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ORIENTAL GAZE OF EASTERN: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND IDENTITY DOMINATION IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN BEAUTY PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract
This study investigates the interplay between power and sociocultural dynamics in Malaysian beauty advertisements and examines how these factors influence consumers' purchasing intentions. Although advertising has long served as a key arena for the negotiation of cultural meanings, insufficient attention has been paid to how sociocultural elements and power relations embedded in Malaysian beauty commercials shape consumer behavior. Situated within the Malaysian context, where beauty advertising is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and societal values, this research analyzes how language, imagery, and symbolic representation construct beauty discourses that guide consumption practices. Drawing on Hall's (1990) Theory of Cultural Identity and Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), four selected digital advertisements were critically examined. The findings reveal that advertisers strategically employ persuasive language, visual aesthetics, and culturally resonant symbols to legitimize and normalize beauty ideals. Notably, Malaysian beauty advertisements foreground Eastern cultural identity through appeals to natural ingredients, halal certification, and community-oriented messaging, thereby reinforcing prevailing cultural norms while shaping consumer perceptions of beauty. By integrating multimodal analysis with critical discourse perspectives, this study offers new insights to the fields of linguistics, media, and cultural studies and underscores the importance of broader cross-cultural inquiry to deepen theoretical engagement with advertising discourse.

Keywords: beauty, critical discourse analysis, Eastern, power, socio-cultural

Introduction
Advertising plays a crucial role in shaping how consumers perceive products and in influencing societal standards. The word "advertising" is derived from an Arabic term that means "general knowledge," while the Latin word *advertere* translates to "diverting the mind" (Ahmad Ishak & Baharuddin, 2002). Scholars have explained that advertising is more than a mere commercial instrument; it functions as a powerful medium that captures attention, informs the public, and influences consumer behavior (Danesi, 2009). Omar (1992) further notes that

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advertisements do not merely promote products but also convey messages that shape consumer decision-making. In this regard, advertising operates as both an economic and sociocultural entity, reinforcing ideologies and behavioral patterns. Bai (2018) adds that, beyond fulfilling marketing objectives, advertisements must also account for psychological, cultural, and social factors to effectively resonate with their intended audiences (Dyer, 1982). Across Asia, countries such as Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia have witnessed a growing influence of beauty advertisements in shaping consumer preferences. Malaysia, being geographically and culturally proximate to South Korea, is particularly influenced by Korean beauty trends and their impact, which can be interpreted through the lens of cultural globalization and transnational consumer culture. The spread of the "Korean Wave" (Hallyu) has had a profound impact across Asia, transmitting aesthetic ideals through K-pop, Korean dramas, and social media influence, thereby shaping perceptions of beauty (Jin, 2016). Research suggests that these transnational cultural flows have normalized practices such as elaborate skincare routines, cosmetic enhancements, and the pursuit of the "glass skin" ideal as desirable beauty standards. As advertisements are disseminated through diverse media platforms, including television, print, outdoor, and digital media, advertisers employ persuasive linguistic and visual strategies to attract and influence consumers (Menon, 2019).

Despite the increasing prominence of beauty advertisements in Malaysia, a distinct research gap remains in understanding the power structures and sociocultural influences embedded within these advertisements. While previous studies have examined the role of advertising in branding and consumer decision-making, few have critically analyzed how advertisers construct power relations and sociocultural ideologies through language and imagery (Turhan, 2017). Kaur (2013), for instance, focuses on consumer perceptions, celebrity and influencer endorsements, and product-related issues such as halal certification and skin-whitening products, rather than systematically exploring how linguistic choices, visual design, and symbolic resources construct power, identity, and normative beauty ideals in online advertising. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2024) and Wang et al. (2025) emphasize influencer credibility, endorsement effects, and consumer decision-making, yet overlook the ideological reproduction and power dynamics operating within digital contexts. Reviews of halal cosmetics research likewise foreground market factors and consumer attitudes but neglect advertising discourse as a site where ideologies are negotiated and reproduced (Isa et al., 2023). There remains limited amount of empirical work employing critical approaches to illustrate how digital beauty advertisements in Malaysia shape and circulate sociocultural norms and power relations. This underscores the significance of the present CDA-driven study, which argues that advertising not only reflects consumer preferences but also actively shapes perceptions of beauty and identity by incorporating prevailing cultural values.

The realm of beauty advertising possesses a long and intricate history in commercial markets. According to Jones (2010), the beauty industry has been deeply embedded in consumer culture since ancient times, evolving into a highly competitive global marketplace. Consequently, a thorough examination is essential to understand how advertisers strategically employ both verbal and visual elements to reinforce sociocultural norms and influence consumers within Malaysia's beauty

industry. Chatterjee and Parihar (2023) assert that gender representation in beauty advertisements plays a crucial role in shaping societal norms and perpetuating traditional beauty ideals. Women are frequently depicted as youthful and flawless, promoting the notion that their worth is closely tied to their physical appearance. Hadi et al. (2020) mentioned that many women, especially those between 20 and 29 years old, show a marked interest in cosmetic products and focus heavily on beauty and appearance-enhancing practices, often without fully understanding the possible positive or adverse effects of the products they apply. Such tendencies are shaped by societal beauty ideals, targeted marketing, and pressures from peers or social media influencers, all of which influence their perceptions and purchasing behaviors.

In contrast, although men appear less frequently, they are typically associated with authority, success, and rugged masculinity rather than beauty itself. Moreover, the involvement of celebrities and influencers in beauty marketing reinforces aspirational ideals, fosters unrealistic beauty standards, and heightens consumer dependence on advertised products (Ji, 2024). This intersection of media influence, cultural perception, and consumer behavior highlights the importance of critically assessing the broader implications of beauty advertising. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how power dynamics and sociocultural themes are represented in Malaysian beauty advertisements and how these elements shape consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviors. To achieve this aim, the study employs Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the discursive strategies used by advertisers, in conjunction with Hall's (1990) theory, which offers a framework for understanding how advertising reproduces sociocultural narratives. By investigating these elements, this research contributes to the fields of media studies, linguistics, and cultural research by revealing how advertising perpetuates existing power structures while simultaneously demonstrating how sociocultural factors shape consumer behavior. Furthermore, it underscores the need for a critical evaluation of advertising strategies to better understand their broader social and cultural implications in Malaysia.

