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A Pragmatic Analysis of Persuasive Language in Sunscreen Advertisements and Its Influence on Students' Buying Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The impact of persuasive language in sunscreen ads on students' purchasing choices is the subject of this research. The purpose of the study is to determine the different types of conversational implicatures and persuasive techniques used in sunscreen commercials disseminated via social media networks like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Particularly for college students, who are regularly subjected to online advertisements, social media has become a powerful marketing channel in the digital age. Sunscreen advertisements frequently use engaging images and persuasive language to influence consumers' attitudes, feelings, and purchasing decisions. As a result, this research investigates how language is intentionally employed to sway readers while also presenting facts about sunscreen products. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine students' reactions to advertisements by analyzing slogans, headlines, taglines, promotional claims, and product descriptions. College students who actively use social media and are regularly exposed to online sunscreen ads were interviewed and observed in semi structured data collecting sessions. The study is based on Grice's Conversational Implicature theory and Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The research shows that sunscreen ads often employ conversational implicatures both generalized and specific to indirectly sway consumers and foster favorable attitudes about the product. Through their exaggerated claims, scientific language, emotional appeals, and restricted product information, the advertisements also break Grice's maxims, especially the maxim of quantity. In addition, university students in today's digital advertising environment are influenced by persuasive methods in both central and peripheral ways, which have an impact on their attitudes, opinions, and willingness to buy sunscreen products.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital world, advertising is one of the most potent marketing strategies for influencing consumer behaviour. Advertisements are no longer just about providing information; instead, they are about using persuasive communication to sway consumers' thoughts, emotions, and behavior in relation to a product. The rise of social media and digital platforms has contributed to this change. This trend is especially noticeable in younger audiences, such as high school and college students, who are more receptive to advertising messages and have a lot of exposure to digital material (Akayleh, 2021).

Growing public knowledge of skin health and protection against ultraviolet (UV) radiation, particularly in tropical nations like Indonesia, has made sunscreen a crucial product in the personal care industry. Recent statistics show that there is an increasing need for sunscreen products. The Indonesian Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM, 2024a) reports that imports of cosmetic raw materials, such as sunscreen, rose by 30% in the first quarter of 2024, and that local sunscreen products make up around 60% of the online retail market. Moreover, according to a Euromonitor International (2024) analysis, Indonesia's sunscreen market increased by 12.5% in 2023 and is expected to hit USD 150 million by 2028, with people between the ages of 18 and 24 mostly students making up about 45% of overall use (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Due to their high use of social media and vulnerability to trends, particularly in beauty and skincare goods, students are a popular demographic for advertisers to reach online. Previous research indicates that online ads influence roughly 70% of students' purchasing choices (Nielsen, 2022). This suggests that advertising, especially through digital platforms, has a big impact on how students make purchasing decisions. Although persuasive language in online advertising has been discussed in many previous studies, few have specifically investigated it in sunscreen advertisements from a pragmatic perspective. Furthermore, few studies have examined the influence of persuasive language and implicature on students' buying decisions, particularly among Indonesian students. This study therefore aims to analyse the persuasive language used in sunscreen advertisements and its influence on students' purchasing decisions using a pragmatic approach, even with the significant impact of advertising (Varghese & Agrawal, 2021).

The efficacy of advertisements can be evaluated from a linguistic standpoint using a pragmatic approach, which examines how meaning is created and understood in context. Through pragmatic analysis, notably using the speech act theory put forth by Austin and Searle, researchers can determine how different kinds of utterances, such as directives (urging purchase), expressives (emphasizing product advantages), and commissives (promising effectiveness), are employed deliberately in advertisements. Furthermore, the effectiveness of marketing messages on consumers is amplified by persuasive tactics like ethos, pathos, and logos (Dewi et al., 2024).

