

Representation of Beauty in Somethinc Advertisements: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Norman Fairclough on Instagram Social Media

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Article History:

Received: 26-06-2026

Revised: 13-08-2026

Accepted: 13-08-2026

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough, Representation of Beauty, Somethinc Advertising, Instagram*

Abstract: *The rapid development of social media, particularly Instagram, has transformed digital advertising into an important medium for promoting beauty products and constructing contemporary beauty standards. This study aims to examine the representation of beauty in Somethinc advertisements on Instagram using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis and Stuart Hall's representation theory. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The data consist of two Somethinc advertisements, namely the Calm Down Skinpair R-Cover Cream and Skinlift Serum, collected through documentation of promotional content published on Instagram. The data were analyzed through three dimensions of Fairclough's framework: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, supported by Hall's concept of representation to interpret the construction of meaning through language and visual elements. The findings indicate that the two advertisements employ different but complementary discursive strategies in constructing beauty ideals. The Calm Down Skinpair R-Cover Cream advertisement emphasizes emotional persuasion through the slogan "NEVER SETTLE for LESS!", while the Skinlift Serum advertisement relies on scientific and technological discourse through claims such as "Dermatologically Tested," "Non-Comedogenic Certified," and peptide-related benefits. Both advertisements construct beauty as associated with smooth, healthy, radiant, youthful, and well-maintained skin, while simultaneously linking skincare consumption with confidence, self-image, and lifestyle. These findings suggest that Somethinc advertisements function not only as promotional media but also as cultural texts that contribute to the construction and reproduction of contemporary beauty standards among young consumers. From the perspective of consumer culture, the advertisements also demonstrate how beauty ideals can be connected to consumption practices and product-based self-image formation.*

How to Cite: Anindya Destyn Wahyuningtyas, Eka Yuli Jayanti (2026). Representation of Beauty in Somethinc Advertisements: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Norman Fairclough on Instagram Social Media.5(2). Pp.144-152 <https://doi.org/10.61536/ambidextrous.v5i02.524>



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Introduction

The very rapid development of media today is driven by technology that makes Many things have changed. The presence of media now makes things easier for users, and this has become something that's hard to separate. Many people are already involved in activities that utilize media without realizing it. This demonstrates the rapid development of media today, one example being the emergence of social media (Utami et al., nd). Social media is a component of the internet that serves as a platform for online interaction. Currently, social media has become a popular communication tool for marketing due to its large number of users from various locations and countries. This allows businesses to reach more potential customers. Furthermore, information disseminated on social media is fast and widespread, making it easier to introduce products to the public who use social media. One example is the skincare industry, which uses digital platforms to expand and market its products (Slamet, 2023).

Advertising is a tool for introducing and selling products to the wider public. It's used to convey information about products or services. Advertising can direct audiences toward a consumerist lifestyle (Prasetyo et al., nd)

Instagram is one of the most widely used social media platforms worldwide. It's used as a place to share memories in the form of videos or images. It also offers several interesting features, including Instagram Stories and Instagram Ads (Slamet, 2023). This way, people will more easily find information about the products or services they are looking for or need. The various types of ads presented on Instagram are designed to be engaging and competitive with other advertisers. Advertisements for skincare products frequently appear on Instagram because skincare is currently a highly sought-after necessity, especially among teenagers.

One cosmetic brand targeting the teenage segment is something, which promotes a youthful lifestyle through lightweight, affordable products. This research is interesting because it uses a unique communication strategy with easy-to-understand language, bright visuals, and colors that resonate with teenagers' everyday lives. However, beyond these marketing tactics, advertising also has the power to shape certain beauty standards that can influence how teenagers view skincare.

Based on research conducted by (Adelina, 2020) In this study, entitled "Critical Discourse Analysis of Skincare Advertisements on Social Media," the author applies Norman Fairclough's narrative theory to analyze how local skincare advertisements on Instagram and Facebook shape existing discourse and ideology. This study confirms that the ideology contained in advertisements has a significant impact on consumer perceptions,



particularly for women who desire white, bright, and radiant skin.

The next research was conducted by (Juli et al., 2024). With the title “Beauty in Pantene Advertisements: A Critical Review According to Norman Fairclough,” the aim of this study is to determine how the media determines beauty standards and their impact on people’s behavior.

Furthermore, research conducted by (Elika, 2024) entitled "Countering the Ideology of Racism in Cosmetic and Beauty Advertising: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Norman Fairclough." This research shows that beauty product promotions attempt to change public perception and introduce new ideas that are more accepting of various skin types.

Then, research conducted by (Move & Benefit, 2022) With the title "Representation of Female Beauty in the Wardah #BeautyMovesYou Video – Moving Brings Benefits," this study aims to examine how female beauty is portrayed in Wardah's YouTube campaign.

The four existing studies differ from the research conducted by the author, namely the chosen object and the analytical theory used. In this paper, the researcher analyzes advertisements through three steps: text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social praxis.