The research questions of this study are:

1. How are power dynamics and socio-cultural factors integrated into beauty advertisements in Malaysia?
2. How do the portrayals of these aspects affect consumer perceptions and purchase intentions?

Literature Review

Cultural dynamics in Malaysian beauty advertising reflect a complex interplay of local traditions and transnational influences. Previous studies have shown that Islamic values, collectivist orientations, and communal identity are frequently embedded in advertising strategies through elements such as halal certification, natural product positioning, modest imagery, and purchase intentions promoted through advertisements and social media (Bakar & Connaughton, 2019; Ngo & Ismail, 2021). Advertisers often strategically integrate these external ideals with indigenous cultural values to enhance market appeal (Veloo & Mustafa, 2023). However, this integration has not been free from critique. Scholars have argued that the persistence of Eurocentric aesthetics and fair-skin ideals perpetuates exclusionary beauty standards, fostering unrealistic expectations (Lim et al., 2019;

Sayogie et al., 2023). Similarly, while the use of cultural symbols can strengthen emotional resonance and consumer identification, it also risks reinforcing stereotypes or marginalizing cultural diversity (Lai et al., 2010). Collectively, these studies suggest that beauty advertising functions beyond its commercial purpose, operating as a discursive arena where cultural identity, social norms, and ideological contestations are continuously constructed and negotiated (Jones, 2010).

The beauty advertising landscape in Malaysia is shaped by its rich cultural diversity, encompassing Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous communities, each with distinct beauty ideals and cultural preferences. Malaysian advertisements reflect a synthesis of local and global influences, blending Western and East Asian beauty standards with traditional Malaysian notions of attractiveness. Jones (2010) observes that advertisements function not only as marketing tools but also as powerful media for shaping cultural identity. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2021) and Jalaluddin and Ahmad (2011) note that beauty products in Malaysia are influenced by trends from South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia, illustrating the broader phenomenon of an interconnected Asian beauty culture. The influence of *Hallyu* (the Korean Wave) extends beyond beauty products to encompass music, fashion, and entertainment, further reinforcing cross-cultural beauty ideals in Malaysian advertisements.

Despite Malaysia's strong Islamic heritage, beauty advertising does not always conform strictly to religious values. Koswara and Herlina (2025) argue that international beauty brands must carefully navigate cultural sensitivities such as modesty, halal certification, and religious values while simultaneously appealing to a broader, more secular audience. Consequently, advertising strategies in Malaysia require careful negotiation of cultural representation, inclusivity, and sensitivity. Lim et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of diverse representation in beauty advertising, advocating for multi-ethnic, multi-skin-tone, and body-positive campaigns that more accurately reflect Malaysia's plural society. Conversely, Sayogie et al. (2023) contend that many beauty advertisements continue to promote unrealistic beauty standards, thereby reinforcing harmful societal pressures related to physical appearance.

The role of cultural symbols, norms, and identity in advertising

In this study, cultural symbols function as semiotic tools. In connection, underlying social norms and ideological frameworks are communicated, revealing the ways in which advertising messages are culturally encoded and interpreted. By embedding such symbols, advertisers not only convey product-related information but also engage with the cultural experiences, belief systems, and collective consciousness of their target audiences, shaping both perception and reception within specific socio-cultural contexts. Muhamad et al. (2023) observe that cultural symbols are components that embody meanings within a society and often reflect a community's values, beliefs, and traditions. These symbols can take the form of objects, colors, sounds, or images ingrained in cultural awareness. For instance, in Chinese culture, red represents good fortune and wealth, while white may denote mourning in certain cultures. In marketing, cultural symbols are intentionally used to provoke specific emotional reactions or communicate a message that resonates with shared cultural understanding among the intended audience. Previous studies, such as Muhamad et al. (2023) demonstrate that such symbols convey collective

cultural values and beliefs, whereas Harun et al. (2025) observe that Islamic motifs are commonly incorporated in Malaysian advertisements to engage Muslim audiences. In a similar vein, Waller and Fam (2000), together with Nayeem (2012), assert that culturally embedded campaigns foster greater audience connection and credibility. Cross-cultural findings further reveal that Western advertising tends to foreground individuality and self-expression, whereas Malaysian advertising underscores collectivism, modesty, and community values, underscoring the role of cultural norms in shaping both advertising messages and audience responses. In contrast, advertisements from Western cultures, which emphasize individualism and self-expression, may not connect as effectively with the collectivist values that dominate Malaysian society. Therefore, cultural norms influence not just the content and style of advertising but also how the audience understands the message, brands, marketers and influencers have an obligation to offer consumers honest, reliable, and safe information for transparently communicating product ingredients, potential side effects, and expected results (Patterson & Wilkins, 2014).

Critical discourse analysis in beauty product advertisement

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been extensively employed to explore how language, ideology, and power intersect in media and communication (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2008). In the context of beauty advertising, CDA provides a useful lens to examine how linguistic, semiotic, and visual resources construct beauty norms and shape consumer identities. In Malaysia, however, its application to this area remains limited, with existing studies largely focusing on external cultural influences and the integration of foreign beauty ideologies. Among the earliest contributions, Jalaluddin and Ahmad (2011) investigated the socio-cultural impact of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) on Malaysian youth, demonstrating how Korean music, fashion, and cosmetics shaped local beauty ideals. Shabudin and Aman (2013) extended this perspective by analyzing Japanese beauty advertisements, revealing the ways Western ideologies were embedded into Asian advertising discourse through textual and inter-discursive strategies. Building on this, John (2015) examined Malay-language beauty advertisements and showed how English and French borrowings in branding and slogans were strategically employed to project modernity, prestige, and global sophistication.

Later research expanded on these findings. Mad Saad and Muhd Ridhwan (2020) illustrated how the Malay language is deliberately integrated into Korean beauty product advertisements in Malaysia as a means of localizing global beauty trends, reflecting a hybrid discourse that shapes consumer aspirations. Similarly, Raslie and Mohd Zaidi (2022) explored feminist stylistics in beauty marketing, demonstrating how advertisements both empower women as active consumers and simultaneously commodify their identities, an outcome that aligns with Williamson's (1978) seminal view of advertising as a mechanism of ideological reproduction. On a broader scale, scholarship on Southeast Asian advertising discourse such as Azmi et al. (2023) and Veloo and Mustafa (2023) underscores that collectivist values, modest portrayals, and indirect forms of communication continue to dominate message construction, even as globalized beauty ideals such as skin-whitening and "glass skin" increasingly influence Malaysian advertising practices (Bakar & Connaughton, 2019).

