

Connotative Meanings in Beauty Product Advertisements on Social Media: A Semantic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the connotative meanings embedded in beauty product advertisement slogans circulated on social media platforms. Using a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in semantic theory, the research analyzes ten advertisement slogans collected from popular Indonesian beauty brands. The theoretical framework draws primarily on Leech's (1974) seven types of meaning and Ogden and Richards' (1923) semiotic triangle, supplemented by Roland Barthes' (1977) concepts of denotation and connotation. Each slogan was analyzed to identify its denotative (literal) meaning and its connotative (contextual and associative) meaning, followed by a classification of the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed. The findings reveal that all ten slogans deploy positive connotative language to construct idealized beauty standards, with aspirational and psychological connotation types being the most prevalent. Key linguistic strategies identified include metaphor, hyperbole, antithesis, imperative mood, and paradox. The study concludes that beauty product advertisements on social media function not merely as commercial messages but as powerful ideological instruments that shape societal beauty norms, consumer self-identity, and psychological well-being. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on critical discourse analysis of advertising language and have implications for media literacy education.

Keywords: *connotative meaning, denotative meaning, beauty advertisement, semantic analysis, social media, advertising language, linguistic strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook have become primary arenas for commercial advertising. Among the most active advertising sectors is the beauty industry, which produces massive volumes of promotional content targeting consumers predominantly young women on a daily basis. Beauty product advertisements are distinguished by their

highly crafted language, which is designed not only to inform but also to persuade, entice, and emotionally engage the audience.

Language in advertising is rarely neutral. Advertisement slogans, in particular, are carefully constructed to carry layers of meaning that extend far beyond their literal or dictionary-based definitions. This is where the study of semantics and more specifically, the study of connotative meaning becomes indispensable. Connotative meaning refers to the secondary, associative, emotional, or cultural meanings that words and phrases carry in addition to their primary denotative meanings (Leech, 1974; Ullmann, 1962). In beauty advertising, words such as "flawless," "natural," "radiant," and "transform" are not merely descriptive; they are ideologically loaded terms that invoke standards of beauty, notions of self-worth, and aspirations of social belonging.

The rapid proliferation of beauty advertisements on social media has intensified scholarly interest in the language of advertising from linguistic, semiotic, and critical discourse perspectives. Research in this area has consistently demonstrated that advertising language constructs and reinforces particular ideals of femininity, beauty, and body image (Cook, 2001; Fairclough, 2003). However, fewer studies have focused specifically on the semantic dimension of beauty advertisements in the Indonesian context, where the beauty industry is growing rapidly and social media penetration is among the highest in the world.

This study addresses that gap by conducting a detailed semantic analysis of ten beauty product advertisement slogans collected from social media. The central aim is to identify and describe the connotative meanings encoded in these slogans, classify the types of connotations used, and examine the linguistic and rhetorical strategies that generate these connotations. By doing so, this research contributes to the fields of applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and media studies, while also offering practical insights for media literacy and consumer awareness.

1.1 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What denotative and connotative meanings are embedded in the beauty product advertisement slogans analyzed?
- What types of connotative meanings predominate in beauty product advertising language on social media?
- What linguistic strategies are employed in these slogans to generate connotative effects?

1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is threefold. Theoretically, it enriches the semantic literature on advertising language, particularly within the Indonesian sociolinguistic context. Practically, it equips

consumers, educators, and policy makers with analytical tools to critically engage with beauty advertising messages. Pedagogically, the findings are relevant to English language education, where the analysis of authentic language use including advertising is encouraged as part of critical literacy curricula.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Semantics and Meaning

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. It encompasses both the literal meanings of words and the complex web of associations, emotions, and cultural values that language users attach to those words in specific contexts (Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 2004). Scholars have proposed various taxonomies of meaning to account for this complexity. Among the most widely cited is Leech's (1974) classification of seven types of meaning: conceptual (logical, cognitive meaning), connotative (communicative value beyond literal content), social (social conditions of use), affective (speaker's feelings or attitude), reflected (meaning through association with another sense), collocative (meaning through co-occurrence with other words), and thematic (meaning conveyed through organization of the message).

