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Ludic pitch: what can we learn from the pitchers of Shark Tank in wordplaying on brands and product lexicons to generate laughter from the sharks?

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Abstract

Pitches of Shark Tank, an award-winning American investment reality show, offer the viewers a unique way of pitching their brands and products. We call it a ludic pitch. To indicate that this unique pitch requires a neologism, we employed the theories of market pitching discourse by Sherry, brand name's association by Meyers-Levi, self-reference by Bartlett, language play by Crystal, and mnemonology by Whorten and Hunt. We argue that this type of pitching is in need of neologism since this pitch has distinctive features compared to the general pitch. A ludic pitch emphasizes wordplaying on brand and product lexicons through visual-medial aids and theatrical acts to generate laughter from the catchers or sharks and to lighten the mood of the pitch. The pitchers exercise a ludic pitch through intra-referential, inter-referential, and extra-referential fashions. The first focuses on brand and product lexicon wordplays through deriving possible meronymous forms of the brand or product lexicons. The second emphasizes synonymity of a wordplay on the pitched brand and product lexicons. The third highlights the use of seemingly unrelated and irrelevant intertextual references to wordplay on the brand and product lexicons. This study might be employed as a theoretical basis to encourage a further examination over the ludic pitch on other pitching programs or non-televised pitches.

Keywords: lexicons, ludic, pitch, Shark Tank, wordplay.

1. Introduction

Pitching a product before potential investors or catchers drives the pitchers to be creative in exploiting verbal and nonverbal expressions. The combination of verbal and nonverbal expressions, as studied by Clark, Cornelissen, and Healey (2019), comprise the use of verbal tactics and gestures. To trigger positive influences in the catchers, one has to consider the combination of verbal tactics and gestures. This creativity is vividly depicted in the Shark Tank television program. In this program, pitchers attempt to persuade and convince the catchers, called sharks, through the combination of verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal means. As seen from the program, pitchers not only carefully select the verbal expressions but also creatively select visual aids and theatrical acts to support the verbalism of the pitch.

These creativities in pitching products before the sharks in Shark Tank have drawn scholars to investigate and study them. Previous studies tend to circumnavigate the strategies of successful pitching through cultural aspects as studied by Al-Ghamdi and Alghofaily (2019), rational

argumentation and emotion relegation as investigated by Fernández-Vázquez, J. S. and Álvarez-Delgado (2020), the rhetoric of ingratiation as researched by Sanchez-Ruiz, Wood, and Long-Ruboyianes (2021), and verbal authenticity by Markowitz, Kouchaki, Gino, Hancock, and Boyd (2022). The gap left by these studies is the wordplaying on brands and product lexicons to make the sharks laugh and to mnemonically implant the pictures of the products, and to influence the decisions by the sharks. The following example might help comprehend the statement:

Josh:	At Manscaped, we're dedicated to beautifying and refining what truly makes a man a man. We have crafted the only kit you would ever need to practice a proper lawn care.
Sharks:	(laughing)
Steve:	When it comes to regions left neglected for far too long, we give you the lawnmower 2.0. (Josh starts using the lawnmower 2.0 to trim hedges around a small plant in a pot). A trimmer careful enough to cut through unruly shrubbery with abandon. (Josh takes the hedges and blows them away).
Sharks:	(laughing)
Steve:	As you can see, when you trim the hedges, the tree stands taller.
Sharks:	(laughing louder)

Manscaped is a male grooming and hygiene brand. One of the products is lawn mower 2.0 designed to trim male hair on under the belt region. Josh King and Steve King, the pitchers, brought a pot of bonsai-like plant abundant with shrubs. This visual aid has already drawn a smile since it resembles men's private parts. The smile turned into laughter when Steve wordplayed on the product and Josh acted out on the product with the private part-resembling tree. The wordplay was seen from the use of connotative words like "shrubbery," "hedges," and "tree." Applied in the line "as you can see, when you trim the hedges, the tree stands taller," the connotative words worked at the climax to draw a burst of laughter from the sharks. This example indicates that the brand name of lawn mower is wordplayed by deriving connotative words from it and evoking laughter. Through the laughter, the pitch might generate a positive vibe and impression. In the context of language play by professionals, as stated by Crystal (2001), these wordplays are aimed at getting a notice from anyone that becomes the advertising target. Thus, any wordplays expressed by the professionals are constructed to generate a positive vibe and impression. Through this positive vibe and impression, the brand and product lexicons, designed and constructed for identification and reputation (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004), might leave positive outcomes of the pitch.

The use of wordplays with visual and theatrical aids in a pitching context is the gap left by the previous studies. Departing from this gap, we argue that pitching blended in comedic fashion through the use of those attributive plays should be called ludic pitch. To indicate that a ludic pitch is significant in the process of a pitch, we propose the following questions:

1. What is a ludic pitch?
2. What types of ludic pitch can be formulated?

To address the questions, we employed the theories of market pitching discourse by Sherry (1988), brand name's association by Meyers-Levi (1989), self-reference by Bartlett (1987), language play by Crystal (1998), and mnemonology by Whorten and Hunt (2011). The first theory was implemented to address how pitching was carried out by the pitchers in Shark Tank, the second

to address how brand names were used in an associative fashion aimed at influencing the targets, the third to reveal the types of self-reference in regard to the reflexivity of the brands, the fourth to address how brand names are wordplayed to generate comedic scenes and responses, and the fifth to indicate how wordplays are devised in a rote repetition to generate mnemonic memorability.

2. Literature review: the roles of self-reference based wordplays in the pitching of brand names

The aim of pitching, as indicated by Sherry (1988), is to transform and convert a spectator into a participant and finally into a consumer through an incantative scripted presentation. As it is necessary to deliver a pitch in an incantative fashion, selective uses of verbal and nonverbal expressions are necessary. Clarke, Cornelissen, and Healey (2018) indicate that figurative languages could be used as a verbal tactic and gestures as a nonverbal tactic in constructing the incantative force from a pitch. One of those verbal and nonverbal tactics is to design a language play which involves not only verbal expressions but also visual and operative fashions.