Given this context, this study seeks to explore the kinds of speech acts and persuasive techniques employed in sunscreen commercials and to investigate how these linguistic aspects affect the purchasing behavior of TBI E students. This study aims to identify the most effective linguistic strategies for influencing young consumers' attitudes and behavior and to demonstrate how language works as a persuasive tool in advertising. In the end, it is hoped that the results of this research will give educators, legislators, and marketers useful information for fostering a critical understanding of the power of advertising. (Fletcher-Brown et al., 2024)

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyse the use of persuasive language in sunscreen adverts and its impact on the purchasing decisions of college students. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to explore the meanings, interpretations and contexts embedded in advertising language, as well as the persuasive intentions behind it. This

approach is particularly well-suited to pragmatic studies related to speech acts, implicatures, persuasive expressions and audience responses (Jannah & Pudjoprastyono, 2025).

The primary data for this study consisted of linguistic elements found in sunscreen advertisements shared on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These included slogans, captions, taglines, promotional statements and product descriptions containing persuasive language. Secondary data were obtained from college students' responses to sunscreen advertisements via interviews and questionnaires. The participants in this study were college students who actively use social media and are frequently exposed to sunscreen advertisements in their daily lives (Yuliah et al., 2021).

The researcher was responsible for collecting, selecting, classifying, analysing, and interpreting the data. Interview guidelines were also used to ensure systematic and consistent data collection. Using a pragmatic approach, the researcher analysed the linguistic features of the advertisements to identify the persuasive strategies, speech acts and implicatures employed.

Data was collected through documentation and semi-structured interviews. The documentation method involved collecting sunscreen advertisements from social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. The selected advertisements included slogans, taglines, captions, promotional statements, product descriptions and combinations of text and images containing persuasive elements. Advertisements were selected based on relevance to the research objectives and audience engagement.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with college students to explore their perceptions of, responses to, and decisions regarding the purchase of sunscreen. This interview method enabled the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also exploring additional information that emerged during the interviews.

The data were analysed in several stages: data reduction, classification, presentation and interpretation. The researcher classified the data based on pragmatic aspects, particularly speech acts and implicatures, in order to identify the persuasive strategies and implied meanings present in the advertisements. Finally, the researcher examined the relationship between persuasive language and students' purchasing decisions within the context of digital advertising and social media marketing (Wijayatiningsih, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The beauty industry has experienced rapid growth in recent years, particularly within the skincare and cosmetics sectors. This growth has been driven by technological advances, social media exposure and a growing public focus on self-care and skin health. These trends have had a significant impact on adolescents and college students, who are becoming increasingly concerned about their appearance and skin condition. Consequently, skincare products have become an integral part of daily life for many individuals. Healthy, well-maintained skin is often associated with self-confidence and overall well-being.

In Indonesia, awareness of the importance of protecting the skin from environmental damage has also increased. Many people now understand the negative effects that sunlight, pollution and ultraviolet (UV) radiation can have on skin health. Consequently, sunscreen products have become highly popular as they are considered effective in preventing sunburn, premature ageing and other skin problems. The growing demand for sunscreen has prompted skincare companies to develop innovative products and strengthen their promotional strategies on digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Advertisements on social media often use persuasive language, emotional appeals, attractive visuals and convincing product claims to grab consumers' attention. These strategies are intended to influence consumers' attitudes and encourage them to make purchases. However, intense competition in the skincare market also means that companies must be ethically responsible when promoting their products. Information relating to ingredients, safety, effectiveness and product benefits must be

presented clearly and accurately. Exaggerated or misleading claims may reduce consumer trust and spread misinformation. Therefore, ethical communication is essential for maintaining a positive brand reputation and helping consumers to make informed decisions.

In this context, the language used in sunscreen advertisements is an important topic for analysis. This study focuses on identifying the persuasive language strategies and conversational implicatures used in such advertisements, and on examining how these elements influence consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly among college students (Hasen, 2018).