Influence of language and visual elements in beauty product advertisements

The literature indicates that Malaysian beauty advertising is shaped by both indigenous sociocultural dynamics, such as collectivist orientations, Islamic values, and halal certification, and global currents, particularly the Korean Wave and Western beauty ideals. Previous scholarship has shown how advertisers deploy language, cultural symbolism, and visual strategies to construct notions of beauty (Jalaluddin & Ahmad, 2011; John, 2015; Mad Saad & Muhd Ridhwan, 2020; Raslie & Mohd Zaidi, 2022; Shabudin & Aman, 2013). Yet much of this work remains concentrated on print advertisements, foreign campaigns, or linguistic borrowings, while more recent research has primarily addressed consumer perceptions, influencer credibility, and purchase motivations (Veloo & Mustafa, 2023). These contributions are valuable, but they do not critically examine how digital beauty advertisements in Malaysia reproduce power relations, circulate sociocultural ideologies, and influence consumer behavior. Semiotic studies, such as those by Shabudin and Ibrahim (2016), further illustrate the dominance of Eurocentric ideals, such as fairness and slimness, yet they stop short of analyzing how these ideals intersect with local cultural frameworks or affect purchasing intentions. Similarly, reviews of halal cosmetics (Isa et al., 2023) emphasize consumer and market factors but overlook advertising discourse as a site where identity, ideology, and power are negotiated. This highlights a significant gap, as there is still limited CDA-informed research that systematically interrogates the language, imagery, and symbolic resources in Malaysian digital beauty advertising. Addressing this gap is crucial for two reasons. First, it reveals how advertisements function not merely as commercial tools but also as mechanisms that reinforce and contest sociocultural norms and power hierarchies in Malaysia's multicultural setting. Second, it provides insights into how these discursive practices shape consumer purchasing intentions, an area that remains underexplored.

Theoretical framework and approach

In this study, Fairclough's (1995) theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed alongside Hall's (1990) framework of cultural identity. As Zhu (2023) explains, CDA functions as a research approach that examines the interrelationship between language, power, and ideology. According to Fairclough's (1995) model, CDA operates across three primary dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice, each involving a distinct level of analysis. The textual dimension focuses on spoken or written communication, while the discursive practice dimension concerns the processes of text production, distribution, and interpretation. The social practice dimension situates discourse within broader sociocultural and institutional contexts. Together, these dimensions are interrelated and form a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how discourse both reflects and shapes social realities. Fairclough's (1995) approach to CDA, as elaborated by Aman (2010), provides valuable guidance for analyzing the connections between micro-level linguistic features and macro-level social structures. Within the textual dimension, for instance, this framework enables researchers to examine not only linguistic features such as lexical choices, modality, and clause structures but also the ideological implications embedded in language use. Within this framework, texts may also be analyzed through semiotic resources

such as imagery, color schemes, and visual layouts, all of which generate meanings that extend beyond written or spoken language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The second dimension, discourse practice, encompasses both the production and interpretation of texts, involving acts such as writing, speaking, listening, reading, and viewing. These practices are inevitably shaped by historical, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts that determine how discourse is produced, circulated, and understood (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). For example, advertising discourse is constructed with commercial intentions but interpreted by audiences through the lens of their cultural knowledge and social experiences (Cook, 2001). The third dimension, social practice, foregrounds the broader ideological and power structures that regulate discourse, establishing how meanings are legitimized, sustained, and reproduced in society (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2008). Thus, advertising functions as a discursive arena where cultural values, political interests, and social identities converge and are reinforced.

Describing the processes of discourse, interpretation, processing, and explanation represents an informative approach to analyzing the dimensions established by Fairclough. The strength of this theory is evident in its analytical adaptability, which does not rely on a specific sequence of dimensions. In essence, Fairclough's theory emphasizes social semiotic elements that reflect the representation of social life within society for the interests. This is especially true in the realm of media and advertising, where the community is influenced by emerging social conditions that shape the acceptance of highlighted channels. These producers use cultural and linguistic knowledge to communicate their ideas. Decoding is the process by which the audience or media user interprets and understands the message being conveyed. This process is influenced by the cultural background, life experience, and social context of the audience. Besides, identity representation refers to self-understanding formed through social and cultural interactions. Identity is something that is constructed and negotiated continuously in a cultural and social context. Identity is formed through cultural practices and the representations we see in the media. The media play an important role in providing images and narratives that help shape individual and collective identities (Hall, 1976). This dynamic is also seen as a mode of communication between advertisers and their audience, even when it pertains solely to media and advertising (Schroeder, 2002; Williamson, 1978). The integration of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory (1995; 2010) with Hall's (1990) theory was used to analyze a selection of four beauty product advertisements. This theoretical adaptation is rooted in the practices of discourse, power, and socio-culture, which serve the goals of the study.

The theoretical framework in this research suggests that this combination and adaptation are particularly relevant for investigating the influence of power and socio-culture in beauty product advertisements, enabling a critical analysis of media and advertising. It underscores the media's role in shaping and reflecting cultural identities and social conventions (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). By combining Fairclough's and Hall's (1990) theories, this research framework offers a comprehensive approach to holistically analyze the various dimensions of beauty product advertisements in Malaysia (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Method

Design

A qualitative method was used to explore the influence of sociocultural and power-related factors such as cultural symbolism, language use, and representations of community values on the construction of Eastern cultural identity in Malaysian beauty advertisements. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Hall's (1990) Theory of Cultural Identity as analytical frameworks, this study examined four selected advertisements to uncover how cultural meanings and power dynamics are encoded in both textual and visual elements. The principles of representation, diversity, and analytical relevance guided the selection of four advertisements. These advertisements were purposefully chosen to reflect both international and local beauty brands that actively shape the Malaysian market, thereby capturing the tension and negotiation between globalized beauty discourses and localized cultural values. Importantly, the sample extends beyond conventional topical beauty products such as creams and cosmetics to include consumable beauty items such as collagen and whitening powder.