One of the features of language play, as implied by Crystal (2001), is to have a deviation over the usual or normal linguistic behaviour while at the same time requiring the deviation to remain within a particular linguistic territory. Thus, in the context of pitching, when brand names are wordplayed, the pitchers are required to linguistically and culturally comprehend who the catchers are, what they say, what jokes could move them to tears, and how to combine verbal and nonverbal expressions along with medial assistances to deliver the wordplays. Through these wordplays of the pitched products, ludicity is generated. Ludicity roots from the word *ludus*, structured play (Caillois, 2001). Through this structure, playfulness, as implied by Huizinga (2014), is expected to emerge through various forms. Lopes (2005) implies that ludicity can manifest through play, game, recreation, leisure and ludic objects. In the context of pitching, it might fall into a play and a game due to their competitive nature. On the other hand, the pitched products could fall into the category of ludic objects due to the way the pitchers wordplay on them. To be able to wordplay on a brand name, one has to carefully construct the associative meaning and implications of the brand names. As studied by Meyers-Levi (1989), through associations, brand names might evoke memorability. To create this memorability, in the context of language play, wordplays might hold a significant role and influence. As studied by Reece, Van der Bergh, and Li (1994), wordplay is one of the factors in triggering positive impacts over memorability with self-reference as the most frequent use. That self-reference plays a crucial role in memorability-induced wordplays indicates that the pitchers have to construct verbal, gestural, and visual associations referentially and derivatively out of the brand.

In the context of brand names, self-referencing, as suggested by Pühringer and Siegert (2007), is a tool for raising brand awareness from which distinctiveness of the brand might be coming to recognition. The process of self-referencing, as suggested by Bartlett (1987), demands reflexivity. The reflexivity in relation to self-referencing might take the forms of indexical signs, egocentric particulars, token-reflexive words, semantical reflexivity, tautological reflexivity, and set-theoretical reflexivity (Bartlett, 1987). The reflexivity involves the use of verbal expressions, verbal intertextualities, verbal propositions, and verbal paradoxes to make reference of one's self. In the context of pitching, this reflexivity might be employed to make a reference to the brand name as the self. Through this reference, when words are at play, memorability might be expected.

The aim of evoking memorability implies that concerns over mnemonics are taken into account. In the context of pitches, which is promotional and advertising in nature, mnemonic devices play a

significant part in introducing the brand and product lexicons to the potential investors or customers with an expectation that the lexicons stay in their memories. Mnemonic devices can be exercised, as suggested by Yalch (1991), through rhymical musical expressions and through what Whorten and Hunt (2011) call rote repetitions. Self-reference to the brand and product lexicons could be exercised to trigger the expected mnemonic devices with direct references or indirect references to wordplays. When wordplays are selected as a means to generate mnemonics, synonymy and meronymy could be implemented.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design, data, and data sources

Shark Tank is ABC's pitch competition TV show that aired first on August 9, 2009 (Smith & Viceisza, 2017). The data of this qualitative study were verbal expressions, gestures, and visual-medial aids employed by the pitchers in the introductory phases of this TV show. The data were purposively taken from Shark Tank episodes. The criteria employed in selecting the episodes were the presence of laughter from the sharks in the introductory phases of the pitching and the presence of combination between verbal expressions, gestures, and visual-medial aids in triggering the laughter. The first criterion refers to the effects of employing linguistic expressions like neologism, metaphor, idioms, onomatopoeia, alliteration, pun, zeugma, and category extension to trigger laughter from the sharks. The second criterion refers to the use of these linguistic expressions for humour purposes in tandem with body languages and visual-medial aids to contextualize the humour for the pitched products. The following episodes were selected due to the use of various combinations of linguistic expressions for humour purposes and creative uses of body language and visual-medial aids:

Table 1. Data sources

Pitchers	Brand Names	Seasons/Episodes
Josh and Steve King	Manscaped	Season 10 Episode 4
Steve Gadlin	I Want to Draw a Cat for You	Season 3 Episode 2
Cyndi Lee	Safe Grabs	Season 8 Episode 5
Hans Dose	Tenikle	Season 13 Episode 9
Nickey Ramsey	Junobie	Season 13 Episode 14
Max Valverde	Morninghead	Season 5 Episode 21
Alex Bayer	Genius Juice	Season 11 Episode 12
Kevin Choi and Edwin Cho	Snactiv	Season 13 Episode 10
Anika Goodwin Hilderbrand	OpulenceMD	Season 12 Episode 20
Johnny Genaro and Vinny Pastore	Broccoli Wad	Season 2 Episode 4
Tate Stock	Chirp	Season 12 Episode 3
Chet Beiler	OverEZ Chicken Coop	Season 13 Episode 13
Renee Heath and Bechara Jaoudeh	Banana Loca	Season 13 Episode 9
Tony Litwinowicz	Hairfin	Season 13 Episode 20

From these fifteen data sources, data in the form of verbal expressions, gestures, and visual-medial aids were collected. Verbal expressions encompass wordplays, gestures encompass not only hand signs but also theatrical motions and movements, and visual-medial aids encompass the brand products and their supporting peripherals. The combination of these data forms would indicate how wordplays were put into a pitch with the emphasis on self-reference.

3.2 Data analysis

Data analysis techniques by Spradley (2016) were employed. Four phases of analysis were selected: domain, taxonomy and componential analysis, as well as cultural theme. In the domain analysis, the theory of market pitching discourse by Sherry (1988) was implemented to reveal the structure of the introductory phase in the pitches. After the structures were revealed, in the taxonomy phase, the theories of brand's name association by Meyers-Levi (1989), self-reference by Bartlett (1987), and language play by Crystal (1998) were applied to indicate how the brand names are wordplayed with, in regard to the self-reference of the brands. In the componential analysis, the results of the domain and taxonomy analyses were employed to construct a definition of the ludic pitch, emphasising the distinctive features it has. From the constructed definition, a typology of ludic pitches was constructed during the last phase.

4. Findings and discussion

This section is divided into two subsections. The first will address the neologism that we proposed, the ludic pitch, and the second will discuss the typology of ludic pitches. In the first subsection, specific features of ludic pitch are identified to indicate how a ludic pitch can be distinguished from pitching in general. The specific features comprise linguistic features, visual features, and theatrical features. In the second subsection, the typology of ludic pitches, the intra-referential and inter-referential ones, is presented.