Because it serves as a means of disseminating product information as well as a strategic instrument for shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing choices, language is crucial in advertising. Language in advertising is intentionally created to capture people's interest, establish emotional bonds, and convince them of the benefits of a product. Advertisements frequently employ enticing slogans, persuasive language, emotional appeals, and implied meanings that lead consumers to have favorable impressions, even when the facts presented are not entirely clear. In order to pique consumers' interest in buying the product, language is often used in skincare and sunscreen advertisements to promote concepts related to beauty, healthy skin, confidence, and a contemporary lifestyle. As a result, advertising language not only delivers factual material but also paints specific images and expectations that can have a psychological impact on viewers. Because pragmatics centers on how meaning is communicated and understood in particular communicative circumstances, it is crucial to examine this event from a pragmatic perspective. The Conversational Implicature theory put forth by H. P. Grice in 1975 is one of the most pertinent concepts in pragmatic studies. This theory explains how implied meanings emerge via the use or breach of the cooperative principle in conversation, which is made up of four conversational maxims: the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. These precepts are frequently intentionally broken or twisted in advertising speech in order to produce persuasive effects and persuade consumers to draw conclusions that support the brand, even if the message is not explicitly stated. For instance, commercials may provide incomplete information, use vague language, overstate the advantages of a product, or make emotional claims that suggest the product is superior without offering all the facts. By using these tactics, consumers are subtly led to see the advertisement in a light that enhances their favorable opinion of the brand. Consequently, conversational implicature is an effective advertising persuasion technique since it enables companies to convey implied messages in a way that is not obtrusive while also capturing customers' attention and influencing their purchasing decisions (Takáčová, 2025).

In addition to the practical research, this study uses Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which was published in 1986, to investigate how persuasive advertising language affects consumers' cognitive processes and buying choices. The application of ELM is significant in this study because advertising language not only transmits information directly but also uses psychological techniques to influence viewers via various forms of communication tactics. The Elaboration Likelihood Model states that there are two primary ways that persuasion occurs, namely the central route and the peripheral route. The central route requires a more thorough and critical examination of data, in which consumers meticulously analyze the arguments, assertions made about the product, components, efficacy, and logical evidence included in advertisements before making a choice. When customers pay attention to explanations about SPF levels, skin protection benefits, dermatological testing, components, or scientific claims about product safety and efficacy in the context of sunscreen ads, this path can be seen. When consumers approach advertising through the central route, they tend to be more engaged and have a stronger desire to comprehend the material before making a purchasing choice. In contrast, the peripheral route depends on signals that are more straightforward and widely accepted, such as appealing images, celebrity endorsements, influencers, packaging design, emotional appeals, memorable slogans, popularity ratings, and numerical claims that can immediately capture consumers' attention without necessitating extensive analysis. Many skincare ads intentionally

employ these extraneous components to generate favorable perceptions and emotional reactions that persuade consumers to believe and purchase the product. Since students are frequent users of digital platforms and are regularly bombarded with skincare advertising via social media apps, e-commerce sites, and internet promotional material in their everyday lives, they are deemed a suitable topic for this study. Students, as digital consumers, are more susceptible to both rational and emotional forms of persuasion since they are regularly exposed to compelling marketing tactics when using Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and online retail apps. Their buying choices could be impacted by advertising's presentation of visual appeal, trends, influencers, and social validation in addition to rational arguments about product quality and effectiveness. As a result, this research aims to shed light on how persuasive language techniques in sunscreen advertisements affect students through cognitive and emotional persuasion processes, as well as how these strategies impact consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing intent in the digital age, by using a combination of pragmatic analysis and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Desfita & Helmita, 2025).