Of these, conceptual meaning (equivalent to denotative meaning) and connotative meaning are most central to the analysis of advertising language. Denotative meaning represents the dictionary or referential meaning of a word what it literally names or describes. Connotative meaning, by contrast, encompasses the subjective, cultural, emotional, and evaluative associations that a word carries (Lyons, 1977; Ullmann, 1962). These two layers of meaning are not mutually exclusive; rather, they interact dynamically within texts to produce layered communicative effects.

2.2 Connotation and Advertising Language

The relationship between connotation and advertising has long been a central concern in linguistics, semiotics, and media studies. Leech (1966) was among the first to systematically analyze the language of advertising, demonstrating how advertisers exploit connotative associations to evoke positive emotions, aspirations, and desires in consumers. Cook (2001) further elaborated on the persuasive functions of advertising language, arguing that advertisements work primarily on the emotional and associative rather than the informational level.

Roland Barthes (1977), in his influential work on semiotics, distinguished between denotation (the first order of signification) and connotation (the second order), arguing that connotation transforms culturally specific values into seemingly natural or universal truths a process he termed "mythologization." In beauty advertising, this is particularly evident: the word "natural" appears in a scientific-sounding or authentic register but carries connotations of purity, virtue, and desirability that are culturally constructed rather than inherent.

More recent scholarship has extended these insights to digital and social media contexts. Kaur et al. (2013) examined how beauty product advertisements employ emotional and sensory connotations to manipulate consumer perception. Wijana (2020) found that Indonesian beauty advertisements frequently use metaphor and idealization strategies to construct unattainable beauty standards. Putri and Santosa (2022) demonstrated that social media beauty advertisements use connotative language to reinforce colourism and skin-whitening ideologies in Indonesian society.

2.3 Linguistic Strategies in Beauty Advertising

A growing body of research has identified specific linguistic strategies through which connotative meanings are constructed in beauty advertisements. These include:

Metaphor is one of the most pervasive devices in advertising language (Forceville, 2021). Conceptual metaphors such as BEAUTY IS A TREASURE (e.g., "unlock your glow") or SKIN IS A CANVAS (e.g., "transform your skin") activate networks of cultural associations that extend the meaning of the advertisement far beyond its literal content.

Hyperbole, or deliberate exaggeration, is used to amplify perceived product efficacy. Phrases such as "like never before" or "in just 7 days" create expectations of extraordinary results, playing on consumer desires for rapid, dramatic transformation (Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985).

Imperative constructions are highly prevalent in advertising slogans, functioning simultaneously to direct behavior and convey empowerment. The use of imperative verbs such as "get," "achieve," "unlock," "transform," and "feel" positions the consumer as an active agent in their own beauty journey, while simultaneously positioning the product as the enabling mechanism (Goddard, 1998).

Antithesis involves placing contrasting concepts in juxtaposition to heighten emotional impact. In beauty advertising, the contrast between negative states (e.g., "dull," "imperfect") and positive ideals (e.g., "perfect," "glowing") creates emotional urgency that motivates consumer action (Tanaka, 1994).

Paradox and oxymoron are particularly interesting strategies in beauty advertising, where phrases like "naturally beautiful with our skincare" simultaneously invoke authenticity and product dependency. These contradictions are rarely interrogated by consumers because the overall positive emotional register of the advertisement overrides critical scrutiny (Williamson, 1978).

2.4 Beauty Standards and Ideology in Advertising

From a critical discourse perspective, beauty product advertisements are not merely commercial texts but ideological instruments that construct and normalize particular beauty standards (van Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2003). In the Indonesian context, these standards are deeply inflected by both global (Western)

beauty ideals and local cultural values, including a historical emphasis on light skin as a marker of social status and beauty (Jones, 2010; Saraswati, 2013).