4.1 Ludic pitch

General pitches, as studied by Daly and Davy (2016), tend to have ten stages in their structure namely greeting, self-identification, investment amount, product explanation, achievements, future plan description, target customer, recapitulating and developing, thanking, and willingness to answer questions. These ten stages, as implied by Daly and Davy (2016), are aesthetically and ethically wrapped in rhetorical and linguistic expressions to deliver a pitch with high level of acceptability. We argue that ludic pitches differ from general pitches on the ludification of greeting, self-identification, and primarily product explanation. We define a ludic pitch as a pitching intended to play the pitched brand and product lexicons through wordplays, visual-medial aids, and theatrical acts from which it is expected that the pitch nuance becomes light and laughter is expected to burst. This definition implies that a ludic pitch has distinctive linguistic, visual-medial, and theatrical features that differentiate it from pitching in general. Through these features, brand and product lexicons are wordplayed with to generate light tone and mood on the pitching process, which eventually might lead to the investment by the sharks. The brand and product lexicons might take a different emphasis with some pitchers focusing on wordplays on brand lexicon, some on the product lexicon, and some attempting to wordplay with both. The following example from OverEZ Chicken Coop might help illustrate the statement.

Chet:	(entering the tank with Chuckles the chicken on his arms)
Sharks:	(laughing)
Chet:	Alright. Sharks, it's no secret America is crazy for backyard chickens right now. Families want more sustainable living and self-reliance and they love having fresh organic eggs every day. Plus, backyard chickens bring joy to families as kids and grandkids make lifelong memories caring for these adorable pets. That's why we created OverEZ Chicken Coops. Our proprietary modular coops are easy to ship and easy to assemble. All you need is thirty minutes, a screw gun, and two people to assemble your OverEZ Chicken Coop. We offer four different sizes that perfectly accommodate between five and twenty chickens. America is so cuckoo for these coops that we can hardly keep up with the demand. We're chickens running around with our heads cut off.
Chuckles:	(cuckooing)
Chet:	Sorry, Chuckles.
Sharks:	(laughing louder)

Chet Byler, the owner of OverEZ Chicken Coops, attempted to wordplay with both his brand and product lexicons. His brand, OverEZ Chicken Coop, was wordplayed with through the use of visual-medial aids and theatrical acts as seen when he introduced Chuckles and put it into the coop. The name Chuckles which indicates light mood and positive vibe is aligned with the positive nuance of having trouble-free chicken coops. The fact Chuckles seems to act along with Chet by cuckooing when he said "we're chickens running with our heads cut off" adds more light mood to the wordplay. Besides focusing on wordplaying on his brand, Chet also attempted to wordplay on the product coops by focusing on the derivational lexicon of the product – the coop and chicken themselves. The line "America is so cuckoo for these coops that we can hardly keep up with the demand" points out that Chet wordplays on the chickens and the coops. Instead of employing "crazy" to indicate how he has a high demand from the Americans, he employed "cuckoo" to align with chickens and to rhyme with "coops." The bursts of laughter from the sharks point out that his brand and product lexicon wordplays are successful in drawing their attention through generating a light mood pitch. The combination of textual, visual-medial, and theatrical elements signifies a ludic pitch.

The fact that brand and product lexicon wordplay might focus on the brand lexicon, the product lexicon, or both signifies the differences in reflexivities. These reflexivities which are realized through self-references in the brand and product lexicons indicate the presence of considerations over which lexicon might disclose more possibilities for a wordplay. The following example from Snactiv might illustrate the statements.

Kevin:	Hi, Sharks. I'm Kevin.
Edwin	I'm Edwin. We're the founders of Snactiv. (Kevin walks to work on a laptop while snacking). We're seeking two hundred thousand dollars in exchange for ten percent equity of our company. Sharks, have a look at Kevin here. (Kevin snacks and dirties his laptop and outfit).
Sharks:	(laughing)

Edwin: He really loves his snack. I have worked with Kevin for many years and to call him a slob is understatement. I never got things back from him without stains or grease.
Kevin: (standing up and handing over a paper with snack stains to Edwin) Hey, Eddie. Check out the concept I'm working on.
Edwin: Oh! This is disgusting, man!
Kevin: Dude! What was that for?... So, Sharks. As a problem maker I became my own problem solver (ripping off his outfit to reveal a T-shirt with "SNACTIV" on it).
Edwin: We revolutionized snacking and create the snacking tool of the future.
Kevin: That's right, Shark. Working home from home in the past year, I got tired of being in such a slob at my desk (got choked of the snack).
Sharks: (laughing)
Kevin: Like many I love to enjoy a snack while I'm gaming or working but keeping your hands or devices clean all the time is a challenge. I even try using these chopsticks but they're super inefficient. So, I asked myself there's gotta be a better way (showing Snactiv).

The brand, Snactiv, might derive from "snacking" and "active" – a signifier of both leisure time and working time – whereas the product tends to tie with chopsticks and extra fingers. Kevin Choi and Edwin Cho, the owners of Snactiv, tend to flow the wordplay on the brand first before the product. The wordplays of Snactiv are made from "slob" to imply the risk of being unclean for snacking while computing or gaming and "as a problem maker I became my own problem solver" to align with being in leisure and working time at the same time. This emphasis on the brand wordplay indicates that it has more linguistic reflexivities than the product. It implies that there is some kind of linguistic awareness from the pitchers of the brand lexicon in terms of the possibilities to wordplay on it.

The linguistic awareness to wordplay on the brand is expressed not only through a verbal, conversational means but also a poetic means, through singing. Through songs, the pitchers attempt to poeticize the brand in a mnemonically hilarious fashion. Steve Gadlin's *I Want to Draw a Cat for You,* for example, that has a self-explanatory company name, combined singing and dancing to ignite a burst of laughter from the sharks.