Moreover, the choice of four advertisements is not a limitation but a methodological strength, allowing for nuanced, multimodal, and critical insights into how digital beauty advertising in Malaysia simultaneously reflects and shapes sociocultural norms, consumer aspirations, and identity constructions.

Data collection

This research analyzes four beauty product advertisements, focusing particularly on how they reflect and resonate with Malaysian cultural values, especially those associated with beauty enhancement. The selected products include facial care items, beauty drinks, and related offerings, capturing a broader spectrum of advertising practices in line with earlier findings that beauty discourses extend beyond skincare to encompass dietary and lifestyle dimensions (Madhavedi et al., 2025). By examining both consumable and cosmetic products, the study highlights the diversity and complexity of beauty standards represented in Malaysia.

The advertisements were sourced from official social media accounts and printed magazines key promotional platforms for the selected brands (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Schroeder, 2002). This data collection approach provides comprehensive insight into both the visual and linguistic features of the advertisements, ensuring a balanced representation across multiple media formats.

The analysis adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach, situated within a theoretical framework that supports the study's objectives. To explore the power relations and sociocultural meanings embedded in the selected beauty advertisements, the researcher draws on the works of Williamson (1978) and Wodak and Meyer (2016). Guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study first examines the discursive practices of advertising, focusing on elements such as purpose, imagery, language, audience, and technique. Then, the researcher associates this practice with Cultural Identity Theory based on signifying practices in a semiotic approach limited to analysis of representation, encoding, and decoding, and culture and identity.

Data analysis

This research analyzes four beauty product advertisements, focusing particularly on how they reflect and resonate with Malaysian cultural values especially those associated with beauty enhancement. The selected products include facial care items, beauty drinks, and related offerings, capturing a broader spectrum of advertising practices in line with earlier findings that beauty discourses extend beyond skincare to encompass dietary and lifestyle dimensions (Ooi & Tan, 2017). By examining both consumable and cosmetic products, the study highlights the diversity and complexity of beauty standards represented in Malaysia. The advertisements were sourced from official social media accounts and printed magazines key promotional platforms for the selected brands (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Schroeder, 2002). This data collection approach provides comprehensive insight into both the visual and linguistic features of the advertisements, ensuring a balanced representation across multiple media formats. The analysis adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach, situated within a theoretical framework that supports the study's objectives. To explore the power relations and sociocultural meanings embedded in the selected beauty advertisements, the researcher draws on the works of Williamson (1978) and Wodak and Meyer (2016). Guided by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study first examines the discursive practices of advertising, focusing on elements such as purpose, imagery, language, audience, and technique.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings demonstrate the four beauty advertisements influenced consumer perceptions by embedding socio-cultural ideals and power dynamics within their narratives. Through persuasive language, visual symbolism, and testimonial appeals not only stimulated purchasing intentions but also reinforced prevailing standards of beauty. The analysis highlights how these strategies shaped consumer trust and cultural identity, underscoring the relationship between advertising discourse, cultural values, and consumption practices in Malaysia.

D'Herb beauty product advertisement

Figure 1. D'Herbs beauty product advertisement

Table 1. Representation and interpretation of the D'Herbs beauty product advertisement on socio-cultural and Eastern identity

Element	Interpretation	Reflection on Socio-cultural	Reflection on Eastern Culture Identity
Image	Male and female figures, and ordinary users shown in modest attire. Visual implies exclusivity across gender and social class.	Adhering to gender binaries, traditional roles.	Eastern values of modesty, family roles, and collective identity.
Metaphor	"Rambut mahkota diri" (Hair as one's crown). Hair symbolized as dignity and pride, extended to both genders.	Physical appearance as a symbol of worth.	Reflecting cultural emphasis on grooming and respectability, especially in the Malay-Muslim context.
Language	"Produk Penjagaan Rambut Sihat Nombor Satu Terlajak Laris!"Exaggerated, persuasive slogan creates urgency and credibility.	Encouraging conformity to beauty ideals.	Combining modern commercial tone with slang (*terlajak laris*), reflecting Malaysian linguistic hybridity.
Testimony	"We were ridiculed… tried Super Lebat… it worked." Uses emotional testimony to show transformation and social acceptance.	Validating the consumer based on post-transformation appearance.	Reflecting the collectivist value of social harmony and external validation within Eastern familial/community settings. Strongly reflects Eastern/Malay-Muslim values of nature, halal-consciousness, and traditional remedies.

The advertisement integrates both male and female figures, combining celebrity endorsements with depictions of ordinary individuals to suggest inclusivity across gender and social groups. At first glance, this strategy seems progressive; however, a closer analysis reveals that the portrayal largely reinforces existing gender norms. As Klein (2014) notes, celebrity endorsements often carry aspirational appeal but simultaneously perpetuate conventional stereotypes. In this case, the characters' modest attire and culturally familiar aesthetics evoke Eastern ideals of decency, family orientation, and respectability, which are highly valued within Malay-Muslim culture. Despite the appearance of diversity, the limited representation of gender identities and roles highlights the persistence of traditional cultural scripts within Malaysian advertising, suggesting that inclusivity is primarily superficial.

The metaphor in advertisements uses bold, exaggerated phrases like "*Produk Penjagaan Rambut Sihat Nombor Satu Terlajak Laris*!" which translates to "the number one best-selling healthy hair care product" to create a sense of confidence and urgency. This inflated language, along with metaphorical hints, casts the product as both broadly appealing and highly effective. The term 'number one bestseller' also commercializes this phrase, suggesting that the product is

outstanding and effective, encouraging both men and women to give it a try as a metaphor.

This persuasive tactic combines contemporary marketing techniques with localized vernacular, particularly by utilizing the widely recognized term "terlajak laris." Such linguistic blending exemplifies Malaysia's multiculturalism. Nevertheless, Black and Sharma (2001) highlighted that by linking the product's advantages to deeply rooted cultural ideals of youth and beauty, the advertisement risks promoting unrealistic beauty standards. These risks perpetuate unrealistic expectations by persuading consumers to equate their self-worth and social acceptance with adherence to narrowly constructed beauty ideals.

As a result, such language may unintentionally emphasize the significance of physical appearance, reinforcing a cultural stereotype that marginalizes alternative views of beauty. Within Eastern cultural frameworks, where physical appearance is often seen as a reflection of moral character and social value, this rhetorical approach risks reinforcing limited and exclusionary standards of beauty and personal worth. The phrase *"rambut mahkota diri"* (hair as one's crown) further illustrates how cultural symbolism reinforces socio-cultural expectations.