Advertisers exploit connotative language to naturalize these ideologically charged beauty standards, presenting culturally specific preferences as universal truths. The connotative cluster around words like "luminous," "crystal clear," "bright," and "flawless" collectively constructs a beauty ideal that privileges lightness and clarity of skin ideals that have significant implications for consumer self-esteem, body image, and identity formation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, which is appropriate for in-depth analysis of linguistic phenomena without the constraints of quantification (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative descriptive research allows the researcher to examine the complexity of meaning as it operates within specific social and cultural contexts, making it well-suited to the analysis of advertising language.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this study consist of ten beauty product advertisement slogans collected from social media platforms, primarily Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, between January and March 2024. The slogans were selected from advertisements posted by popular beauty brands targeting Indonesian consumers. Purposive sampling was employed to select slogans that: (1) were written in English, (2) contained identifiable connotative language, (3) represented diverse product types (serums, moisturizers, skincare solutions), and (4) reflected varied linguistic strategies.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each slogan was transcribed and its denotative (literal) meaning was identified using standard dictionary definitions. Second, the connotative meanings of key words and phrases were identified through close reading informed by Leech's (1974) framework and Barthes' (1977) concepts of denotation and connotation. Third, the connotative meanings were classified into types according to the dominant emotional and ideological register (e.g., aspirational, psychological, social pressure, paradoxical, hyperbolic, exclusive). Fourth, the linguistic strategies generating the connotations were identified and described. Triangulation of interpretation was achieved through consultation of relevant theoretical literature and existing empirical studies.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework is Leech's (1974) typology of meaning, with particular focus on connotative meaning as the secondary, associative layer of semantic content. This is supplemented by Ogden and Richards' (1923) semiotic triangle (symbol–thought–referent), which illuminates the relationship between linguistic signs and the cultural concepts they evoke. Barthes' (1977) distinction between denotation and connotation provides the analytical lens for examining how advertising language naturalizes ideological content.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Overview

The ten advertisement slogans analyzed in this study are presented in Table 1. Each slogan was drawn from real beauty product social media advertisements and represents a distinct use of connotative language.

Table 1. Overview of Advertisement Slogans Analyzed

Data No.	Advertisement Slogan	Key Connotative Words
1	"Get your flawless skin in just 7 days!"	flawless, 7 days
2	"Reveal your natural beauty with our brightening serum."	reveal, natural beauty, brightening
3	"Achieve glowing and radiant skin effortlessly."	glowing, radiant, effortlessly
4	"Say goodbye to dull skin and hello to a perfect look."	dull, perfect look
5	"Feel confident with smooth and healthy skin."	confident, smooth, healthy
6	"Unlock your youthful glow today!"	unlock, youthful glow
7	"Experience crystal clear skin like never before."	crystal clear, like never before
8	"Transform your skin into a brighter and more beautiful version."	transform, brighter, beautiful version
9	"Your secret to flawless and luminous skin."	secret, flawless, luminous
10	"Be naturally beautiful with our skincare solution."	naturally beautiful, solution

4.2 Detailed Semantic Analysis of Each Datum

The following section presents a detailed semantic analysis of each advertisement slogan. For each datum, the denotative meaning, connotative meaning, dominant connotation type, and operative linguistic strategies are identified and discussed.