Steve: Little music, maestro. (dancing and singing)
Hey, there, sharks. My name is Steve.
I got an offer that you won't believe.
For the low low price at just ten grand
You get a quarter of my company, understand?
You go to my site, you describe a cat.
I draw it, I mail it. As easy as that.
I'd invest if I were you
And I want to draw a cat for you.
(Mark is seen dancing)
I'll draw you a cat that's short and fat.
I'll draw you a cat with a pork pie hat.
I'll draw you a cat whatever the vibe.

I draw a cat that you describe.
Sharks: (laughing and clapping)
Steve: *I want to draw a cat for you. I want to draw a cat for you. I want to draw a cat for you. I want to draw a cat for you.*

Though *I Want to Draw a Cat for You* is already self-explanatory, elaborating on what the company does through a rhymical song could deliver details in an entertaining way. Steve divides his song lyrics into four segments. The first is introduction. In this segment, Steve introduced himself as the owner of the company in the first and second line. The second, as seen in the third and fourth lines, is the amount of investment money he was asking. The third is how Steve runs the business. This portion consumes the largest portion of the lines since it appears on the fifth, sixth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth lines. The fifth and sixth line function as a general description of the procedures on how to order the cat drawing, while the rest of the lines indicate what cats Steve would draw for his customers. The last segment is the brand lexicon repetition of "I Want to Draw a Cat for You," which functions as a mnemonic drive.

The mnemonic drive is derived in a wordplay fashion from the brand lexicon "I Want to Draw a Cat for You." Steve employed the mnemonic drives from each lexical item that constructs the brand lexicon namely *I*, *Want*, *Draw*, *Cat*, and *You*. The following table might illustrate this statement.

Table 2. Mnemonic Drives

Lexicon of the Brand	Mnemonic Driven Lexicon	Illocutionary Forces
I	My name is Steve	Introduction
	I got an offer that you won't believe	Offering
	I draw it, I mail it	Showcasing an ability
	I'd invest if I were you	Persuading
	I'll draw you a cat that's short and fat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat with a pork pie hat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat whatever the vibe	Showcasing an ability
	I draw a cat that you describe	Showcasing an ability
	I want to draw a cat for you	Branding
Want	For the low low price at just ten grand	Asking
	And I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability
	I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability
Draw	I draw it, I mail it	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat that's short and fat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat with a pork pie hat	Showcasing an ability
		Showcasing an ability

	I'll draw you a cat whatever the vibe	Showcasing an ability
	I draw a cat that you describe	Showcasing an ability
	I want to draw a cat for you	
Cat	You go to my site, you describe a cat	Purchasing procedure
	And I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat that's short and fat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat with a pork pie hat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat whatever the vibe	Showcasing an ability
	I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability
You	You get a quarter of my company, understand?	Offering
	You go to my site, you describe a cat	Purchasing procedure
	And I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat that's short and fat	Showcasing an ability
	I'll draw you a cat with a pork pie hat	Showcasing an ability
	I want to draw a cat for you	Showcasing an ability

As seen from Table 2, showing an ability appears more frequently than the other illocutionary forces. This frequent appearance points out that Steve attempts to pitch his ability in drawing a cat to the sharks more than his demand for investment. This focus on showcasing an ability received praises from the sharks for his extraordinary talent and business idea. In the end, he closed a deal with Mark Cuban. Table 2 also points out that each lexical item which constructs Steve's brand lexicon tends to be distributed equally – implying that each word appears to work in tandem in the mnemonic driven lexicon. This consistent use of a mnemonic driven lexicon in a musical fashion implies that Steve has applied what Yalch (1991) calls as a mnemonic device. The key to mnemonic device, as suggested by Whorten and Hunt (2011), is rote repetition. Through this repetition, the lexicon repeated by rote is expected to reside in the memories of the listeners. In a ludic pitch context, the repetitions appear by wordplaying on the brand and product lexicons as the references with the support of visual-medial aids and theatrical acts.

4.2 Linguistic features of a ludic pitch

Wordplays with self-reference to the brand and product lexicon are the linguistic features found in a ludic pitch. These specific wordplays tend to operate by making references to the brand lexicon and the product lexicon. Making references to the brand lexicon points out that the wordplays tend to be onomastic in nature. On the other hand, making references to the product lexicon points out that the wordplays might derive from the materials, the functions, or the designs of the products. Either through the brand lexicon or the product lexicon, the wordplays in a ludic pitch rely on how

to associate them with verbal expressions which might trigger laughter from the sharks. The following example from Safe Grabs might help illustrate the statement.

> Cyndi: Have you ever burned your fingers trying to get a hot dish out of the microwave. Well, fear no more because Safe Grabs will solve that problem and much much more. Let me show you how the simple silicone mat will change your kitchen forever. You simply put it on the turntable. Grab a bowl of soup. Microwave as usual. And when it's done. Beep. Beep. Beep. You basically grab it from the bottom of without burning your fingers.... so, sharks, who would like to invest in these silicones (putting Safe Grabs silicone mats before her breasts)?

Cyndi introduced her invention Safe Grabs, a multifunctioning silicone mat for various kitchen tasks. In her presentation, she wordplayed on her product lexicon with the emphasis on the material, silicone, and on her brand, Safe Grabs. The wordplays were made by associating silicone mat with silicone for breast implants. This is seen in the last part of the introductory phase where she put a pair of silicone mats before her breasts. This invited laughter from all of the sharks as Cyndi implied that her silicone mat Safe Grabs was more functional and much safer than the silicone implanted in one's breasts. Added to these wordplays is the mention of the word "grab," consistently to highlight her brand of Safe Grabs. Its consistent mentions strengthen her pitching in terms of introducing her brand lexicon and the wordplay related to the silicone.

Rote repetitions to induce mnemonic drives, as seen in Cyndi repeating "grab," can be performed through same word repetitions or meronymous repetitions. Through the latter, where words related to the brand or product lexicons are repeated to construct a semantic web, the chances of delivering a wordplay might be higher. The following example of Banana Loca might illustrate the statement.