Traditionally associated with femininity, the metaphor is extended to include men, yet the focus remains on outward appearance and societal approval, linking personal grooming to respectability, discipline, and social honor within the Malay-Muslim context. Black and Sharma (2001) argue that when beauty is framed around youth and culturally idealized attributes, advertisements risk marginalizing alternative conceptions of self-worth. In line with Hwang and Chung (2019), the strategic inclusion of culturally significant natural ingredients such as olives, noni, and hibiscus resonates with local religious and cultural practices but simultaneously reinforces narrow beauty standards tied to dark, thick hair, youthfulness, and attractiveness.

While these symbols resonate strongly with the target audience, they also reinforce a narrow definition of beauty by associating characteristics such as thick, black hair with youth and attractiveness. This dependence on traditional cultural stereotypes may exclude individuals who do not conform to these limited criteria and brings forth critical ethical questions regarding the influence of advertising on personal self-image and the wider societal standards of beauty. The D'Herbs advertisement cleverly combines visual, linguistic, and cultural elements to establish a dual identity of beauty and efficacy for both genders; nevertheless, the analysis indicates that it mainly echoes familiar concepts without offering fresh insights.

While it effectively uses imagery and language, the approach lacks depth and does not thoroughly examine the underlying socio-cultural and ethical concerns involved. Furthermore, the reliance on a limited dataset restricts the broader relevance of the findings. Meanwhile, "We never thought that this D'Herbs Super Lebat product could change our appearance. We frequently dealt with embarrassing hair issues. Insults and ridicule had become a regular part of our lives." "Then one day, I saw the Super Lebat advertisement in local newspapers and magazines. We decided to try it, and it turned out that our hair issues were resolved. The Super Lebat product works. Thank you, D'Herbs." This highlights the testimonials from the public regarding their satisfaction with a product that was not expected to be effective but ultimately helped them resolve their hair problems. The

advertisement's visual, linguistic, and symbolic elements reveal how power operates to maintain established socio-cultural hierarchies.

While it appears inclusive, it subtly upholds traditional gender and beauty norms. These findings align with Black and Sharma (2001) regarding the reinforcement of cultural beauty ideals yet differ from Western advertising practices where diversity and inclusivity are more actively promoted. This demonstrates that Malaysian beauty advertising negotiates global marketing strategies while remaining firmly rooted in local socio-cultural ideologies.

Next, the finding of impact on consumer purchasing intentions relies on a combination of visual, linguistic, and culturally resonant strategies designed to influence consumer behavior. Hyperbolic statements, such as *"Produk Penjagaan Rambut Sihat Nombor Satu Terlajak Laris!"* ("the number one best-selling healthy hair care product"), create urgency and highlight the product's purported effectiveness, echoing Klein's (2014) observation that celebrity and commercial endorsements can amplify aspirational appeal. The term *"terlajak laris"*, widely recognized in Malaysian vernacular, illustrates how local linguistic conventions are leveraged to increase reliability and memorability, demonstrating an interplay between cultural context and marketing strategy. As mentioned by Suyanto (2007), marketing strategies help business growth through the internal environment for achieving long-term objectives, which include securing competitive advantages to succeed amid intensifying competition.

Consumer testimonials further strengthen purchasing intentions by showcasing perceived product efficacy and emotional satisfaction. For instance, narratives detailing the resolution of personal hair problems reinforce the product's credibility while appealing to the audience's desire for social acceptance and self-confidence. This aligns with Hwang and Chung (2019), who emphasize the effectiveness of culturally meaningful symbols in building consumer trust. Nonetheless, such strategies risk cultivating dependency on external beauty products as markers of self-worth, highlighting the ethical implications of advertising practices.

The advertisement functions not only as a commercial tool but also as a cultural mechanism that shapes aspirations and social norms around beauty. The findings indicate that Malaysian consumers' purchasing intentions are influenced strongly by socio-cultural alignment, demonstrating a reliance on culturally embedded ideals of modesty, family respectability, and appearance-based social evaluation. Compared with Western contexts, where aspirational narratives often focus on individualism and diversity, the Malaysian context shows a stronger orientation toward collective values and socially sanctioned beauty ideals.

Qu Puteh beauty product advertisement

Figure 2. Qu Puteh beauty product advertisement

Table 2. Representation and interpretation of the Qu Puteh beauty product advertisement on socio-cultural and Eastern identity

Element	Interpretation	Reflection on Socio-cultural	Reflection on Eastern Culture Identity
Image	-Features attractive women styled with perfect skin and elegant gestures.	-Centering beauty on women; reinforces physical appearance as central to feminine identity.	-Mirroring traditional ideals of femininity, grace, and modesty; lacks representation of ethnic or class diversity.
Language	-"Achieve fair skin and red lips in 7 days".	-Promoting unrealistic beauty expectations; links physical transformation with social value.	-Lighting up skin is ideal, tied to purity and status; it reflects colorism prevalent in Eastern/Asian beauty ideals.
Testimony	-Consumer story implying transformation from unattractive to confident and accepted.	-Personal transformation equals social redemption; it reinforces the stigma of non-conformity	-Emphasizing collectivist values like approval, discipline, and outward success tied to appearance.

Figure 2 and Table 2 display the *Qu Puteh Beauty* advertisement, which visually and textually reinforces dominant socio-cultural power structures by promoting a narrow standard of beauty. The advertisement predominantly features attractive women, blending celebrity-like imagery with ordinary models, suggesting that a woman's social value is closely tied to her physical appearance. This visual strategy perpetuates entrenched societal expectations that women must conform to specific beauty ideals to gain social approval. Although the presence of celebrities and everyday models might suggest inclusivity, the analysis shows that it largely preserves traditional gender hierarchies rather than challenging them. This prompts further consideration: does the inclusion of male or ordinary female figures genuinely broaden appeal, or does it inadvertently reinforce the idea that beauty is predominantly a female concern?

