of this study is to identify the types of figurative language based on Harris' (2018) figurative language theory and explore their meanings within the context of each Instagram post. A qualitative method was applied to analyze 40 Instagram posts. Data collection involved selecting relevant posts, taking screenshots, and collecting sentences containing figurative language. These were categorized according to Harris' (2018) theory, while Jackson's (2013) theory of denotation and connotation was used to interpret meaning. Each sentence was also examined alongside visual content to understand how language and imagery work together to convey meaning. The results show that the advertisements used simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, allusion, and transferred epithet. The figurative language in these advertisements helps build emotional connections, enhance storytelling, create memorable experiences, and encourage participation in limited-time events.

Keywords: advertisements, figurative language, Instagram post

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a marketing tool used to promote and persuade people (Ruslinah, 2017, as cited in Rosli & Azman, 2024). One strategy to make advertisements more persuasive is by using figurative language, which helps create memorable language that effectively resonates with audiences (Haya, 2019, as cited in Rosli & Azman, 2024). Among various platforms, Instagram is the most popular and effective platform for game promotion because it targets teenagers and young adults through algorithms and achieves higher engagement rates (Challa & Anute, 2021). The effectiveness of Instagram marketing is shown by the number of likes a post receives, which indicate strong audience interest (Amriel & Ariescy, 2021). The higher the engagement rate, the more effective the advertisement is considered. According to Dvir-Gvirsman (2019, as cited in Tenenboim, 2022), high-engagement posts are more likely to capture attention and inspire similar content creation, showing that engagement rate is a valuable indicator of advertising success on Instagram.

One example of a game that effectively uses Instagram marketing is *Love and Deepspace*. The writer used Phlanx.com on November 24, 2024, and found that *Love and Deepspace* account had an average of 32,625 likes per post and a 5.44% engagement rate, which is above the ideal average of 3.78% (Phlanx.com, n.d.). *Love and Deepspace* is a 3D dating simulation game set in a science fiction world integrated with a battle system. Players aim to find love while protecting humanity and crises together. The game currently has four love interests, Xavier, Zayne, Rafayel, and Sylus. Each of the characters have unique personalities, special powers, and storyline. Players build relationships with these characters, engaging in both romantic and battle experiences (Love and Deepspace, n.d.).

The writer chose 40 Instagram posts from *Love and Deepspace* published between March 2024 - September 2024 as the data. All selected posts had at least 6,000 likes, which was used as the minimum to show they are effective. According to Sánchez Torres et al. (2018), a post needs at least 1,000 likes to be considered effective advertising because it means people

liked and noticed it. This period was chosen due to significant game updates, limited-time promotional events, and the introduction of a new character. According to Lin (2024), limited time items and promotional events create urgency, encouraging players to make quick purchases due to the fear of missing out (FOMO). As a result, in September 2024, *Love and Deepspace* was the second highest-earning mobile game, with its revenue increasing every month. This achievement shows that it is the most popular dating game among players (Ashiilah, 2024).

There are two main reasons the writer chose to analyze *Love and Deepspace*. First, the game is relatively new. It was released in January 2024 by InFold PTE. LTD and quickly gained over 9.2 million downloads (Aso World, 2024). By August 11, 2024, it had earned \$200 million and ranked first in China and fourth globally (36Kr English, 2024). Second, *Love and Deepspace* Instagram ads apply figurative language to capture audience interest, matching the game's visual style and emotional themes. Figurative language in ads helps influence consumer perception (Pho-Klang, 2020). For example, one post contains the sentence "As you can see, I accidentally left some pearls on your cheek. I forgot to take them back" (Love and Deepspace, n.d.). This sentence is figurative because 'pearls' is a metaphor for tears. It shows how figurative language enhances storytelling by creating vivid imagery and engaging the audience's imagination (Ayu & Simanjuntak, 2025). Fitriana and Rois (2023) explain that figurative language helps build emotional connections between players and characters and enhances storytelling. Additionally, metaphors strengthen character identity and make the game more immersive, fostering deeper player engagement and loyalty.

Through this study, the writer wants to identify the types of figurative language used in *Love and Deepspace* Instagram advertisement posts and to analyze the meaning of the sentences containing figurative language in the advertisement contexts. In analyzing these advertisements, this study applied the theory of figurative language by Harris' (2018). Harris' (2018) explains that figurative language is important for communication because it uses words or expression in imaginative ways that goes beyond the literal meaning of words. Harris' (2018) points out that there are eleven types of figurative language, namely simile, analogy, metaphor, catachresis, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, allusion, eponym, apostrophe, and transferred epithet.

METHODS

In this study, the writer used a qualitative method proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2017). The writer analyzed the data using Harris' (2018) theory of figurative language, and interpreted the meanings within the context of each Instagram advertisement by applying Jackson's (2013) theory of denotation and connotation. The data consisted of sentences containing figurative language taken from Instagram advertisement posts with 6,000 likes or more. The data source consisted of 40 Instagram posts from *Love and Deepspace* (Love and Deepspace, n.d.) that contained sentences. Both single and multiple posts were examined to analyze the use of figurative language. The writer focused only on the sentences shown in the images and did not include captions.