> (Renee and Bechara enter the tank along with a banana shaped mascot leading their way in)
> Renee: Hi, sharks! I'm Renee Heath!
> Bechara: And I'm Bechara Jaoudeh!
> Renee and Bechara: And we are Banana Loca! (high-fiving)
> Renee: We're seeking $250,000 in exchange for 25% of our very (quotation marking) "appealing" business.
> Mark: (laughing)
> Bechara: My favorite snack of all time is banana and chocolate hazelnut spread. The flavor combination is delicious but what a mess. Have you ever tried to take slippery banana slices and try to spread peanut butter on them? It just doesn't work.
> Renee: So, we are here to put an end to this monkey business.
> Bechara: Introducing Banana Loca. The very first kitchen gadget that allows you to core and stuff a banana while still in its peel.
> Renee: First, you core while still in its peel (demonstrating how to core a banana in its peel). And then, fill it with whatever you want (demonstrating how to fill the core with chocolate). It's so easy to use that the whole family can really use and enjoy.
> Sharks: Wow! Wow! Wow!

Mark:	Not bad at all.
Bechara:	Sharks, creating droid by putting some yummy in tummies and smiles on faces is why we do this.
Renee:	So, sharks, which one of you wants to join our bonkers banana bunch?
Mascot:	(joining with Renee and Bechara to sing and dance)

Renee and Bechara wordplayed on "banana" and "loca" through the series of words: "appealing," "monkey business," "bonkers," and "bunch." The word "appealing," which is plays on "peeling" comes first in the wordplay to function as a persuasion that accompanies the investment request of $250,000. After the persuasion move, the wordplay is performed after Bechara explained how messy it was to spread peanut butter on chocolate. In response to this problem, Renee meronymized banana with "monkey business" to emphasize the solution Banana Loca brings. Then, after demonstrating how the gadgets of Banana Loca work, Renee closed the presentation by requesting the sharks to join their "banana bonkers bunch," which is lexically meronymous with a cluster of "banana" and "loca" (or "crazy" in Spanish). Through the meronymization of the brand lexicon, as shown by the Banana Loca pitch, rote repetitions in regard to wordplays tend to display a more structured fashion of delivering mnemonic drives. That Renee was assigned to deliver the wordplays and that she wore a yellow dress signify how rote repetitions could be structured as such to gain focus on the ludic sides of their pitch.

The examples indicate that humour-related linguistic expressions are in tandem with humour techniques to ludify the pitches. Through ludification, the pitching situation and mood might be lightened. Ludification might also maintain the intimacy between the pitchers and the catchers while at the same time preserving the seriousness of the pitch.

4.3 Visual-medial features of the ludic pitch

Visual-medial features refer to visual and medial aids employed in pitching to elaborate on the wordplaying on either the brand or product lexicon while at the same time introducing them. The aids might encompass objects related to the brand or product, and the products themselves. Through these aids, the process of elaboration might focus on the materials, the functions, or the designs of the products. The following example from Tenikle might help illustrate the statement.

Hans:	(entering the tank with underwater sound effect as the background and in tentacle swimming balloon) Hello, sharks! My name is Hans Dose. I'm from Dana Point California and I'm here seeking two hundred thousand dollars in exchange for ten percent of my company Tenikle. As you can see I love the ocean. I especially love the octopus. With all these tentacles (holding the tentacles of the balloon), they could do so many things at once (throwing the tentacle balloons). We humans have a big problem. Holding phones while trying to do something else (acting as if making a call with the right hand while typing something with the left) with only two hands....

Hans Dose's product, Tenikle, is a multipurpose suction mount holder that can be used for various activities, e.g. charging a phone, a camera, a speaker, hanging an object and other go-getter related activities. These multipurposed and multifunctioning natures are the semantic-onomastic determiner of the brand name, Tenikle, wordplayed with Octopus' tentacles. The use of underwater

sound effect and octopus-like swimming balloon supports the wordplay on Tenikle with tentacles. Through these visual-medial aids, the repetition of the brand and product lexicon, bridged through the use of words indicating "holding," such as "hold," "hands," "doing," and "tentacles," a narrative of the brand and the product is highlighted and strengthened. Further, it implies that mnemonics is an attempt to be generated. Besides employing verbal expressions for mnemonic device with visual-medial aids as the axis, visual-medial aids could be designed as a mnemonic device that ludically speaks for itself. The following example from Tony Litwinowicz's Hairfin might illustrate the statement.

Tony: Haircutters rely on hair clippers to cut hair evenly. These are great for cutting short hair but these clippers come only about an inch. That's not very long. You throw into a bowl cut but they are out (the monitor displays Tony putting a bowl on his head and holding a haircutter which he seems to doubt).
Sharks: (laughing)
Tony: And the calendar cut (the monitor displays Tony with a rice bowl on his head and holding a haircutter in doubt).
Sharks: (laughing)
Tony: It's not much better, so if you don't want one of those, you're going to need a way to cut long hair evenly. Now measuring your hair as you cut it seems like an obvious solution. But if you're holding your hair in one hand (holding his hair) and you're holding a measuring tape in your other hand (putting the measure on his head), how are you going to cut it? What we need is a modern solution to this age-old problem. Introducing the hair fi, a measuring tool that mouses to your hand and stays out of the way so that you can grasp hair.

The use of timing between lines and the visual-medial aids indicates that visual wordplay is at work. The pictures which are the visualization of what Tony says support the ludic nuance Tony attempts to generate since they could reveal the functions of the products through indicating the problems of hair cutting with hair cutters. To add more humour to the pitch, Tony not only utilizes verbal-visual timing through the monitor but also visualization through theatrical acts. He did so by demonstrating what would happen when one tries to cut their hair evenly by utilizing a measuring tape. The rote repetition of various hair measuring visualizations from the use of a bowl to a measuring tape is an effort to generate mnemonics of Tony's brand and product lexicon, which circumnavigate "hair" and "measure."

The examples indicate that the ludification of visual-medial aids is applied on the elements of the aids. They refer either to how the media is used or to how to media supports the narratives and the identities of the pitchers. If the focus of ludification is on how the media is used, this tends to imply that the pitched products mechanically have significance in delivering the humour. If the focus of ludification is on the narratives and the identities of the media, this tends to indicate that the humour has the power to signify not only the elements of the products but also the brand of the products.

