



## Being Flawless: Beauty Representation in L'Oréal Paris Skincare Advertisements

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> 2024-08-21 <b>Revised:</b> 2024-11-14 <b>Accepted:</b> 2024-12-03</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Advertising Analysis; Beauty Representation; Flawless Skin; L'Oréal Paris; Semiotics</p>	<p>Advertising serves as a key medium for promoting products, often conveyed through posters, images, or videos. The language and visuals in advertisements significantly shape consumers' perceptions of the product's effectiveness. This study examines the verbal and non-verbal signs in L'Oréal Paris skincare video advertisements, using a qualitative approach supported by Saussure's semiotic theory and Barthes' framework on connotation and denotation. Data were analyzed through observation and interpretation to uncover how advertisements convey meaning. The findings reveal that the representation of beauty in L'Oréal Paris advertisements transcends skin tone, emphasizing the ideal of flawless skin. Models of diverse skin tones are consistently presented, showcasing a universal aspiration for radiant, blemish-free, and well-maintained skin. The study highlights how both verbal elements, such as slogans and product descriptions, and non-verbal cues, including colors, visuals, and models, contribute to crafting a compelling message. This research provides insights into how semiotics enhances the communication of beauty ideals, offering implications for advertising strategies aimed at inclusivity and universal appeal.</p>

**Citation (APA):** Wahyuni, N. L. P. A., & Ayomi, P. N. (2024). Being Flawless: Beauty Representation in L'Oréal Paris Skincare Advertisements. *Innovations in Language Education and Literature*, 1(2), 62-67.

### INTRODUCTION

Mass media will continue to be used and developed along with technological advances. The delivery of information also adapts to the development of language in each generation. As we know, language plays an important role in communication, including in delivering messages through advertising. Kotler and Keller (2006) define advertising as all forms of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services carried out by certain sponsoring companies that require payment. The function of advertising is to inform, persuade, remind, and add value (Hidayat et al., 2021; Tellis, 2003). For this reason, information about a product from an advertisement must be conveyed correctly to achieve targets related to the product being marketed. Information about product benefits in advertising is conveyed through verbal and non-verbal signs.

According to Saussure in Chandler (2022), a sign consists of a signifier (sound image) and a signified (concept). The signifier is the material or physical form of the sign taken, while the signified is the concept meant by the signifier. Winarni (2010) stated that advertisements often highlight aspects of appearance, gender identity, and beauty in their representations. As language adapts to cultural and generational shifts, advertisements need to effectively communicate their intended message to resonate with audiences. This study is crucial because advertisements often embed societal ideals, such as beauty norms in both verbal and non-verbal cues, impacting viewers' self-image and expectations around products. Analyzing L'Oréal Paris skincare advertisements allows for a deeper understanding of how these representations of beautiful skin reinforce or redefine contemporary beauty standards.

This article is supported by previous research that also discusses the semiotic meaning of Loreal Paris brand advertisements. The thesis written by Azhar (2023) entitled *Diversities Shown in L'oréal Paris Europe and Asia Advertisements* analyzed the verbal and non-verbal meaning in Loreal Paris advertisements by analyzing European and Asian beauty in advertisements, focusing on consumer values and the theory used in this study was supposed by Barthes. The analysis in this thesis is described first with the meaning of

connotation and denotation which then explores the myths and self-esteem associated with the use of beauty products. The second previous study was conducted by Syahdini (2019) entitled *Semiotic Analysis of L'oreal Paris Advertisements* which analyzed three advertising videos and compared the connotative meanings of each video through analysis of body language, speech, and the models contained therein to describe the meaning of beauty in the advertisement and was used the sign theory supposed by Roland Barthes and Saussure.