To collect the data, the writer conducted several steps. First, the writer checked *Love and Deepspace* Instagram posts with the highest number of likes, with a minimum of 6,000 likes. The writer collected all the sentences from the Instagram posts first, without deciding if they contained figurative language. During the analysis process, the writer identified which sentences contained figurative language and classified them using Harris' (2018) framework. Then, the writer took screenshots of the Instagram posts with the sentences that included number of likes and date of posting. The writer ensured that the 40 selected posts contained sentences and the most number of likes. The writer wrote down the sentences in the table to help with the analysis. After collecting the data, the writer assigned a number to each sentence to

differentiate and organize the data across different posts. The numbering system used two digits. The first digit represents the post number. For example, 1 for the first post, 2 for the second post, etc. The second digit represents the sentence number within that specific post, numbered sequentially from the beginning of the post. For example, 1 refers to the first sentence, 2 to the second sentence, etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The writer presented the data collected from the analysis of *Love and Deepspace* Instagram advertisement posts using the figurative language theory by Harris' (2018), as explained below.

Types of Figurative Language

According to Harris (2018), there are eleven types of figurative language: simile, analogy, metaphor, catachresis, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, allusion, eponym, apostrophe, transferred epithet. The findings show that only simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, allusion, transferred epithet can be found in *Love and Deepspace* Instagram advertisement posts. Further explanations on each finding are provided below.

Simile

Simile is a comparison of two different objects that have one similar characteristic (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 14.1 – Now **it's like a glowing light bulb**.

The word "it's" refers to Galaxy Kid, the alien mascot of Xavier's character, drawn by the player. The sentence compares Galaxy Kid to a light bulb using the word "like", which is a simile. At first, this comparison may seem unusual because it connects two very different things, Galaxy Kid, a fictional alien drawing, and a light bulb, a common household object. However, the simile works by highlighting their shared physical and emotional qualities, both give off warm and positive vibes. The Galaxy Kid wears a helmet that gives it a round shape, making it looks bright, cute, and friendly, that looks like a glowing light bulb.

Metaphor

Metaphor compares two different things by stating that the subject is the image (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 22.1 – **If you want to tame me**, you'll need more than that.

The word "tame" is used figuratively to describe gaining Sylus's trust, not literally training him like an animal. Sylus is the powerful and dangerous leader of a criminal organization called Onychinus. To "tame" Sylus means to create a bond strong enough that he willingly chooses to protect and care for the player. In this way, "tame" is a metaphor for emotional connection and relationship development, where love and trust help Sylus open up and show his true feelings.

Metonymy

Metonymy replaces the name of something with something connected with it (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 19.1 – It’s time to bring the culprit to **justice!**

This sentence is a metonymy because the word “justice” stands in for the act of punishing someone for doing wrong. In the *Love and Deepspace* game, the player and the characters have a mission to fight the Wanderer Heartbreaker, an alien enemy that causes emotional damage, makes couples break up, and leaves people with broken hearts. Instead of directly saying “punish the culprit,” the sentence uses “justice” as a more powerful word.

Personification

Personification is when non-human things are given human qualities (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 1.1 – **The ice cream scoops have to undergo a great challenge every time they go out. They must resist eating the boat** before reaching their destination!

This sentence is a personification because it gives human-like qualities to something non-living. The ice cream scoops plushie is described as if it has human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. The scoops are described as going through challenges and resisting the temptation to eat the banana boat, which are human actions. In both real life and the game, a plushie is just a soft toy used for collection.

Allusion

An allusion is when a famous person, place or event is briefly mentioned (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 6.1 - **The legendary chaste and mysterious animal**, if encountered, can start an unlimited period of good luck.

This sentence is an allusion because it refers to a unicorn, a mythical creature that appears in many legends and stories. The sentence does not directly name the unicorn but calls it a “legendary and chaste mysterious animal,” assuming that readers will recognize the description and the plushie in the picture is shaped like a unicorn. Unicorns are often seen as symbols of good fortune, innocence, and power, even if they have never seen one in real life. The sentence says that “if encountered, can start an unlimited period of good luck,” alludes to the magical beliefs surrounding unicorns in folklore.

Transferred Epithet

A transferred epithet occurs when an adjective is used to modify a noun in an unusual way (Harris, 2018). Here is one of the examples.

Sentence 24.1 – Even when a heavy snowfall covers all, the footprints left on that **silent snowy night** remain in someone’s memory.

This sentence is a transferred epithet because the adjective “silent” describes “night,” even though silence is not a literal quality of night. Silence is typically associated with the atmosphere or environment. Time itself cannot be silent, but by transferring the adjective to “night,” the sentence evokes a figurative sense of calm and peace. The phrase “silent snowy night” symbolically reflects Zayne’s feelings to remember precious memories.

Meanings of Figurative Language in the Context of Advertisements

In this section, the writer analyzes how sentences combine verbal and non-verbal elements to convey their full meaning based on denotative and connotative theory by Jackson (2013), the message of the advertisements, and the creator's intended purpose. The explanations are provided below.