The design relies on bold typography, expressive gestures, and pink-centric aesthetics to convey femininity, elegance, and gentleness (Bower & Landreth, 2001). The confident central female figure serves as the focal point, subtly highlighting the product's perceived benefits. While these color and gesture choices align with cultural beliefs that associate women's worth with physical attractiveness, they may simultaneously marginalize individuals who do not fit these narrow norms. Moreover, testimonials such as *"Achieve fair skin and red lips in 7 days"* further reinforce idealized beauty standards, demonstrating how the advertisement encodes cultural power and societal expectations into its visual and textual elements.

From a contemporary discourse perspective, the advertisement's multimodal approach combining imagery, text, color, and testimonials illustrates how socio-cultural ideologies and power relations are embedded in advertising practices. Although the ad presents itself as persuasive and culturally meaningful, it primarily reproduces existing beauty norms rather than contesting them, aligning with findings in Malaysian contexts (Black & Sharma, 2001) but contrasting with Western advertising trends that foreground diversity and inclusivity (Klein, 2014).

In addition, the Qu Puteh Beauty advertisement reveals its significant influence on consumer purchasing intentions through the integration of exaggerated language, culturally symbolic visuals, and testimonial endorsements. Together, these multimodal strategies position the product as both essential and aspirational, while simultaneously illustrating how beauty advertising in Malaysia ties cosmetic consumption to cultural identity and social value.

At the same time, the campaign reinforces narrow beauty standards and entrenched socio-cultural expectations. While the advertisement effectively stimulates purchasing intentions, it not only persuades consumers to buy the product but also reinforces dependence on external commodities to affirm self-worth, thereby sustaining restrictive beauty ideals and socio-cultural expectations. In this way, consumer behavior is shaped by both the promise of personal transformation and the underlying message that beauty equates to social value and acceptance.

Qu Puteh advertisement exemplifies how Malaysian beauty advertising intertwines power, culture, and persuasion to shape consumer behavior. By embedding socio-cultural ideologies into its discourse, it perpetuates gender hierarchies and narrow conceptions of attractiveness, while simultaneously capitalizing on these norms to drive commercial gain. Qu Puteh reflects a local context in which beauty remains framed through traditional ideals of femininity, modesty, and respectability, positioning consumption as both a cultural obligation and a marker of social legitimacy.

The Eskayvie beauty product advertisement

Figure 3. Eskayvie beauty product advertisement

Table 3. Representation and interpretation of the Eskayvie beauty product advertisement on socio-cultural and Eastern identity

Element	Interpretation	Reflection on Socio-cultural	Reflection on Eastern Culture Identity
Image	Featuring a male spokesperson with clear, radiant skin, including before-and-after visuals.	Disrupting conventional beauty marketing norms involving men, challenging stereotypes.	Reflecting a growing openness within Eastern societies toward male grooming.
Language	"Don't hide the signs of aging, face it head-on." Brand name in large font for visibility. Emphasis on the benefits of reversing aging signs.	The assertive tone appeals to masculine values of confidence and directness.	Blending modern, global commercial language with culturally relevant messages about vitality and self-care.
Testimony	Including a testimonial with the spokesperson's name and contact.	Personal testimony adds emotional credibility and social proof, especially in collectivist cultures. Halal certification taps into religiously rooted consumer confidence.	Reinforcing Eastern values of trust, authenticity, and communal validation. Halal branding aligns with Islamic ethical consumption, widening the market's cultural reach while upholding socio-religious norms.

Figure 3 and Table 3 highlight the marketing initiative for Eskayvie Redianze beauty products, which diverges from typical beauty advertising practices by featuring a captivating male spokesperson. Historically, beauty products have been

predominantly marketed to women; however, this advertisement cleverly employs a male endorser to engage male consumers, thereby challenging the conventional gender stereotypes in the beauty industry. Including a male figure in a sector mainly focused on women is a noteworthy strategy to boost the product's appeal to men, emphasizing a shift in how beauty products are marketed and consumed. By showcasing a male model with a radiant, revitalized complexion, the campaign symbolically repositions beauty as a legitimate pursuit for men, thereby shifting traditional power relations. The model's image, embodying the promise of anti-aging transformation, normalizes male participation in practices once culturally coded as feminine.

This positioning is both innovative and ambivalent. On one hand, it disrupts entrenched gender expectations by suggesting that the pursuit of beauty and youthfulness is no longer solely a female responsibility. On the other hand, it continues to uphold narrow aesthetic standards that link self-worth to flawless, youthful skin, thereby extending the pressure of beauty norms to men as well. The advertisement also demonstrates sensitivity to Malaysian socio-cultural contexts, where the inclusion of the Halal certification builds religious trust among Muslim consumers, while the testimonial featuring the model's name and contact information enhances credibility and authenticity. Together, these features highlight the intersection of cultural values, religious identity, and consumer trust in shaping beauty discourse.

By moving away from conventional gendered marketing strategies, the advertisement prompts discussions about whether it truly confronts existing gender norms or merely exploits the distinctiveness of a male endorsement to attract male clientele. From a linguistic perspective, the advertisement utilizes clear and persuasive language, exemplified by the phrase "Don't hide the signs of aging, face it head-on," which directly speaks to concerns regarding aging. This assertive and progressive message aims to resonate with adult men looking for effective ways to address signs of aging. Utilizing a larger font for the brand name enhances its prominence and visibility, while the carefully chosen words specifically address the audience's quest for solutions to aging concerns. As noted by Lazovic (2014), using well-considered and pertinent language is crucial for engaging interest in the beauty sector.

Additionally, the advertisement focuses on adult men by emphasizing the concept of maintaining youthful, ageless facial skin. The core message is that using this product allows men to achieve and maintain youthful skin, regardless of the inevitable signs of aging. Showcasing before-and-after images of the male model further reinforces this claim, demonstrating the change from dull and tired skin to a revitalized, glowing appearance. Including an authentic testimonial, along with the model's name and contact information, boosts trust and credibility, while the 'Halal' certification adds another layer of cultural significance, particularly for consumers in Malaysia. The advertisement, while focused on men, still relies on common stereotypes associated with beauty products, including the aspiration for flawless and youthful skin. It reinforces the societal belief that the pursuit of vibrant, healthy skin is an aspiration esteemed by all genders.

