

DISCOURSE FEATURES OF ENGLISH ADVERTISEMENTS FOR SKINCARE PRODUCTS

ĐẶC ĐIỂM ĐIỂN NGÔN CỦA CÁC QUẢNG CÁO TIẾNG ANH VỀ SẢN PHẨM CHĂM SÓC DA

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Abstract - This study investigates the discourse features of English advertisements for skincare products (EAFSPs), an area of growing relevance in linguistic research and consumer communication. The analysis focuses on two main aspects: layout structures and lexical choices. A dataset of 115 advertisements was collected from the official websites of five well-known UK skincare brands. The findings indicate that advertisements typically adopt a layout combining headlines, illustrations, and concise body copy to enhance persuasive impact. Lexically, the advertisements display a strong tendency toward the use of positive evaluative adjectives, particularly in their base forms. These findings contribute to a better understanding of commercial discourse and offer practical implications for English language teaching and learning, especially in ESP (English for Specific Purposes), media studies, and advertising communication.

Keywords - Advertising discourse; skincare advertising; layout structures; lexical features; evaluative adjectives.

1. Rationale

Language plays a crucial role in human life as an effective means of communication used for various purposes in everyday interactions. Advertising, as a form of discourse, functions as a medium through which cultural and social norms are constructed and disseminated, reflecting dynamic socio-cultural processes [1], [2], [3]. Among different types of advertising, skincare product advertisements have gained increasing prominence due to their widespread presence and influence on consumer behavior. Through carefully designed layout and lexical choices, advertisers aim to attract attention, generate interest, create desire, and encourage purchase decisions. Advertising also functions as a form of public announcement that persuades consumers, creates demand, and fosters brand preference and loyalty [4].

Based on these considerations, this study addresses two research questions: (1) What are the layout structures of English advertisements for skincare products? (2) What lexical features characterize English skincare product advertisements?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Discourse and Discourse Analysis

According to the Cambridge dictionary [12], discourse is defined as “the use of language to communicate in

Tóm tắt - Nghiên cứu này khảo sát các đặc trưng diễn ngôn của quảng cáo tiếng Anh về sản phẩm chăm sóc da (EAFSPs), một lĩnh vực ngày càng có ý nghĩa trong nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ học và truyền thông tiêu dùng. Phân tích tập trung vào hai khía cạnh chính: cấu trúc bố cục và lựa chọn từ vựng. Bộ dữ liệu gồm 115 quảng cáo được thu thập từ các trang web chính thức của năm thương hiệu chăm sóc da nổi tiếng tại Vương quốc Anh. Kết quả cho thấy các quảng cáo thường sử dụng bố cục kết hợp tiêu đề, hình ảnh minh họa và nội dung ngắn gọn nhằm tăng cường hiệu quả thuyết phục. Về mặt từ vựng, các quảng cáo cho thấy xu hướng sử dụng phổ biến các tính từ đánh giá mang sắc thái tích cực, đặc biệt ở dạng nguyên cấp. Các phát hiện này góp phần làm rõ hơn đặc điểm của diễn ngôn thương mại, mang lại những hàm ý thực tiễn cho việc dạy và học tiếng Anh, đặc biệt trong lĩnh vực ESP (Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành), nghiên cứu truyền thông và truyền thông quảng cáo.

Từ khóa - Diễn ngôn quảng cáo; quảng cáo sản phẩm chăm sóc da; cấu trúc bố cục; đặc điểm từ vựng; tính từ đánh giá.

speech or writing” that is to be widely used. It means a relatively discrete subset of a whole language, used for specific social or institutional purposes. Cook [5] claims that discourse is a language in use and it is used for communication. Cook assumes that advertising is a widely recognized and prominent form of discourse, and provided us a framework for advertisements analysis as a discursive genre in accordance with the advertisements’ textual and contextual features through stylistics and linguistics with concepts from discourse analysis. Concurrently, Gee and Hanford [6, p.3] assert that the significance of discourse analysis “lies in the fact that, through speaking and writing in the world, we make the world meaningful in certain ways and not in others”. Additionally, discourse analysis is the study of how language is used in linguistic products with reference to the social and psychological factors that influence communication, how forms of language are used in communication, and what linguistic means are used to carry out linguistic purposes [7]. Hence, the ultimate aim of text analysis and discourse analysis is to show how the linguistic elements enable language users to communicate in context [8].