The third previous study entitled *A Semiotic Analysis of L'oreal Advertisement: This is an Ad for Men Campaign* was written by Ariani (2021) analyzed women's empowerment in the red nail polish advertisement of Loreal Paris by describing each part of the advertisement. This component consists of a headline, illustration, body copy, signature line, and standing detail which are explained using the theory of supposed by Candler. The fourth previous study was written by Dewi (2021) entitled *The Meaning of Verbal and Nonverbal Signs in Maybelline Advertisements* which used the theory by Sausurre and Barthes to analyze verbal and non-verbal signs in Maybelline cosmetic advertisements. The latest previous research was written by Setyaningsih and Palupi (2022) entitled *Representation of Beauty in Scarlett Whitening Advertisements: Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis*, analyzing verbal and non-verbal signs in Scarlett products that explore the shift in beauty standards inspired by South Korean and Japanese trends, and they use the theory supposed by Roland Barthes.

This article discusses three Loreal Paris skincare advertisement videos taken from the Loreal Paris YouTube account which analyzes the verbal (speech) and non-verbal (model) signs in them. The difference between this article and previous studies, first, second, and third, can be seen from the data source, where this article discusses the representation of beauty in a woman as seen from her flawless skin without dark spots and aging. The discussion also focuses on skincare products, which are different from other cosmetic products. An attractive advertisement must identify the verbal and non-verbal meanings associated with the product being marketed. As in skincare products that claim flawless skin for consumers. Flawless skin refers to "perfect skin" which means having clean skin, describing skin color that is radiant and smooth in texture, color, and pattern, without blemishes or spots, which requires a healthy lifestyle and is assisted by the use of skincare with good procedures.

## METHODS

The data for this study was collected from three L'Oréal Paris skincare video advertisements. The analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive methods, chosen for their suitability in interpreting the rich and nuanced meanings embedded in the verbal and visual signs within the advertisements. This analytical approach is grounded in Saussure's (1974) semiotic theory of signs, providing essential tools for understanding the function and interaction of signs to produce meaning. Saussure's framework, further elaborated by Chandler (2022), was applied to identify the verbal and nonverbal signs in the advertisements. Additionally, Barthes' (1986) theory of meaning, as explained in *Elements of Semiology*, was used to interpret these signs, uncovering layered meanings in the portrayal of beauty within the context of advertising. The data analysis technique employed was content analysis, systematically examining the verbal and visual signs to reveal recurring themes and patterns in the representation of beauty. To improve clarity, the observation and interpretation process was conducted in several stages. First, each advertisement was observed multiple times to identify key verbal phrases and visual elements. Next, each identified sign was categorized as either verbal or visual. These elements were then analyzed according to Saussure's concepts of the signifier and signified, along with Barthes' connotative and denotative meanings, to interpret how each sign contributed to an idealized beauty standard.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis of verbal and non-verbal signs in three Loreal Paris video advertisements, by analyzing the advertisements using Bhartes' theory of meaning. Verbal signs are the text of the advertisement, while non-verbal signs can be pictures, colors, symbols, etc. which appearances are aimed to support the verbal signs to be an interesting package of advertisement (Barthes, 1986). Verbal signs are utterances conveyed in the video, while non-verbal signs are images in the video, including the model chosen as a visualization of the product. The visuals through the model in the advertisement represent the beauty of a woman seen with the naked eye which has the same impression, namely that beauty is not seen from white skin, but flawless and well-groomed skin.

The analysis of the meaning of a sign can be seen from the meaning of denotation and connotation. Denotation is interpreted, clearly, or based on common sense, while connotation is used to refer to the socio-

cultural and personal associations of the sign (Chandler, 2022). Analysis of the meaning of verbal and nonverbal signs can be seen in the following description.

### **Bright Reveal Dark Spot Exfoliant Snake Peel**



**Figure 1.** Bright Reveal Dark Spot Exfoliant Snake Peel advertisement

The video features a white model, Luma Grothe, who has striking blue eyes and smooth skin without dark spots or acne. The first verbal signifier that appears in the video is "New Bright Reveal Dark Spot Exfoliant Snake Peel" as an introduction to the newly released skincare product. The video starts with the model saying "Post Acne Marks, Game Over" while holding a dice indicating that the advertisement product is specifically a skincare designed to address skin issues related to dark acne scars. The second verbal signifier is "25% exfoliating acid AHA + BHA + PHA" which is a known lightening ingredient. The mixture of these three active ingredients is very helpful for exfoliating dull and dead skin including dark acne scars (Ladenheim & Marmur, 2021). This ingredient also can help raise the skin tone on the face to make it look brighter.