4.4 Theatrical features of the ludic pitch

Theatrical acts, just like visual-medial aids, are employed to emphasize and elaborate the wordplaying process of the pitched brand and product lexicons. The theatrical acts might involve one person, two persons or more in costumes which indicate the brand and product lexicons. The

costumes might take the form of a simple T-shirt with a brand name on it, iconic costumes that represent the lexicon, or costumes which are the products themselves. The following example from Chirp Wheel might help illustrate the statement.

Tate: Hi Sharks, my name is Tate Stock. My business is Chirp and we're here about a very serious matter, backpain. It's the worst (his partner in popping bubbles costume nodding in agreement). We created the world's simplest backpain relief, the chirp wheel. And we'd love to show you how it works. But first let's go over all of this. These bubbles represent those hard-to-reach muscle knots in your back and your neck. Now most people use a foam roller to roll out their backs. As he rolls out, there should be enough pressure to make the bubbles pop, symbolizing that deep tissue, backpain relief. What's that, one pop? (his partner acting indicating a dissatisfaction). Even though it touches his entire back, there's just not enough contact to be effective so let's try again with the chirp wheel. Slap my mama and call me Sally, that's a lot of pops. (his partner acting, indicating satisfaction)

Tate Stock brought his product called Chirp Wheel, an exercise wheel for back pain relief. One needs only to lie on the wheel and move forward-backward to relieve the pain of one's back. These emphases on back pain and relief are theatrically represented through the costume Tate's partner donned. He wore a costume made of popping bubbles to represent the back pain. Each pop represents the relief the wheel has contributed. To further strengthened the product lexicon theatricalization, Tate's partner first lay with his back on the conventional exercise wheel. A single pop was heard to indicate that the wheel did not function well and the actor made a dissatisfying expression to point out his upset. Then, he changed the wheel to Chirp Wheel. Lots of pops were heard indicating that the wheel worked as hoped. The actor then smiled to point out his satisfaction. These theatrical acts, though they seemed simple, function also as a proof of the quality of the pitched product. This proof of quality comes from the use of popping bubble costumes which represent back pain and its relief.

In strengthening the theatrical acts through the use of costumes, the pitchers not always wear mascot-like costumes. They also wore simple daily costumes that have a significant message and a theatrical alignment with the brand or product lexicons. Nickey Ramsey, the owner of Junobie, for example, presented herself in a golden blazer and white dress. The combination of gold and white refers to the breastmilk which her storage bag is designed for. Breastmilk is called white gold due to its benefits for babies in their golden years, and this "white gold" is in line with the colour of the outfit of Nickey. Combined with the phrase "white gold," consistently repeated to generate mnemonics in her pitch, Nickey attempted to emphasize the importance of not wasting breastmilk.

Nickey: After countless attempts at trying to store my breastmilk (pouring the breastmilk into a plastic bag to show that it could not contain and preserve the milk), I was left with the white gold leaking all over the place.
Lori: (surprised)
Emma: No.
Nickey: Precious gold, sharks! So, instead of the five ounces that I needed, I was left with only two. I literally cried over the spilled milk.
Sharks: (laughing)

The emphasis of breastmilk as white gold is delivered through an amusing demonstration and verbal presentation. Nickey delivered an educational message through her demonstration of the negative side of using plastic bags for containing breastmilk in two segments. She started with a serious demonstration, which resulted in surprised expressions and ended the serious presentation with comical wordplayed line. This is seen in "I was left with the white gold leaking all over the place," and the wordplay "I literally cried over the spilled milk." Through these two contrastive segments, Nickey managed to deliver the cruciality of her product and maintain the mnemonics of her product lexicon.

The theatrical acts employed to deliver the ludic pitch tend to emphasize the mixture of soliloquy, dialogue, and interactive talks. Through soliloquy and interactive talks, the humour is delivered in the informative salesman fashion. The informative functions of soliloquy are not only circumnavigating the product but also the mental states of the pitchers. Hasegawa (2011) implies that soliloquy could disclose the mental states of certain interlocutors through the use of linguistic expressions. In the context of ludicity, the linguistic expressions revolve around the use of humour to drive playfulness. Through dialogue, the humour is delivered in narrative based act.

4.5 Types of ludic pitch

In a ludic pitch, as discussed in subsection 4.1, references play a significant part in the attempt to trigger mnemonic drives through rote repetitions. The references wordplayed tend to circumnavigate primarily on self-referencing the brand and product lexicons. This primary use of self-reference is understood due to the commercial nature of the pitches. Furthermore, appearing on Shark Tank is a chance of exposure that the pitchers must not waste. This typology is based on the use of self-reference to the brand and product lexicons of the pitchers in the process of wordplaying through the combination of verbal expressions, visual-medial aids, and theatrical acts. The following example from Max Valverde's Morninghead might illustrate how self-reference is exercised through verbal, visual-medial, and theatrical expressions.

Max:	Hi sharks, my name is Max Valverde. I'm from Boston, Massachusetts and I'm the creator of Morninghead.
Robert:	Of what?
Max:	Morninghead.
Mark:	(closing his eyes and smiling)
Daymond:	(smiling indifferently)
Barbara:	Of course.
Max:	I'm seeking $25.000 in exchange for 25% equity in my company. I try to exercise every day after work. I love mountain biking, rock climbing, basketball, you name it. After I got to get the sweats going, I come home, hit the shower and hit the head. But the next morning I'm still totally clean, but my bed hair is insane.
Barbara:	(flying a big smile)
Max:	And last thing I wanna do is take another shower.
Robert:	(flying a big smile). For years, I tried to wet my hair in the sink, but water gets everywhere and you never really get at the back of your head.
Daymond:	(smiling) Morninghead solves the problem once and for all. It's a reusable, washable cap, with a super absorbing material on the inside.
Kevin:	(laughing and looking at Mark while he's raising his eyebrows)

Max: Simply add water into it, and allow that water to absorb (demonstrating how to use the Morninghead). Put it on your head, push it on your head and rub around for a few seconds, let the water absorb into your hair. No water dripping on your neck so you can do it anywhere, even if you're fully clothed.

All Sharks: (bursting into laughter)

Max: Seconds later, your hair is completely wet. No mess, bed hairs gone. Then style your hair as you normally would, as if you just get out of the shower.