However, it also challenges the idea that such aspirations are exclusive to women, thereby opening new possibilities in the market for men's beauty and skincare products. The advertisement for Eskayvie Redianze effectively employs a

male spokesperson to break away from traditional conventions in beauty marketing. In doing so, it both challenges and reinforces societal norms surrounding gender and beauty. The advertisement's skillful incorporation of persuasive language, striking imagery, and culturally relevant elements showcases a deep understanding of consumer preferences, while the inclusion of male models in beauty product endorsements marks a noteworthy step toward broadening beauty standards. The advertisement still relies on conventional notions of beauty, illustrating the tension between subverting stereotypes and maintaining mainstream beauty ideals. Visually, the use of before-and-after imagery provides concrete evidence of the product's effectiveness, while testimonial endorsements reinforce authenticity and emotional credibility. These strategies collectively reposition skincare as a credible and necessary practice, encouraging men to associate it with health, youthfulness, and social confidence rather than vanity.

As a result, the campaign broadens the beauty market to include male consumers, aligning product consumption with culturally valued ideals of strength, vitality, and resilience. Yet, this approach simultaneously perpetuates dependency on external products as markers of self-worth, shaping consumer behavior through aspirations for transformation as well as cultural expectations. The Eskayvie Redianze advertisement illustrates a dual dynamic where it disrupts traditional gender boundaries by legitimizing men's participation in beauty practices, while reinforcing narrow ideals that equate attractiveness with flawless, youthful skin. Its persuasive impact lies in reframing beauty consumption as a shared pursuit across genders, while embedding cultural, religious, and aspirational values to enhance trust and desirability. Within the Malaysian context, this campaign underscores how beauty advertising functions beyond commerce, embedding socio-cultural ideologies that position such products as instruments for shaping identity, affirming social acceptance, and sustaining self-worth.

Noir beauty product advertisement

Figure 4. Noir beauty product advertisement

Table 4. Representation and interpretation of the Noir beauty product advertisement on socio-cultural and Eastern identity

Element	Interpretation	Reflection on Socio-cultural	Reflection on Eastern Culture Identity
Image	Featuring a middle-aged woman before and after product use. Focuses on visible signs of aging.	Challenging the youth-centrism norms in advertising by making aging visible and women as active beauty consumers.	Reflecting societal respect for elder women in traditional values, but to retain youthful looks to maintain social and familial roles.
Language	"reducing whiteheads," "brighter skin in 6 months," and use of bold typography emphasize fast, visible results.	Appealing to rational, middle-class consumers seeking "proven" solutions.	Bilingual packaging reflects a Malaysian linguistic hybrid.
Testimony	Including transformation narratives, showing skin improvement over time. Testimonials imply trustworthiness.	Evoking relatability and authenticity, especially for older audiences.	Oral tradition testimonies are a persuasive method in Eastern marketing among older Muslim women expected to uphold modesty and self-care.

The Noir advertisement in Figure 4 introduces an uncommon strategy in Malaysian beauty marketing by foregrounding a middle-aged woman as its focal figure. This marks a departure from the dominant reliance on youthful models to represent beauty ideals. From a multimodal and critical discourse perspective, the representation operates within a cultural system that commodifies aging, transforming it into a profitable niche. By centering middle-aged women, a demographic often neglected in mainstream beauty advertising, the campaign acknowledges their concerns while simultaneously reinforcing socio-cultural pressures that equate beauty with youth and flawless skin.

The novelty of this strategy lies in its multimodal construction of aging as both a problem and a site for consumption. Visual depictions of skin transformation, linguistic promises such as "reducing whiteheads" and "making facial skin appear brighter," together with English-labelled product names like *"Treatment Cleanser Malachite Crystal"*, frame the product as a premium, and credible solution. In doing so, the advertisement extends the discourse of beauty beyond younger women and positions middle-aged women as active consumers, contributing fresh insight into the underexplored intersection of age, gender, and beauty discourse in Malaysian advertising. The advertisement also invokes cultural stereotypes related to aging, beauty, and femininity.

Based on the power and social element, the advertisement illustrates the workings of power by embedding socio-cultural ideologies that treat beauty as a moral and social responsibility, particularly for women. It relies on stereotypes that link femininity to youthful skin, reaffirming the idea that women's worth is tied to physical appearance. At the same time, the Halal certification and sophisticated English terminology balance cultural authenticity with global prestige, showing

how advertising negotiates both religious sensitivities and aspirational modernity to appeal to Malaysian consumers. The claims made by the product, supported by testimonials of noticeable improvements in a mere six months, may attract women seeking instant solutions for their perceived imperfections.

This strategy might foster an excessive dependence on beauty products, neglecting more extensive discussions about aging naturally and embracing self-acceptance. Although the Noir advertisement recognizes middle-aged women regarding aging and attractiveness, it nevertheless perpetuates the societal expectations linking beauty to youth and perfect skin. While it aims at a frequently neglected audience in beauty marketing, it still maintains traditional beauty ideals that could be seen as troubling for some.

The Noir campaign embodies a dual process that it challenges the youth-centric bias in beauty advertising by recognizing middle-aged women, while simultaneously reinforcing restrictive ideals that equate femininity with youthful, flawless skin. The novelty of this finding lies in revealing age as a critical dimension in multimodal beauty discourse, demonstrating how Malaysian advertising not only reproduces gendered norms but also constructs age-related anxieties as commercial opportunities. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how discourse, power, and socio-cultural values intersect in beauty marketing, broadening the scope of critical inquiry beyond gender alone.

Unlike prior studies that largely emphasize Western beauty ideals or present advertising as gender-exclusive, this research demonstrates that Malaysian beauty advertising negotiates power and socio-cultural expectations in context-specific ways. First, Eskayvie Redianze introduces a male spokesperson, extending beauty discourse beyond women and reshaping it as a cross-gender concern. Second, Noir highlights aging as both a site of cultural anxiety and a marketable commodity, challenging the youth-centric bias of most campaigns. Third, Qu Puteh and others embed religious and cultural elements such as Halal certification and Malay-Muslim motifs, showing how beauty is legitimized through local identity and trust-building strategies.

Collectively, these findings underscore how beauty advertising in Malaysia operates through power by framing beauty as a moral and social obligation. Women's value is tied to appearance, men's inclusion is constructed as legitimate consumer participation, and aging anxieties are rebranded as commercial opportunities. Persuasion is achieved through multimodal appeals ranging from hyperbolic claims and testimonial narratives to before-and-after visuals and culturally symbolic cues.