This research makes use of the Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which was developed in 1986, to further examine how persuasive advertising language influences consumers' opinions, thought processes, and purchase intentions, in addition to the practical study. According to ELM, there are two separate ways in which persuasion might occur: the central route and the peripheral route. The central route is used when consumers pay close attention to the quality, logic, and relevance of the material in an ad, such as assertions regarding SPF values, skincare components, product benefits, and dermatological effectiveness. In contrast, the peripheral route depends more on external cues that may readily grab attention and sway opinions without requiring a lot of cognitive processing. These cues include alluring packaging, celebrity endorsements, stunning images, claims of popularity, statistical figures, and emotionally engaging language. In the context of sunscreen advertising, the two strategies are frequently combined in order to enhance the effectiveness of the ads and encourage positive consumer responses to the marketed product. Since university students often use digital platforms and are constantly exposed to skincare advertisements on social media apps, online marketplaces, beauty influencers, and other e-commerce websites, they are seen as a good and relevant subject for this research. They are more likely to come across persuasive messages that gently influence their opinions, tastes, and purchasing choices regarding skincare and sunscreen products because of their regular exposure to digital advertising (Purba, 2017).

Conversational Implicature Analysis

This study demonstrates that conversational implicature is a prevalent persuasive strategy in sunscreen advertisements. Rather than making explicit claims of superiority or scientific guarantees, advertisers use concise phrases, numerical data and promises relating to skincare, which viewers then use to infer positive connotations. This phenomenon aligns with Grice's (1975) theory of implicature, which suggests that meaning can extend beyond the literal content of an utterance through contextual inference. The findings suggest that advertisers deliberately construct messages that exploit the cooperative principle, guiding consumers towards favourable interpretations without making verifiable assertions. This indirect mode of communication is particularly effective in the cosmetics industry, where emotional appeal and perceived credibility significantly influence purchasing decisions. Consequently, an understanding of implicature in advertising discourse provides valuable insight into the pragmatic mechanisms underlying consumer persuasion (Putri, 2025).

1. In the Wardah commercial, the phrase "100% Setuju Sunscreen Dapat Mengontrol Minyak" carries an implicit meaning. At first glance, the ad merely conveys that users concur the sunscreen controls oil levels. Nevertheless, viewers might interpret this assertion as suggesting that the product is exceptionally effective and highly regarded by many users. The advertisement infringes upon the Maxim of Quantity, as it lacks comprehensive details about the participants, research techniques, or scientific validation

backing the claim. However, the inclusion of the term “100%” fosters a sense of certainty, dependability, and high consumer satisfaction.

This compelling wording encourages prospective shoppers to assume that the product has undergone extensive testing and received favorable reviews from users. Consequently, consumers might feel more assured about buying the sunscreen since the advertisement hints at both its effectiveness and trustworthiness without providing thorough factual support (Wedananta et al., 2020).



Figure 1. Wardah Sunscreen

2. Similarly, the Emina ad says, “91% Agree the Formula is Comfortable to Wear All Day.” This message has a general meaning that people can understand, as viewers can easily guess that a lot of users find the product comfortable for wearing all day without needing more details. The percentage shown in the ad subtly encourages people to think that the sunscreen works well, is trustworthy, and has many satisfied users. Even though the ad doesn’t include proof or detailed research data, it manages to build trust and credibility by using numbers in its claims. Additionally, the statement connects with consumers on an emotional level by highlighting comfort, which is a key aspect for people who use sunscreen in their everyday routines. Because of this, people might start to see the product in a good light and feel more inclined to buy it, as the ad hints at how happy users are and how useful it is in daily life (TAKACOVA, n.d.).



Figure 2. Azarine Sunscreen

3. Another illustration is found in the advertisement for Facetology featuring the words “Bantu Samarkan PIH dalam 2 Minggu.” This declaration suggests that individuals can see a noticeable enhancement in their skin in a brief time frame. While the advertisement does not explicitly guarantee outcomes, viewers deduce that the sunscreen operates swiftly and efficiently. This implication occurs as buyers perceive the statement to go beyond its straightforward interpretation. Additionally, the inclusion of skincare terminology like “PIH” contributes to a sense of scientific credibility (Hariyanto, 2025).



Figure 3. Facetology Sunscreen

4. In the Skintific promotion, the tagline “12 Jam Bebas Minyak” includes an implied meaning that is broadly understood. Shoppers quickly grasp that the sunscreen is capable of managing oiliness for an extended period, despite the absence of scientific proof. The brevity of the phrase enhances its persuasive effect, as it remains straightforward, easy to remember, and closely related to customers' skin care needs (Wardani, 2018).