Kevin: Max, what do you think the chances are I'm going to invest on that? (The other three sharks laugh)

Max: Kevin. Daymond. You guys are the lucky ones. No hair, no problem. But for the rest of us, basically anyone who's ever had bed hair without the need or the time for a shower has a real use of the product.

When entering the tank, Max showed a contrast between his tidy outfit and his messy hair. The sharks at first were surprised of his appearance. When Max mentioned the name of his brand "Morninghead," the sharks began to digest the reference and the relationship between Max's appearance contrasted with the lexicon. They began to smile. Their smile turned into laughter when Morninghead is referenced in the form of elaborative wordplays on various sanitizing related activities, sweat cleansing activities, and the common problems to do both. The laughter became intensified when Max demonstrated how to use Morninghead. The laughter intensification might be due to the contrastive appearance between Max's formal outfit and his Morninghead head cap. The contrastive appearance was then solved when Max tidied his hair with his head after using Morninghead. This consistency on employing contrastive appearance was made possible through the consistent use of self-reference derived from the brand and product lexicon with "head" as the differentiating or contrasting word.

Comprehending the significant roles of self-references in tandem with the three features of the ludic pitch, we found that there were three types of ludic pitch. We dubbed them intra-referential, inter-referential, and extra-referential. Intra-referential is a ludic pitch where the wordplaying acts are exercised through deriving referential lexicons from the brand or product lexicons. Inter-referential is a ludic pitch in which the wordplaying acts are exercised through comparing the brand and product lexicons with other lexicons outside the brand and the product through similar feature identification. Extra-referential is a ludic pitch that emphasizes the use of references that are intertextually wordplayed. The following subsection will detail the explanation for each type of ludic pitch.

4.5.1 Intra-referential ludic pitch

In an intra-referential ludic pitch, the pitchers meronymously derive lexicons from the brand and product lexicons. The lexicon derived from the brand might take its literal and implied meaning while the lexicon derived from the product might root from the materials, functions, or designs. The following example from Genius Juice might help illustrate the statement,

Alex: Hello sharks. My name is Alex Bayer. I'm the founder and CEO of Genius Juice. We're seeking $250.000 in exchange for 7% equity. Instead of talking about our product, we're going to sing about it. And here we go.
Coconut… Coconut smoothie
Whole coconut landed up... So creamy!

Whole coconut in a drink... It's amazing!
Everything but a shell... It's pure Genius!
Genius Juice is the first product to include whole coconut in every bottle. Unlike regular coconut water, we freshly cracked open the organic young Thai coconut and blend together the coconut water and the coconut meat. It's from tree to bottle within five hours or less. It's truly pure genius. So, who wants to join us on our Genius journey?

Barbara: (laughing)

Lori: (clapping) Bravo! Bravo!

Alex Bayer is the owner of Genius Juice, bottled coconut juice drinks. The brand lexicon, as seen in "genius" and "juice," suggests the creativity on innovating popular drinks. This implied meaning of the brand lexicon is expressed through "pure genius." To support this wordplay, Alex wears a pair of nerdish circular spectacles and a messy wig like that of *Back to the Future*'s Prof. Emmeth. On the other hand, the product lexicon which emphasizes the coconut is meronymously wordplayed through "coconut smoothie" and "shell." The former is a wordplay of "smoothie," which might refer to "a suave or confident man" and "fresh fruit drink." This dual meaning suggests and implies that drinking Genius Juice will make the drinker a suave man and it implies also that Genius Juice is truly invented by a genius. This message of being genius is wordplayed also through the use of the word "shell," which refers to "coconut shell." In slang, "coconut shell" means "brain."

4.5.2 Inter-referential ludic pitch

This ludic pitch focuses on finding lexicon synonymous to the pitched brand and product lexicon. The synonymous referenced lexicon might share similar semantic or semiotic features on which wordplays become possible. Similar to the intra-referential ludic pitch, an inter-referential ludic pitch might wordplay on the brand or the product lexicon. The following example might illustrate the statement.

Anika: Hello Sharks, how are you? My name is Anika Goodwin Hilderbrand, I live in Greensboro, North Carolina. I am the head diva in charge at OpulenceMD Beauty and I am here seeking for $75000 in exchange for 5% of my company. Sharks, don't you love my eyelashes? (blinking)... They're fake. These days, Kevin lashes are the new boobs. Every woman wants a bigger better pair... As much as I love wearing lash extensions, I suck at putting them on correctly, and worse it bothers me that I'm using harmful chemicals, like formaldehyde near my eyes... After years of eyelash abuse and losing my own lashes and walking around looking like hairless chihuahua, I decided enough is enough. There has to be a better way, so I created OpulenceMD beauty... So, Sharks, don't blink on this opportunity of a lifetime. Your time to get involved on this great deal may be short, but your lashes should never be.

Anika made an analogy of lashes and breasts in "They are fake. These days, Kevin, lashes are the new boobs. Every woman wants a bigger better pair." The breast references for eyelashes indicate that inter-referential is employed since breasts and lashes are assumed to share similar semantic and semiotic features. The similarities are emphasized by Anika through the use of "fake,"

"woman," and "bigger better pair." The inter-reference suggests that lashes are as precious as breasts for women in view of beautification, and thus women would even try to fake them to look pretty. The emphasis on beauty and the necessity to be beautiful without being fake is further emphasized through the mention of "hairless chihuahua." When a chihuahua is hairless, it implies that there might be a biological defect. Through this analogous wordplay on defect, Anika supported her claim about the danger of chemical substances in eyelashes. Due to this danger, Anika invented her safe eyelashes Opulence MD.

4.5.3 Extra-referential ludic pitch

This ludic pitch relies on a seemingly unrelated reference in wordplaying on the brand or product lexicon. However, after a thorough examination in an intertextual fashion on the textual, visual-medial, and theatrical elements of the pitch, a relationship between the seemingly unrelated reference with the lexicon is revealed. The following example from Broccoli Wad might illustrate the statements.