The last verbal signifier is "Visible Fades -47% Acne Marks" which states that this skincare product is very effective in removing acne scars. The use of percentage numbers is increasingly attracting consumer attention because it provides concrete results. The results of using this product are also presented in the form of images that show the time difference, namely "before" and "after". In the "before" image, it is clear that the skin is still dull and there are some dark spots that interfere with the appearance. However, after regular use of the product, the "after" image shows significant changes. The skin looks brighter, and more radiant, and dark spots begin to fade, making the skin look healthier and more even. This product is dedicated to flawless facial skin, without dark spots from acne and bright. In closing, there is the utterance "I am worth it" which is the slogan of the L'Oréal Paris brand, which means that every woman has the same position and rights with more inclusive recognition.

The visualization of this advertisement is a model, Luma Grothe who is currently 30 years old. Having perfect skin without black spots from acne or dark spots in adulthood is every woman's dream. The appearance of this model indirectly conveys a message to consumers to immediately buy this product as an investment in facial skin so that the skin becomes more flawless in adulthood. Another visual sign is the selection of bright colors, sky blue and white as the background. Bright colors are carriers of electromagnetic waves' energy, making objects visible to the human eye (Tilley, 2020). The color blue is identified with confidence, commitment, and trust. White symbolizes purity and innocence. White gives the impression of being clean, neat, and trustworthy because it makes the eyes see objects appear wide (Mulyati, 2022). The combination of sky blue and white conveys the message that the product offered is truly capable of making elderly women increase their confidence and get the desired flawless skin.

### **New Glycolic-Bright Serum**



**Figure 2.** New Glycolic-Bright Serum Advertisement

This advertising video opens with a model and a South African dermatologist who has a dark skin tone having a conversation. The first verbal sign "Is Glycolic Acid Safe for Your Skin?" was the opening question

the model asked the dermatologist. Glycolic acid (AHA) explains that glycolic acid helps in smoothing the skin and reducing dark spots. Dermatologists answered that using glycolic acid is good for the skin but not in high doses, only as a skincare mixture. The second verbal sign “Created by Loreal Paris, Validated with Dermatologist Dr. Ayanda Motau” explained that the skincare products released had been validated to pass trials by dermatologists, as well as an introduction to dermatology in a video that is well-known in South Africa, Dr. Ayanda Motau. The third verbal sign “% Glycolic Acid, 2% Niacinamide” is related to the conversation in the first verbal sign, where it is explained that the glycolic acid content must be combined with other ingredients to work well for the skin, one of which is Niacinamide. The benefits of Niacinamide can help brighten the skin, fade acne, and disguise black spots (Mohiuddin, 2019). The fourth verbal sign “soft on skin, effective on dark marks” describes the benefits of this skincare product for facial skin, especially in softening and removing dark marks. As mentioned regarding the ingredients in the product, this serum is very helpful for someone who wants to have soft, flawless skin without dark marks. The last verbal sign is “New Innovation Loreal Paris Glycolic-Bright” as an introduction to the newest serum product released.

The visual sign of this skincare advertising video is a South African model and dermatologist who has a dark skin tone. This indicates that the skincare product released by Loreal Paris can be used by all women, especially those with dark skin. All women want to have bright and flawless skin without acne scars or black spots on their faces, so this product is dedicated to brightening ingredients that can be used for all skin tones, not only for women with white or light skin. Another visual sign is the choice of pink and white as the background in the advertising video. According to Fuady (2017), the color pink refers to female traits and supports feminine traits. White is known as the color of purity and truth, so it indirectly adds to the impression that the benefits of the choice of pink and white connect with the color of the product packaging so that the advertising video looks more attractive.