In addition, this study also uses the perspective of representation theory to understand how Something advertisements on Instagram create a certain image of beauty. According to Hall (1997) quoted in (Bahasa et al., 2024). Representation is a crucial aspect of the process by which meaning is formed and exchanged among members of a culture, involving the use of language, symbols, and images that depict or represent something. Therefore, Somethinc's advertising serves not only as a marketing tool but also as a way to shape social views that influence how teenagers view skincare.

The aim of this study is to understand how the language and visuals in Somethinc advertisements on Instagram not only function as promotional media, but also shape the ideology and perspectives of society towards beauty.

Research Methods

In this study, the researcher applied the critical discourse analysis method proposed by Norman Fairclough, a qualitative descriptive approach. The steps taken to collect descriptive information, whether through speech, writing, or behavior observed by the researcher. This research is sourced from natural observations of the object of study. This involves collecting information from various types of documents, notes, reports, or other sources of information related to the object of study. After that, the researcher took screenshots as documentation of the data that has been collected. Then, the data was analyzed using Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach which consists of three stages: text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social praxis. The results of the

data analysis are presented in the form of descriptive narratives. The source of this research data was taken from Instagram social media in image format.

Results and Discussion

Based on the research results, several data were found as follows:



Figure 1.

Text Analysis

In text analysis, this advertisement demonstrates a highly persuasive use of language. The main sentence, "NEVER SETTLE for LESS!" is structured as a concise, clear, and memorable slogan. This word choice not only provides information about the product but also creates an emotional impulse for the audience, making them feel they shouldn't accept something "ordinary" when there are products that are claimed to be better. The word "never" provides strong emphasis, while "settle for less" suggests that choosing another product means accepting lower quality. Thus, the advertisement's text serves to create the perception that this product is a better choice than its competitors.

The product name "Calm Down Skinpair R-Cover Cream" is also interesting to examine. The phrase "calm down" means calming, reducing stress, and providing a soothing effect. In the context of beauty products, this phrase implies that the product is suitable for those with sensitive skin, redness, or those in need of extra protection. The term "cover cream" emphasizes the cosmetic function of covering skin imperfections. So, textually, this product is presented as something that not only beautifies but also soothes and cares.

Visually, the packaging's soft green and warm orange colors create a fresh, natural, and skin-friendly impression. Green is often associated with calm, health, and freshness, while orange evokes warmth and attracts attention. This combination supports the product's message of safety, fun, and modernity. Furthermore, the model's smooth, radiant, and flawless face reinforces the product's intended effects. In this type of advertising, the visual and verbal text complement each other, further enhancing its persuasive power.

Descriptive Practice Analysis

At the descriptive level, this ad can be seen as a series of images designed to immediately capture attention on social media. The image is divided into several panels: the model's face, the product packaging, the product texture, and the application method. This division is not accidental, but rather a visual strategy to ensure the viewer receives information quickly and gradually. The model's face serves to attract emotional attention, the product packaging conveys the product's identity, the product's texture emphasizes its physical quality, while the application image on the face provides visual evidence of the application method and the desired results.

The placement of text within the image is also highly considered. The slogan "NEVER SETTLE for LESS!" is centered, making it the primary focus. The use of capital letters for key words makes the message feel stronger and more authoritative. Furthermore, the text's contrasting size with the background makes it easy to read even at a glance. In the context of digital advertising, this is crucial because social media viewers typically skim content and don't always read lengthy details. Therefore, this ad design relies on an instant impression; within seconds, the viewer is already led to understand that this product is related to beauty, care, and better results.

Upon closer inspection, the image of the model displaying a calm and confident expression is also an important part of the visual description. The smooth face, soft lighting, and the pose of the hand touching the face create the impression that this product can provide healthy and attractive skin. Close-ups of the product being applied to the skin emphasize how light and easy the cream's texture is to apply. All of these elements work together to build a visual narrative that this product is not just a cosmetic product, but a practical solution for achieving the desired skin appearance.

Analysis of Social Practices

In the social aspect, this advertisement reflects and at the same time reinforces views about beauty that are very strong in today's society. Skin that looks smooth, bright and perfect is the ideal benchmark that is worth pursuing. This ad also displays the strong connection between consumption and personal identity. Beauty products here are not only sold as functional goods, but also as a symbol of lifestyle, grooming, and self-confidence. The implied message is that someone who uses this product will look better, more well-groomed, and more socially acceptable. In other words, this advertisement links consumption with the formation of self-image.

More generally, this type of advertising also reinforces a visual culture that emphasizes perfection. Images of perfect faces, balanced skin tones, and the appearance of certain products can influence people's perceptions of themselves, especially young women, who are the primary target audience for cosmetic advertising. This demonstrates that advertising serves not only as a promotional tool but also as a vehicle that contributes to shaping mindsets, body image perceptions, and perceptions of beauty in society.



Figure 2.

Text Analysis

This advertisement uses compelling, concise language that directly emphasizes the primary benefit, namely, "Smooths fine lines and wrinkles." This statement creates a problem-solution claim: there's a skin problem, and this product appears to be the answer. Words like "Dermatologically Tested," "Non-Comedogenic Certified," and "Suitable for Sensitive Skin" convey a sense of scientific, safe, and trustworthy quality.