Table 2. Detailed Semantic Analysis of Beauty Product Advertisement Slogans

Data	Slogan	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Connotation Type
1	"Get your flawless skin in just 7 days!"	Skin free from visible blemishes within a 7-day period	"Flawless" implies perfection beyond physical appearance; "7 days" connotes speed and magical transformation, suggesting that beauty is an urgent, achievable commodity	Positive / Aspirational
2	"Reveal your natural beauty with our brightening serum."	A serum product that brightens the skin and uncovers its original condition	"Reveal" implies that true beauty is hidden and waiting to be discovered; "natural beauty" paradoxically associates chemical products with authenticity and purity	Positive / Paradoxical
3	"Achieve glowing and radiant skin effortlessly."	Attaining skin that is luminous and bright without difficulty	"Glowing" and "radiant" evoke vitality, health, and inner happiness; "effortlessly" connotes privilege and ease, suggesting natural superiority	Positive / Aspirational
4	"Say goodbye to dull skin and hello to a perfect look."	Replacing skin that lacks brightness with an appearance deemed perfect	"Dull" carries a strong negative social stigma suggesting lack of energy or worth; "perfect look" implies that appearance determines social acceptance	Negative + Positive / Social Pressure
5	"Feel confident with smooth and healthy skin."	Experiencing self-assurance as a result of having smooth and healthy skin	"Confident" links beauty with psychological well-being; implies that confidence is conditional on physical appearance, reinforcing beauty standards	Positive / Psychological
6	"Unlock your youthful glow today!"	Activating or achieving a youthful appearance on the same day	"Unlock" metaphorically implies that youth is a locked treasure accessible through the product; "youthful" valorizes youth over age, evoking anti-aging anxiety	Positive / Metaphorical
7	"Experience crystal clear skin like never before."	Having exceptionally transparent and clear skin as a new or unprecedented experience	"Crystal clear" connotes purity, rarity, and luxury; "like never before" creates hyperbolic urgency suggesting a revolutionary breakthrough	Positive / Hyperbolic
8	"Transform your skin into a brighter and more beautiful version."	Changing the skin's condition to become	"Transform" suggests radical self-reinvention; "more beautiful version"	Positive / Transformational

Data	Slogan	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Connotation Type
		lighter and more attractive	implies the current self is inferior and that identity improvement through products is desirable	
9	"Your secret to flawless and luminous skin."	A product that is one's personal method for achieving perfect and glowing skin	"Secret" implies exclusivity, forbidden knowledge, and aspiration; "flawless and luminous" together set an idealized beauty standard that normalizes perfection	Positive / Exclusive
10	"Be naturally beautiful with our skincare solution."	Becoming beautiful in a natural way using the company's skincare product	"Naturally beautiful" is an oxymoron in advertising context — it connotes authenticity while promoting product use; "solution" frames skin problems as solvable through consumption	Positive / Contradictory

4.2.1 Analysis of Data 1: "Get your flawless skin in just 7 days!"

Denotatively, this slogan promises skin that is free from visible blemishes within a period of one week. The imperative verb "Get" functions as a direct command, positioning the consumer as an active agent capable of achieving the promised result. However, the connotative dimensions of this slogan are considerably richer and more ideologically loaded.

The adjective "flawless" operates as a central connotative pivot. Beyond its dictionary meaning of "without imperfections," "flawless" in the context of beauty advertising carries connotations of absolute perfection, social desirability, and even moral virtue invoking a cultural equation between physical appearance and personal worth that is deeply embedded in contemporary consumer culture (Wolf, 1991). The qualifier "in just 7 days" introduces a temporal connotation of urgency and accessibility, suggesting that the transformation from imperfection to perfection is not only achievable but rapid and effortless. This hyperbolic time claim reinforces the broader advertising narrative that beauty is a problem to be solved efficiently, as one would approach a commercial transaction.

The exclamation mark intensifies the sense of excitement and urgency, amplifying the emotional appeal. The overall connotative register of Data 1 is aspirational—it constructs beauty as a desirable state that is immediately within the consumer's reach, contingent only on purchasing the product.

4.2.2 Analysis of Data 2: "Reveal your natural beauty with our brightening serum."

The denotative meaning of this slogan is straightforward: a brightening serum product that helps to uncover the skin's original condition. The verb "Reveal" denotes an act of uncovering or making visible

what was previously hidden. "Natural beauty" denotes beauty that exists inherently, without artificial modification. "Brightening serum" denotes a cosmetic product formulated to enhance skin luminosity.

Connotatively, however, this slogan constructs a fascinating paradox. The verb "Reveal" implies that the consumer's true beauty already exists but is somehow concealed perhaps by pollution, stress, or age — and requires the product to bring it to the surface. This positions the product not as an artificial enhancement but as a liberating force that restores an authentic self. The phrase "natural beauty" carries strong positive connotations of genuineness, purity, and effortless attractiveness, which are paradoxically achieved through the use of a manufactured chemical product (the serum). This is a classic example of what Barthes (1977) identifies as mythologization the naturalization of the artificial.