Johnny:	Hi my name is Johnny Gennaro and I'd like to introduce you to my associate Mr. Vinny Pastore, celebrity star of HBO series "Sopranos." I created a project called the Broccoli Wad. I'm here today looking for an investment of fifty thousand dollars and for that I'm willing to give twenty percent of the company away.
Robert (shark):	Johnny, let me just start per saying if he's packing here, I don't care how much money is involved, I'm in.
Vinny:	Now, most guys carry their money in a wallet. But wise guys carry their money in a wad, like this (presenting the product). Ladies and gentlemen, this is the broccoli wad.
Johnny:	Wise guys never carry wallets. They carry their cash in a broccoli band (camera shoots a bunch of broccolis in purple bands), not in a rubber band.
Kevin (shark):	Where do the wise guys keep their credit cards?
Johnny:	Wise guys don't carry credit cards.
Kevin (shark):	Just cash?
Vinny:	But what I'm impressed by what this broccoli wad (Johnny hand over the wad to every shark) was, I mean, look how cute it is (presenting some money in broccoli wad). (Everybody in the room is laughing.)

Johnny Gennaro brought his associate, Vinny Pastore, the actor who played Big Pussy Bonpensiero of "The Sopranos" series. That the product is called Broccoli Wad is intertextually linked to the Italianesque of "The Sopranos" used to talk about the life stories of Italian gangsters. Strengthening the intertextual tie-in to "The Sopranos" is the function of the wad – to keep cash safe. Thus, in the introductory phase, words related to "keep," "cash," and "safe" are consistently played. This tie-in intertextuality of "The Sopranos" is what defines this ludic pitch as extra-referential.

4.6 Discussion: the problems of brand and product lexicon ludicity in a pitch context

Brand lexicons which are primarily present through their onomastic aspects, as suggested by Meyers-Levy (1989), can be more meaningful when the lexicons are relatable to various concepts in regard to memory storage and memorability. In the context of wordplay, the aim of having memorability is further enhanced through the awareness of ludicity. This awareness, as implied by Crystal (1998), is not only related to the owners of the lexicons but also the target users or readers of the lexicons. Through this ludic awareness in a pitching context, it is expected that a pitch draws a notice from the catchers due to the ludic and light mood the pitches evoke. This ludic awareness might fail to be grasped when what Meyers-Levy (1989) calls an association set is not familiar to the target users or catchers in pitch context.

The familiarity with the association set, as implied by Meyers-Levy (1989), depends on the usage of words with low and high frequencies. In the context of ludicity, this associated set evokes problems since the owners or the designers of the brand and product lexicons have to consider two concerns, namely frequency and ludicity. The considerations over words with low and high frequencies and ludicity spark similar problems and those problems are related to culture and context. In Safe Grabs' silicone mats, for example, the word "silicone" might fall into the category of words with low frequency for those who are familiar with science and beautification, but the word might be that of high frequency for laymen. When the word "silicone" is attempted to trigger a wordplay, problems of ludicity might appear depending on whether the associated set of meanings of "silicone" might be grasped or not by those who are not familiar with science and beautification. To classify whether a lexicon has ludicity or not requires cultural and contextual backgrounds and concerns. The absence of background knowledge might result in receivers of the lexicons failing to grasp their ludicity. One of the attempts to generate ludic awareness of the brand and product lexicon, as seen for example in the Manscaped team, is through the use of gestures and visual-medial analogies.

The use of gestural actions e.g. facial expressions, postures and speeches, as implied by Clarke, Cornelissen, and Healey (2018), is an attempt to deliver and represent the passion and enthusiasm of the pitchers through expressive fashions of pitching. The use of expressive fashions through visual-medial aids to emphasize passion and enthusiasm indicates that the categories of ludicity and low-high frequency of words have to consider gestural elements. Adding gestural elements might expose new problems since they are culture and context-bound. Moreover, in the case of ludic pitch, where theatrical acts tend to be of significance, gestural element considerations might be more complex. The complexity of theatrical acts might be considered positively impactful for the pitchers in regard to brand and product lexicon wordplays.

Since brand and product lexicons are the kernel and visual-medial aids and theatrical acts are the satellites, the satellites, as implied by Winter-Froemel (2016), tend to function sublexically. This sublexical function of theatrical acts and visual-medial aids points out that they weave a supportive relationship for the brand and product lexicons. The sublexicality might pose more complex problems in wordplay context due to the facts that visual-medial aids and theatrical acts might sometimes not function sublexically. They might be the lexicons themselves in the sense that they elaborate on the pitched brand and product lexicon. This can be seen in Manscaped, for instance, where the wordplay about man's private parts is more elaborate with visual-medial aids than with words.

5. Conclusion

What we can learn from pitches in Shark Tank shows is the presence of a ludic pitch. This pitch is different from a general pitch. This pitch is defined by wordplays on the brand and product lexicon with elaborating assistance from visual-medial aids and theatrical acts. The emphasis on brand and product lexicon wordplays suggests that the pitchers might give more reflexivity in wordplaying on the brand, product, or both. The existence of these reflexivities further suggests that brand and product lexicons might have different level of wordplay vulnerability in a sense of employing words with a low and high level of frequency or words of general or specialized lexicon. This condition further signifies the roles of self-reference in wordplaying on brand and product lexicons. Primarily through these self-references, a ludic pitch might be classified into some types.

We formulated three types of ludic pitch: intra-referential, inter-referential, and extra-referential. The first refers to a ludic pitch that relies on derivational meronymic lexicons that can be employed as references in wordplaying on the brand and product lexicons, the second relies on derivational synonymic lexicons, and the third on extra intertextual references. Each type, though different in employing the types of referencing, shares similarities in the use of visual-medial aids and theatrical acts. The use of these aids, elaborating and explanatory in relation to self-references and extra references, complicates the wordplaying process since the pitchers have to ensure that the references have ludicity. Through this ludicity, it is expected that the catchers might find themselves in a light mood, might capture the positive vibe, and might burst into laughter.

Future studies might address these ludicity issues. The studies might concern constructing a rubric to assess what referential lexicons might work better than others when wordplays are employed in a pitch. Theories of associated set by Meyers-Levi (1989), expressive pitch by Clarke, Cornelissen, and Healey (2019), and sublexicality by Winter-Froemel (2016), as well as ludic linguistics by Purnomo et al. (2017) might be employed as a constructive point of departure.

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