Visually, the dominant purple and white colors create an elegant, modern, and high-quality impression. The bottle design is large and clear, highlighting the product, while elements like the "3X Power peptide" emphasize its benefits. The "Exclusive Launch at Shopee" message also reinforces the marketing strategy by directing buyers to specific channels.

Descriptive Practical Analysis

At the descriptive practical level, this ad was created for social media followers, particularly Instagram users who are accustomed to fast-paced, visual advertising formats. The ad utilizes digital communication techniques commonly seen in the beauty industry: benefit statements, scientific jargon, and engaging imagery. This demonstrates that ad copy is inseparable from, but rather influenced by, marketing activities, social media algorithms, and digital consumption culture.

During its distribution, this Instagram post includes a brief description and emphasizes the product's features for quick understanding. Viewers are perceived as potential buyers seeking a quick solution to aging skin issues. Thus, the meaning of this advertisement is constructed through the interaction between the advertiser, the platform, and the consumption habits of social media users.

Analysis of Social Practices

This advertisement depicts a contemporary beauty culture that prioritizes smooth, fine-line, and youthful skin as the social standard. Phrases like "Flaw fine lines and wrinkles" demonstrate the cultural pressures on appearance, particularly for women or

consumers who are more concerned with anti-aging. This is closely linked to the consumer culture in Indonesia's major cities, where an attractive and youthful appearance is often associated with social status and success. (Social, 2025) Scientific claims such as peptides, resveratrol, and various certifications are used to enhance product credibility amidst the fierce competition in the skincare market. Thus, advertisements not only promote serums but also hope to sell confidence, hope, and an idealized image.

Discussion

The results of the study on Something advertisements, namely Calm Down Skinpair R-Cover Cream and Skinlift Serum, show different discourse approaches even though both form an image of beauty. In the Calm Down Cream advertisement, the phrase "NEVER SETTLE for LESS" is used as a persuasive expression that is short, clear, and touching emotions. This language not only provides information about the product but also creates a psychological impulse that consumers should not accept low quality. The green and orange colors and the calm face of the model further reinforce the meaning that this product provides calm and beauty. On the other hand, the Skinlift Serum advertisement highlights scientific claims such as "Flaws fine lines & wrinkles," "Dermatologically Tested," and "Non-Comedogenic Certified." The elegant purple color with the image of molecules emphasizes the product's image as a premium, technology-based skincare.

This finding is in line with the representation theory put forward by Stuart Hall in 1997. (Theory & Hall, nd), which explains that media creates meaning through visual symbols and language. The depiction of healthy, radiant, and wrinkle-free skin in both advertisements demonstrates that beauty is constructed as a social norm to be achieved through the purchase of skincare products.

Compared to previous research, these findings align with Adelina's (2020) study, which showed that skincare product advertisements on social media construct views of beauty and impact women who desire white, clean, and radiant skin. However, this study focuses more on the Something object on Instagram and combines Fairclough's analysis with representation. Meanwhile, research by Juli et al. (2024) on beauty in Pantene advertisements also aligns with this study, as they both demonstrate that media establishes standards of beauty and influences audience actions. The difference is that this study focuses on skincare advertisements and the use of unique visual language on Instagram. On the other hand, Erika's (2024) study shows resistance to racist ideologies in beauty product advertisements, which alienate and become more open. Meanwhile, the findings of this study emphasize how Something advertisements still maintain common standards of beauty, albeit conveyed in a more modern and appealing language for teenagers. Meanwhile, according to Bergerak Manfaat (2020), the depiction of female beauty in Wardah videos is also important because it discusses how women are visually depicted in beauty advertisements. What is different, this research places more emphasis on advertising on Instagram and highlights the interplay between text, images, and ideology in the digital world.

Therefore, this study supports the theory of Fairclough and Hall and adds new information from previous research, namely the introduction of two different strategies: the Calm Down Cream advertisement focuses on emotional influence and quick solutions, while the Skinlift Serum advertisement emphasizes scientific claims and the validity of the technology. Both advertisements reinforce the dominance of the beauty industry on social

media platforms, but with different ways of speaking according to their target audiences. This shows that the way beauty is presented in Somethinc advertisements not only influences how consumers view the product, but also not only influences how consumers view the product, but also reinforces social views regarding current beauty standards and lifestyles.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research discussion regarding Somethinc advertisements on Instagram, it can be concluded that Somethinc advertisements on Instagram not only function as a tool to promote beauty products, but also as a way to shape the understanding of ideal beauty in society. The results of this discussion answer the research question that the use of language, images, and the way the advertisements are delivered are carried out with persuasive techniques to create an image that beauty is related to bright, smooth, healthy, and well-groomed skin. In addition, the research objective to see how advertisements shape the image of beauty has also been fulfilled, because each element in the advertisement supports each other in building a message that can influence the views of the audience, especially teenagers and young women. Thus, Somethinc advertisements show that social media is not only a place for promotion, but also a space that helps shape ideas and standards of beauty in everyday life.

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