The linguistic strategy at work here is paradox: the advertisement simultaneously invokes naturalness and promotes product use, creating a cognitive dissonance that is resolved by the consumer's desire to believe in the possibility of authentic, product-enhanced beauty.

4.2.3 Analysis of Data 3: "Achieve glowing and radiant skin effortlessly."

Denotatively, this slogan promises luminous and bright skin that can be attained without significant effort. The verb "Achieve" suggests a goal-oriented process, while the adverb "effortlessly" immediately qualifies this by removing any implication of difficulty.

Connotatively, "glowing" and "radiant" are among the most positively charged words in beauty advertising discourse. Both adjectives evoke not merely the appearance of the skin but the inner state of the person: glowing skin connotes health, happiness, vitality, and youth. These connotations draw on deeply rooted cultural associations between luminosity and life-force, between radiance and social desirability. "Effortlessly" adds a connotation of natural superiority the suggestion that achieving this ideal is not merely possible but easy, implying that only those who fail to purchase the product would struggle with "non-effortless" skin. This creates a subtle social pressure within an ostensibly positive message.

The linguistic strategy here is the use of positive semantic prosody the clustering of positively charged lexemes ("glowing," "radiant," "effortlessly") to create an overwhelmingly positive affective atmosphere that discourages critical scrutiny.

4.2.4 Analysis of Data 4: "Say goodbye to dull skin and hello to a perfect look."

Denotatively, this slogan encourages the replacement of skin that lacks brightness with an appearance considered perfect. The structure "Say goodbye to X and hello to Y" is a binary antithetical construction that is immediately recognizable from everyday conversational idiom, giving the slogan a friendly, colloquial tone.

Connotatively, the word "dull" is particularly significant. In the context of beauty advertising, "dull" carries not merely the denotative meaning of "lacking brightness" but a broader set of negative connotations including lack of energy, unattractiveness, and even social inadequacy. The social stigma attached to "dull" skin in beauty culture is considerable, and the advertisement capitalizes on this stigma to motivate consumer anxiety. Conversely, "a perfect look" — an absolute, unhyphenated ideal — suggests that the consumer's current appearance is by definition imperfect, positioning the product as the solution to a socially constructed deficiency.

This slogan is notable for employing social pressure as its primary connotative mechanism. Unlike most of the other slogans, which rely on positive aspiration, Data 4 works partly through the evocation of a negative emotional state (inadequacy, shame) before resolving it through the promise of the product.

4.2.5 Analysis of Data 5: "Feel confident with smooth and healthy skin."

Denotatively, this slogan suggests that the consumer will experience confidence as a result of having smooth and healthy skin. The verb "Feel" is an affective term that explicitly invites the consumer to imagine an emotional state, not merely a physical condition.

Connotatively, the most significant strategy in this slogan is the construction of a causal relationship between physical appearance and psychological well-being. By linking "confident" (an emotional/psychological state) with "smooth and healthy skin" (a physical condition), the slogan implies that beauty is a prerequisite for confidence — and, by extension, for social participation and success. This reflects a broader ideological construct in consumer culture wherein self-esteem is understood as dependent on physical appearance (Bordo, 1993; Wolf, 1991). The adjectives "smooth" and "healthy" further connote purity, discipline, and care — qualities that are positively valued both aesthetically and morally.

The psychological connotation type is dominant here: the slogan's primary persuasive mechanism operates at the level of emotional identification rather than rational argument.

4.2.6 Analysis of Data 6: "Unlock your youthful glow today!"

Denotatively, this slogan invites the consumer to activate or achieve a youthful, glowing appearance on the same day. The metaphor "Unlock" suggests that something desirable is currently inaccessible and requires a key — which the product provides.

Connotatively, the metaphor of unlocking is highly evocative. It positions the desired state ("youthful glow") as a locked treasure or hidden potential, implying that it already exists within the consumer but is somehow constrained or suppressed. The product is thus constructed as a liberating key rather than an external addition, which appeals to the consumer's desire for authentic self-expression. The adjective "youthful" carries powerful anti-aging connotations in a cultural context where youth is highly

valorized and aging is constructed as a problem to be remedied. "Glow" connotes health, vitality, and attractiveness, while the temporal urgency of "today" reinforces the immediate availability of the promised transformation.