1. Sentence 14.1 – Now **it's like a glowing light bulb**.

The advertisement invites players to participate in a creative activity called "Let's Draw Galaxy Kid," where they complete the drawing of Galaxy Kid, Xavier's alien mascot. Visually, Galaxy Kid is shown half-finished. Xavier's figurative comment, "Now it's like a glowing light bulb," creates a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Denotatively, it means the drawing looks like the shape of a glowing light bulb. Connotatively, comparing it to a glowing bulb suggests ideas like creativity, curiosity, and brightness, which match with the friendly and supporting atmosphere. The use of purple, a color associated with creativity, imagination, and mystery, matches the space theme and reinforces Xavier's personality. Overall, the figurative language and visual design in the ad work together to show that the creator wants viewers to enjoy being creative and see the drawing activity as a fun and meaningful opportunity to feel more connected to Xavier.

2. Sentence 22.1 – **If you want to tame me**, you'll need more than that.

The Instagram post promotes a limited-time card called "No Defense Zone", featuring Sylus. Visually, he appears in a dark black, intimate setting with a confident gaze, an open shirt, and a black choker, giving off a seductive and mysterious vibe. The figurative sentence "If you want to tame me, you'll need more than that" is used as the main verbal element. Denotatively, it means that Sylus is challenging the viewer to try harder to win him over. Connotatively, the word "tame" is often used to describe controlling wild animals, which here symbolizes Sylus's emotional resistance and a power dynamic between him and the player. The message of the ad is to show Sylus as someone who is not easily won over, appealing to viewers who enjoy mysterious or emotionally complex characters. The creator uses both the visuals and language to make viewers feel drawn in, encouraging them to engage with the story and build a deeper relationship with Sylus.

3. Sentence 19.1 – It's time to bring the culprit to **justice!**

The Instagram post promotes a story event featuring Heartbreaker as the enemy who must be stopped. The line "It's time to bring the culprit to justice!" functions as a call to action and uses metonymy to make the story feel dramatic. Denotatively, it refers to punishing Heartbreaker, the wanderer responsible for breaking couples apart. Connotatively, the words "culprit" and "justice" bring in legal and moral ideas, framing Heartbreaker as a villain and making the situation feel serious and important. Visually, the use of purple-pink colors, heart symbols, and music notes adds a playful atmosphere, while Heartbreaker's cartoonish blue color suggests sadness and represents his role in breaking couples apart. The message of the ad is to pull players into a story where love and teamwork are tested. The figurative language helps make the mission feel meaningful and heroic. The creator uses both the visual and verbal elements to grab the player's interest by making them become a hero in the story.

4. Sentence 1.1 – **The ice cream scoops have to undergo a great challenge every time they go out. They must resist eating the boat** before reaching their destination!

The post introduces a new plushie called Banana Boat. Visually, the plushie design features scoops of ice cream sitting on a banana, resembling a banana split. The bright yellow color evokes feelings of happiness and optimism while also creating urgency. The sentence “The ice cream scoops have to undergo a great challenge every time they go out. They must resist eating the boat before reaching their destination!” use personification to give a short story to make the plushie seem alive like a human. Denotatively, the sentence means the ice cream scoops face a challenge each time they go out. Connotatively, the idea of resisting the urge to eat their boat suggests patience and self-control. The message of the ad is to show that the plushie is not just a prize, but a symbol of the player’s effort and determination in the claw machine game. The creator makes the plushie more lovable and emotionally appealing to viewers.

5. Sentence 24.1 – Even when a heavy snowfall covers all, the footprints left on that **silent snowy night** remain in someone’s memory.

This Instagram advertisement features the character Zayne from *Love and Deepspace*, introducing his new outfit called "Midnight Silence". The sentence “Even when a heavy snowfall covers all, the footprints left on that silent snowy night remain in someone’s memory” uses a transferred epithet. Denotatively, the sentence describes how footprints can still be remembered even after being covered by snow. Connotatively, the "footprints" symbolize meaningful memories that last a long time. The phrase “silent snowy night” suggests calmness, which matches with Zayne’s personality. Visually, he appears composed in elegant black winter clothing, giving him a formal and gentlemanly look. The message of the ad is to show Zayne as someone who holds onto special memories with the player. The creator combines figurative language and visuals to attract viewers by sparking curiosity about Zayne’s feelings and portraying him as a caring character.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study found that there are only 6 types used in the advertisement out of the 11 types of figurative language Harris’ (2018). They are simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, allusion, and transferred epithet. The figurative language in each sentence was used to support the game's storytelling, evoke emotional responses, and strengthen the connection between players and characters. When combined with strong visual design, the use of figurative language made the advertisements more interesting, memorable, and persuasive. It encouraged players to participate in events and maintain their interest in the game. Overall, *Love and Deepspace* effectively uses figurative language and visual storytelling in its Instagram marketing to attract and engage its target audience, contributing to the game's success in the competitive mobile game industry. Last but not least, the writer hopes that this study’s result can be a useful reference for those who want to do future research on the similar topic of figurative language in game advertising.

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