### Revitalift Clinical 12% Pure Vitamin C Serum



**Figure 3.** Revitalift Clinical 12% Pure Vitamin C Serum Advertisement

The opening video shows the product that was released directly as an introduction to the product. Verbal signs are seen directly in the opening video. The first verbal sign “New Revitalift Clinical 12% Pure Vitamin C [tone + pore + line] Serum Loreal Paris” is an introduction to the name of the newest product released, where the verbal directly explains that the content of this skincare product contains high vitamin C. The second verbal sign “Created by Loreal Paris, Validated by Dermatologists” explains that the product has passed the dermatologist test. Like the second video advertisement above, this verbal sign is a marker that this product has the appropriate content while also convincing potential consumers that the product is safe to use.

The third verbal sign is on the packaging which says “12% Vitamin C + Vitamin E + Salicylic Acid Serum” indicating that in addition to containing high levels of vitamin C, this product also has vitamin E and salicylic acid as the main ingredients to reduce aging and lines on the face. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help brighten skin color, so vitamin C has been used as a therapy for problems with dark and problematic skin color (Humbert et al., 2018). According to Devitasari & Basuki (2022), vitamin E functions as antioxidants in the skin which help for anti-aging of the skin and help maintain moisture. Salicylic acid can eliminate acne that has grown and become inflamed and make dead skin easier to peel off so that pores are not blocked and cause acne to grow (Putri et al., 2016). The combination of these three ingredients seems perfect for dealing with several skin problems, so potential consumers will certainly expect the benefits of the product for their skin.

The next verbal sign “No Retouching-Notary Certified” indicates that this product has been verified safe and perfected. The next verbal sign is “Oxidized Solution” which is done by comparing ingredients during the trial. It is seen that “Vitamin C Derivative Serum” and “Pure Vitamin C Serum” are compared and it is seen that Pure Vitamin C Serum is more oxidizing to the skin. This verbal sign describes that the pure vitamin C content used in the product is a fast solution to oxidize the skin.

The last verbal sign “2x brighter, pores 2x less visible pores” which explains the benefits of the skincare product. As previously mentioned, the main ingredients of this product are vitamin C, vitamin E, and salicylic acid which help brighten the skin and reduce large pores. The combination of these three ingredients in skincare products has significant benefits for facial skin. As most women dream of, having flawless skin without large pores and looking bright.

The visual sign in this advertising video is a 27-year-old model and singer, Camila Cabello. Indirectly, she represents the age that can use this product, where this product is indeed made for women who are 20 years old and above who have problems with dull skin and large pores. Another visual is the orange color used as the verbal sign background in the video. The orange color is connected to the product concept, namely Vitamin C, where Vitamin C is always identical to the color orange. In addition, Junaedi (2021) describes orange as the color of describes orange as the color of warmth, enthusiasm, and trust. This adds an identical impression to the product so that potential consumers can remember it clearly.

Another visual sign is the choice of red on the packaging for the background of the verbal sign “Revitalift Clinical” which looks eye-catching. Junaedi (2021) describes the color red as a symbol of energy, passion, and power. This is like urging consumer passion to immediately have the latest skincare product that is released. The last visual sign is the white background used in the video as a symbol of truth. Like the other video, this advertisement used white as a background to gain consumer trust and white is the best background for any product that has bright packaging.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that the representation of a woman's beauty in the advertisements is not determined by skin color. In advertisements for various skincare products from L'Oréal Paris, the ideal of beauty is depicted as flawless skin. While skin color is not emphasized, there is a subtle preference for fairness, as evidenced by models with darker skin tones still using brightening products. The terms “bright” and “white” convey different meanings: “bright” refers to radiant, well-maintained skin, while “white” describes a specific skin tone. Flawless skin, however, is not exclusive to any one skin tone; it can be achieved by anyone, regardless of their complexion. The three video advertisements analyzed, featuring models with different skin tones, all share the same goal: achieving flawless skin. Flawless skin is defined as being free from acne, scars, dark spots, photoaging, and wrinkles. A woman with bright, flawless skin is often associated with greater confidence. Future research could explore semiotic analysis in different cultural settings to understand how beauty standards vary globally and examine if concepts like “brightness” and “whiteness” hold different connotations. This would provide deeper insight into how beauty ideals are shaped by cultural narratives, potentially encouraging more inclusive portrayals of beauty in advertising.

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