The metaphorical connotation type is dominant in this slogan, with aspirational and anti-aging dimensions adding further layers of ideological content.

4.2.7 Analysis of Data 7: "Experience crystal clear skin like never before."

Denotatively, this slogan promises unprecedented clarity and transparency of skin. "Crystal clear" denotes a high degree of transparency or clarity, while "like never before" indicates a level of experience that surpasses anything in the consumer's past.

Connotatively, "crystal clear" is a richly evocative phrase. Crystals — particularly clear or diamond-like crystals — carry strong cultural connotations of purity, rarity, luxury, and value. To describe skin as "crystal clear" is thus to imbue it with qualities of preciousness and perfection that far exceed what any topical product could literally deliver. The phrase "like never before" employs hyperbole to suggest that the product represents a revolutionary breakthrough, creating a sense of historical uniqueness and urgency. Together, these connotations construct a beauty ideal that is simultaneously attainable ("experience" it now) and extraordinary ("like never before").

The hyperbolic connotation type is most prominent in Data 7, operating in conjunction with luxury and exclusivity connotations to elevate the perceived value of the product.

4.2.8 Analysis of Data 8: "Transform your skin into a brighter and more beautiful version."

Denotatively, this slogan promises a change in the skin's condition, making it lighter and more attractive. The verb "Transform" denotes a fundamental change from one state to another, while "brighter and more beautiful version" denotes a comparative improvement in appearance.

Connotatively, "Transform" is one of the most ideologically potent verbs in beauty advertising discourse. It invokes the narrative of metamorphosis — the possibility of radical self-reinvention which is a central myth of consumer culture (Featherstone, 1991). The phrase "more beautiful version" is particularly revealing: it implies that the consumer's current self is a less adequate version of who they could be, inviting a form of self-dissatisfaction that the product promises to resolve. This transformational narrative is closely linked to the ideology of self-improvement as an individual responsibility and consumer act.

The connotative type is transformational/aspirational, and the dominant linguistic strategy is the use of comparative adjectives ("brighter," "more beautiful") to construct an implicit before-and-after narrative that motivates consumer desire.

4.2.9 Analysis of Data 9: "Your secret to flawless and luminous skin."

Denotatively, this slogan identifies the product as the consumer's personal method for achieving perfect and glowing skin. "Your secret" denotes a private, personal technique or remedy, while "flawless and luminous skin" denotes skin that is both perfect and radiant.

Connotatively, the word "secret" is particularly charged. Secrets carry connotations of exclusivity, forbidden knowledge, and special access — the suggestion that the consumer is being initiated into an inner circle of beauty knowledge unavailable to others. This creates a sense of privilege and desirability that significantly elevates the perceived value of the product beyond its functional properties. The adjective "flawless" (already analyzed in Data 1) reinforces the aspiration to absolute perfection, while "luminous" evoking light, glow, and inner radiance extends the connotative field to include notions of inner beauty and health.

The exclusive connotation type is dominant in Data 9, with the "secret" framing functioning as a particularly effective strategy for creating perceived product uniqueness in a crowded market.

4.2.10 Analysis of Data 10: "Be naturally beautiful with our skincare solution."

Denotatively, this slogan encourages the consumer to become beautiful in a natural way using the company's skincare product. The imperative "Be" is an existential verb that invites the consumer to inhabit a state of being, not merely to perform an action.

Connotatively, this slogan presents perhaps the most sophisticated contradiction of all ten data. The phrase "naturally beautiful" is, in the context of product advertising, an oxymoron: "natural" beauty implies the absence of artificial products, yet the slogan recommends a manufactured "skincare solution." This paradox is resolved in the consumer's mind by the positive emotional associations attached to both "natural" (authenticity, purity, health) and "beautiful" (social desirability, attractiveness). The noun "solution" further frames skin as a "problem" requiring correction — a framing that is both pathologizing and commercially convenient, as it creates an endless market for products that promise to solve the constructed problem.