Figure 4. Skintific Sunscreen

5. The NPURE promotional material shows an example of implicature with the phrase "Hypoallergenic Sunscreen." It suggests that the product is safe for sensitive skin, but it doesn't actually guarantee that it will not cause any irritation. Customers see the scientific language as proof that the product is safe and meets trustworthy skin care standards. In the same way, the ad from Beauty of Joseon uses the phrase "Rice + B5" to imply that it provides nourishment, hydration, and helps to restore the skin barrier using natural ingredients. The meanings are hinted at instead of being directly expressed (Kozyr, 2024).

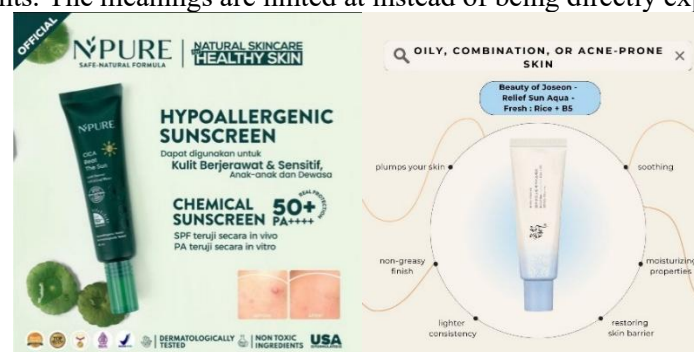


Figure 5. NPURE Sunscreen

Overall, marketing for sunscreens depends significantly on indirect implications to gently persuade buyers. By using insufficient details, technical language, and statistical assertions, marketers prompt viewers to draw conclusions concerning efficacy, safety, widespread use, and enhancement of appearance. This approach of implicit messaging works well because shoppers frequently find these suggested meanings to be more believable and genuine compared to straightforward advertising claims (Fowler et al., 2019).

Persuasion Analysis Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

This research additionally evaluates sunscreen marketing using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo. The results indicate that sunscreen marketing utilizes both central and peripheral methods of persuasion to shape consumers' beliefs and intentions to buy.

The central method is evident when advertisements present rational information and product-specific arguments that necessitate cognitive engagement. For instance, the Wardah advertisement features assertions like “SPF 50 PA++++” and “Oil Control.” Such specifics motivate consumers to assess the practical advantages of the sunscreen, particularly its capacity to safeguard the skin from UV rays and to minimize excess oil. Individuals with a solid understanding of skincare are likely to analyze this information thoroughly prior to making a purchase (Wagner and & Petty, 2022).

In a comparable manner, the NPURE advertisement employs central-route persuasion through statements like “Dermatologically Tested” and “Hypoallergenic Sunscreen.” These scientific assertions resonate with consumers who value product safety and the ingredients used. The incorporation of medical and dermatological terms establishes a logical foundation for trust.

The Facetology advertisement likewise exemplifies central-route persuasion through skincare-oriented terminology such as “PIH” and “Non-Comedogenic.” Consumers who understand skincare jargon may view the product as sophisticated and scientifically valid. Similarly, advertising focused on ingredients in Beauty of Joseon, featuring phrases like “Rice + B5,” persuades viewers by stressing the formulation and practical benefits of the skincare product (Cacioppo & Petty, 2022).

Meanwhile, the peripheral route is clearly evident in the visual and emotional features of advertisements. Numerous sunscreen commercials utilize eye-catching packaging, vibrant colors, images of radiant skin, and attractive models to elicit positive emotional reactions. In the Emina ad, the youthful hues and fun design appeal to teenage audiences on an emotional level rather than a logical one. The statistic “91% setuju” serves not only as informative data but also acts as a signal of social approval, prompting consumers to align with the prevailing view.