Discussion

Representation and construction of power dynamics and socio-cultural factors in Malaysian beauty advertisements

The advertisements' expressive linguistic and visual strategies vividly reveal how beauty discourse in Malaysia is embedded within broader market-driven ideologies. Malaysian beauty advertisements function as ideological texts, embedding socio-cultural norms and power relations within their multimodal persuasive techniques. The advertisements present beauty as more than a matter of appearance, framing it instead as a marker of dignity, confidence, and social legitimacy (Heller, 2010). Although some advertisements appear to challenge

conventions, such as Eskayvie's inclusion of male consumers or Noir's focus on middle-aged women, the findings indicate that they continue to reinforce restrictive ideals emphasizing youthfulness, flawless skin, and appearance-based value. These advertisements both reflect and perpetuate dominant socio-cultural norms in the Malaysian context.

The power operates through the normalization of beauty standards closely connected to gender roles, age expectations, and cultural legitimacy. Women are primarily constructed as responsible for maintaining aesthetic ideals, where youthfulness and fair, flawless skin are presented as essential for gaining social approval (Dai et al., 2024; Hogg & Garrow, 2003). Although the inclusion of men in campaigns such as Eskayvie appears to broaden the scope of beauty consumption, it ultimately reinforces, rather than challenges, appearance-based expectations. In addition, cultural and religious signifiers, especially Halal certification, references to natural ingredients, and Malay-Muslim visual aesthetics, serve as discursive strategies that legitimize consumption by linking beauty practices to moral values and communal identity. Cultural and religious markers, particularly Halal certification and Malay Muslim aesthetics, further legitimize this commodification by embedding consumption within moral and communal frameworks (Koh, 2020). Malaysian beauty advertisements construct beauty not merely as aesthetic preference but as symbolic capital tied to social worth, cultural belonging, and economic participation. Collectively, these representations position beauty not as an individual preference, but as a socially regulated norm embedded within broader cultural and power structures.

The influence of representations on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions

Malaysian beauty advertisements employ multimodal strategies including celebrity endorsements, ordinary-user testimonials, metaphorical language, and culturally resonant symbols to construct idealized standards of beauty that operate as markers of social status, personal dignity, and moral propriety (Lau & Lee, 2018). These representations shape consumer perceptions by equating aesthetic perfection with self-worth and social validation, effectively framing product consumption as a necessary route to achieving culturally sanctioned beauty ideals. The campaigns reinforce internalized pressures to conform to narrowly defined gendered and age-related expectations, exemplified by D'Herbs' emphasis on lustrous hair, Eskayvie's targeting of male consumers, and Noir's focus on middle-aged women (Jonauskaite et al., 2021). Through testimonial narratives, exaggerated claims of transformation, and culturally embedded cues such as bilingual labeling and Halal certification advertisements cultivate consumer trust while presenting consumption as both a social and moral obligation.

These multimodal strategies illustrate the exercise of power through advertising: by invoking socio-cultural values, gender norms, age hierarchies, and religious markers, campaigns actively shape desires, encourage self-surveillance, and influence purchasing decisions (Åkestam, 2017). Consumers are positioned as participants in a discourse that links personal appearance to societal approval, communal belonging, and symbolic capital. The consumer impact on purchasing intentions exerts a strong influence through its multimodal strategies. Before-and-after visuals, bold claims of transformation within six months, and testimonial endorsements foster trust and credibility, especially among older women seeking

visible solutions to age-related concerns. Yet this approach also risks exploiting insecurities by framing skincare as the primary path to confidence and acceptance. What is new here is how multimodal discourse both engages an overlooked demographic and reshapes their consumption patterns through a careful balance of empowerment and exploitation.

Consequently, Malaysian beauty advertisements function not merely as marketing tools but as ideological texts that both construct and reinforce socio-cultural hierarchies, embedding moral and social imperatives within beauty consumption and highlighting the interplay between commercial persuasion, cultural identity, and power relations.

Study limitations

A significant limitation of this study lies in its focus on only four Malaysian beauty advertisements. While these examples offer meaningful insights, they do not capture the full spectrum of advertising strategies across diverse brands, media platforms, and consumer demographics. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader advertising landscape. This constraint underscores the need for future research to examine a wider selection of advertisements and to integrate audience perspectives. Such investigations should move beyond descriptive analysis and instead interrogate more complex dimensions such as gender ideologies, power relations, and the psychological consequences of beauty advertising. Equally important is the development of a more robust analytical framework that accounts for sociocultural, ideological, and ethical factors, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how beauty discourses shape consumer behavior while reinforcing or contesting dominant cultural norms. Although Malaysian beauty advertisements are strategically crafted to foster trust and resonate with cultural values, they simultaneously perpetuate narrow beauty ideals that affect both self-perception and societal standards. Future research that situates beauty advertising within wider sociocultural and ethical contexts will not only enhance understanding of multimodal advertising discourses but also reveal their broader impact on consumer decision-making and collective constructions of beauty in contemporary Malaysia.

Conclusion

The analysis of Malaysian beauty product advertisements reveals how power relations and sociocultural values are embedded within persuasive marketing strategies. Beyond relying solely on visual appeal and linguistic techniques, these campaigns consistently frame beauty as both a moral and social obligation. Gender and age emerge as key discursive resources: women are depicted as valuable through youthful and flawless appearances; men are positioned as legitimate participants in beauty consumption; and middle-aged women are targeted through discourses of aging and rejuvenation. By linking beauty to cultural legitimacy through halal certification, natural ingredients, and Malay-Muslim aesthetics, advertisers commodify cultural identity while sustaining restrictive beauty norms. This demonstrates how advertisements both challenge and reinforce societal expectations, positioning beauty consumption as a moral duty connected to confidence, self-worth, and cultural belonging.

Besides, the campaigns illustrate how multimodal persuasion operates to influence consumer behavior. Strategies such as testimonial narratives, before-and-after imagery, hyperbolic claims, and culturally symbolic cues work to cultivate credibility and urgency. They promise skin revitalization and whitening effects within a specific time frame, framing aging as a condition to be corrected through consumer action. The study's contribution lies in revealing that Malaysian campaigns do not merely replicate global beauty norms but localize them strategically, blending cultural authenticity with restrictive ideals, besides reflecting a broader trend in Malaysian advertising, wherein consumer trust is constructed through cultural resonance while insecurities are subtly reinforced.

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