The contradictory/paradoxical connotation type is dominant, and the primary linguistic strategies are oxymoron ("naturally beautiful" in an artificial product context) and problem-solution framing.

4.3 Classification of Connotation Types

Based on the detailed analysis above, Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of connotation types across the ten slogans.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Connotation Types

Connotation Type	Frequency	Data Numbers	Percentage
Aspirational	3	Data 1, 3, 6	30%
Psychological / Emotional	2	Data 5, 8	20%
Social Pressure / Stigma	1	Data 4	10%
Paradoxical / Contradictory	2	Data 2, 10	20%
Hyperbolic / Exaggeration	1	Data 7	10%
Exclusive / Secretive	1	Data 9	10%
Total	10	—	100%

As Table 3 illustrates, aspirational connotation is the most frequently employed type (30%), appearing in Data 1, 3, and 6. This finding is consistent with existing research on beauty advertising, which identifies aspirationalism as a core persuasive strategy (Williamson, 1978; Goldman & Papson, 1996). Psychological and paradoxical/contradictory connotation types each appear in 20% of the data, reflecting the dual strategies of emotional engagement and ideological naturalization that characterize contemporary beauty advertising. Social pressure, hyperbolic, and exclusive connotation types each appear once (10%), functioning as supplementary persuasive mechanisms.

4.4 Analysis of Linguistic Strategies

The detailed analysis of all ten slogans reveals a consistent set of linguistic strategies through which connotative meanings are constructed. Table 4 presents these strategies with representative examples from the data.

Table 4. Linguistic Strategies and Their Semantic Effects

Linguistic Strategy	Examples from Data	Semantic Effect
Metaphor	"Unlock your youthful glow" (D6); "Your secret..." (D9)	Creates imaginative associations that elevate product value beyond literal function
Antithesis / Contrast	"Say goodbye to dull... hello to perfect" (D4)	Heightens emotional impact by juxtaposing negative and positive states
Hyperbole	"like never before" (D7); "in just 7 days" (D1)	Amplifies perceived product efficacy beyond realistic expectations
Imperative Mood	"Get," "Achieve," "Feel," "Be," "Transform," "Unlock"	Directs audience behavior and creates urgency and empowerment simultaneously

Linguistic Strategy	Examples from Data	Semantic Effect
Oxymoron / Paradox	"Naturally beautiful with our skincare" (D10); "Reveal natural beauty" (D2)	Normalizes product use under the guise of naturalness, masking artificiality
Positive Semantic Prosody	"Flawless," "radiant," "luminous," "crystal clear," "glowing"	Clusters of positively-charged lexis that construct an idealized beauty standard

The imperative mood is the single most pervasive linguistic feature across the ten slogans, appearing in eight of the ten data (Data 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10). This finding aligns with Goddard's (1998) observation that imperative constructions are central to advertising discourse because they create the illusion of empowerment while directing consumer behavior. Metaphor is the second most prevalent strategy, appearing in Data 6 and 9, and implicitly informing the transformational narratives of Data 8 and others. Positive semantic prosody — the dense clustering of positively valenced lexis — is a background strategy operative across virtually all ten slogans.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Connotative Meanings as Ideological Constructs

The findings of this study confirm and extend existing scholarship on the ideological functions of connotative language in beauty advertising. Across all ten slogans, connotative meanings operate to naturalize a set of beauty ideals — luminosity, flawlessness, youthfulness, smoothness — that are culturally specific, commercially motivated, and frequently unattainable. By employing Barthes' (1977) concept of myth, these connotations transform contingent cultural preferences into seemingly universal, natural truths about beauty.

The prevalence of aspirational connotation (30%) is particularly significant. Aspirational language works by positioning the desired state (flawless, radiant, confident skin) as both intensely desirable and realistically achievable — a combination that is commercially powerful because it motivates desire without triggering the scepticism that explicitly exaggerated claims might provoke. This is consistent with Featherstone's (1991) analysis of consumer culture, in which the cultivation of desire is maintained precisely by keeping aspirational objects just within reach.