The Skintific commercial features a brief and memorable tagline, “12 Jam Bebas Minyak,” which serves as an effective peripheral cue due to its simplicity and ability to create an instant perception of product excellence. Similarly, phrases like “Glowingnya Sehari” in the Scora advertisement resonate with consumers’ emotions and aspirations for beauty. These advertisements link glowing skin to qualities like confidence, attractiveness, and contemporary standards of beauty (Grose-Fifer et al., 2023).

Table 1. An Analysis of Conversational Implicature, Violations of Grice’s Maxims, and Persuasion Strategies in Sunscreen Advertisements in Digital Media

No	Brand/Advertisement	Type of Conversational Implicature	Implicit Meaning	Grice’s Maxim Flouted	Persuasive Language Strategy	ELM Route
1	Wardah “100% Setuju Sunscreen Dapat Mengontrol Minyak	Particularized Conversational Implicature	The sunscreen is highly effective and trusted by users for oil control	Maxim of Quantity	Statistic Appeal, Bandwagon Appeal, Emotional Appeal	Central & Peripheral Route
2	Emina “91% Setuju Formula Nyaman Dipakai Sehari”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Most users feel comfortable using the sunscreen all	Maxim of Quantity	Statistic Appeal, Soft Selling, Youthful Persuasion	Peripheral Route

			day			
3	Facetology “Bantu Samarkan PIH dalam 2 Minggu”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	The product can improve dark spots quickly	Maxim of Quantity	Promise Appeal, Problem-Solution Technique, Rational Appeal	Central Route
4	Skintific “12 Jam Bebas Minyak”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	The sunscreen provides long-lasting oil control	Maxim of Quantity	Hyperbole, Practical Appeal, Catchphrase	Central & Peripheral Route
5	NPURE “Hypoallergenic Sunscreen”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	The product is safe for sensitive skin	Maxim of Quantity	Scientific Persuasion, Safety Appeal, Trust Building	Central Route
6	Beauty of Joseon “Rice + B5”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	The sunscreen nourishes and hydrates the skin naturally	Maxim of Relation	Natural Appeal, Ingredient-Based Marketing, Minimalist Persuasion	Central Route
7	Scora “Glowingnya Sehari”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Users will look glowing and fresh all day	Maxim of Manner	Beauty Appeal, Emotional Persuasion, Trend Language	Peripheral Route

CONCLUSION

The research conclusion is presented briefly, narrative and conceptual which describes the research findings and its impacts. The conclusion comprises the summary of research findings and discussion. Recommendations may also be inserted in this chapter. Please avoid using bullets. (Avenir regular 12, space 1.5) The study leads to the conclusion that college students, particularly those with TBI E, are strongly influenced by the use of persuasive language in sunscreen advertising when making purchasing decisions. Sunscreen commercials use practical methods, such as conversational implication, to influence consumers' opinions, attitudes, and trust, in addition to serving as a channel for product information. Advertisements entice customers to infer implicit messages about product efficacy, safety, and quality without providing specific information by using brief yet significant phrases, scientific jargon, and statistical assertions like "100% agree," "dermatologically tested," or "12 hours oil-free." The advertisement seems more believable, realistic, and trustworthy to consumers as a result of this indirect communication approach. Furthermore, according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory, sunscreen commercials employ both the central and peripheral routes of persuasion to capture consumers' attention and sway their purchase decisions. The central route is reflected in reasonable explanations concerning SPF levels, components, skin protection, and product advantages, whereas the peripheral route is reflected in appealing packaging, images, celebrity endorsements, emotional appeal, and compelling slogans that generate favorable impressions of the product. These tactics effectively appeal to consumers' emotions and minds, increasing students' curiosity in experimenting with and buying the advertised sunscreen goods. Additionally, the study reveals that students are more likely to believe commercials that employ scientific terminology and

current beauty trends since they convey a sense of professionalism and trustworthiness. Consequently, in the cutthroat beauty business, sunscreen ads with persuasive language may successfully pique consumers' curiosity, foster trust, influence their purchase choices, and reinforce favorable impressions of the promoted products.

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