5.2 Psychological Mechanisms and Consumer Well-being

The psychological connotation type, which appears in Data 5 and 8, reveals a particularly significant dimension of beauty advertising language: the direct equation of physical appearance with psychological well-being. When Data 5 states that the consumer will "feel confident with smooth and

healthy skin," it encodes a conditional logic confidence is available, but only through the mediation of the product. This construct has implications beyond commercial persuasion: it contributes to a broader cultural pattern in which self-esteem is contingent on adherence to externally defined beauty standards.

Research in social psychology and media studies has extensively documented the negative effects of beauty advertising on consumer self-esteem, particularly among young women (Grabe et al., 2008; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). The present analysis adds a linguistic dimension to this understanding, demonstrating how specific semantic strategies particularly the use of conditional constructions, comparative adjectives, and before-and-after narratives create the psychological architecture through which these effects operate.

5.3 The Paradox of Naturalness

One of the most analytically interesting findings of this study is the prevalence of paradoxical connotation in beauty advertising language. Two of the ten slogans (Data 2 and 10) explicitly invoke "naturalness" as a desirable quality while simultaneously promoting manufactured products. This paradox is resolved through the connotative magic of advertising language, which associates the product with the positive values of authenticity and nature while simultaneously positioning it as a technological solution.

This finding is consistent with Wernick's (1991) analysis of the "promotional culture," in which the distinction between authentic and artificial is continuously blurred by commercial discourse. It also resonates with Jones' (2010) research on the beauty industry in Southeast Asia, which shows how the rhetoric of "natural beauty" is used to market skin-whitening and brightening products in ways that reinforce colorist beauty standards while maintaining the appearance of benign, nature-aligned wellness.

5.4 Social Implications and Media Literacy

The findings of this study have significant social implications. The connotative language analyzed in these ten slogans collectively constructs a beauty ideal that is narrow, hierarchical, and commercially driven. The idealization of flawlessness, clarity, brightness, and youthfulness and the corresponding stigmatization of "dullness" has real consequences for how consumers perceive themselves and others. In the Indonesian context, where global beauty industries promote Eurocentric or light-skin ideals through social media channels with massive reach, these connotative constructs can exacerbate existing social inequalities related to colorism and appearance-based discrimination (Saraswati, 2013).

These findings underscore the importance of media literacy education that equips consumers particularly young people with the analytical tools to decode the connotative strategies embedded in advertising language. In the context of English language education in Indonesia, the analysis of authentic

advertising texts offers a valuable pedagogical resource for developing both linguistic competence and critical thinking skills.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has conducted a detailed semantic analysis of ten beauty product advertisement slogans circulated on social media, focusing on the connotative meanings embedded in these texts and the linguistic strategies through which they are constructed. The analysis, grounded in Leech's (1974) typology of meaning and Barthes' (1977) concepts of denotation and connotation, reveals that all ten slogans deploy rich connotative language to construct and reinforce idealized beauty standards.

The dominant connotation types identified are aspirational (30%), psychological (20%), and paradoxical (20%), with social pressure, hyperbolic, and exclusive types appearing less frequently. These connotation types are generated through a consistent set of linguistic strategies: metaphor, hyperbole, antithesis, imperative constructions, oxymoron, and positive semantic prosody.

The findings demonstrate that beauty product advertisements on social media function not merely as commercial communications but as powerful ideological texts that shape beauty norms, construct consumer identities, and implicitly address the psychological needs of their audiences. The paradox of naturalness – the simultaneous invocation of authentic beauty and the recommendation of manufactured products – is identified as a particularly sophisticated ideological strategy.

These conclusions have implications for media literacy, consumer awareness, and English language education. Future research might extend this analysis to a larger corpus of slogans, incorporate multimodal analysis (examining visual and linguistic connotations in combination), or compare connotative strategies across different cultural and linguistic contexts. Research examining the reception and interpretation of these connotative strategies by actual consumers would also significantly enrich the picture presented here.

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Supporting Recent Journals (2020–2026)

The following recent peer-reviewed articles (2020–2026) further support and contextualize the findings of this study:

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