In this study, the notion of discourse is synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the term. Discourse is viewed as language in use for communication, forming meaningful, coherent, and purposeful units that may consist of multiple sentences. Within this framework,

discourse analysis involves examining how language constructs social and cultural perspectives and identities. It therefore focuses on analysing linguistic units larger than a sentence, with particular attention to their structure and communicative functions.

2.2. Layout

Each advertisement possesses its own structure and layout which can be flexible and varied depending on the specific types of advertising that the advertisers desire to deliver to the audience. Leech [9, p.59] also assert that the layout of advertisement owes different components, namely headline, body copy, illustration, signature line and standing details. In details, the headline is a brief statement of the main information of the product or service while the sub-headline is used to explain, clarify or emphasize the outstanding characteristics of the product. The body copy is considered as the core of an advertisement and as a way to convey the detailed information of the product or service. The illustration or visualization shows the image of the product or service so that the customer can have a glimpse at the dynamic shape of its product or service.

2.3. Lexical choices

Evaluative adjectives represent a substantial subclass within the adjective system and are commonly classified within the broader domain of descriptive adjectives in linguistic analysis [9]. Adjectives represent the most prototypical linguistic device for encoding the qualification of nouns. Nevertheless, elements originating from other syntactic categories may also assume adjectival functions, as observed in the use of present and past participles or in nominal forms employed as premodifiers [10]. Another element could be classified as Chikathenta [11] found that some adverts tend to employ the first and third person pronouns. Personal pronouns such as “you, your, we, our” in advertisements make the language sound warm, friendly and narrow the distance between the advertiser and the reader.

2.4. Advertisements for skincare products

According to the Cambridge Dictionary [12], skincare refers to “things that you do and use to keep your skin healthy and attractive.” Daily skincare plays an important role in maintaining and improving the health and appearance of the skin. It involves various practices, products, and lifestyle choices aimed at cleansing, nourishing, protecting, and treating the skin. In addition, skincare helps provide essential nutrients and prevent common skin problems such as ageing, acne, and dryness.

Skincare products typically provide key information including ingredients, product descriptions, benefits, prices, and usage instructions. Among these aspects, the stated benefits often play a crucial role in attracting potential customers when they encounter skincare advertisements online. Overall, advertisements for skincare products are designed to persuade, attract, and influence audiences, ultimately encouraging them to purchase suitable products.

2.5. Previous researches related to the study

Numerous studies have applied Discourse Analysis to examine evaluative language in diverse contexts. Baharum

et al., [4] examined the impacts of lexical strategies in Malaysian advertisements’ discourse as well as the influence of the use of lexical strategies on Malaysian beauty product advertisements’ discourse. Besides, Ly and Jung [13] employed a theoretical framework in visual communication by decoding the meanings and visual grammar structures of two images. Notwithstanding, these investigations have concentrated on the analysis of visual modality and lexical strategies on general advertisements, and have not systematically and specifically analyzed the sub-categories of features in discourse, namely layout and lexical choices in English skincare advertisements. This study provides a detailed analysis of how an advertisement is displayed and the use of lexical choices in campaigning the products. It offers both theoretical contributions to discourse features in advertising and practical implications for the skincare industry.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. It focuses on analyzing and describing the discourse features found in English skincare product advertisements. The study uses discourse analysis to examine linguistic and semiotic elements such as layout and lexical choices from skincare advertisements. Also, it is supported by the combination of quantitative information to find out the occurrences, and percentages of tokens, which is applicable to answering the research questions of the research.

3.2. Research Methods

The researcher combined a wide range of methods, specifically, descriptive, qualitative method with the aid of quantitative information, analytic, deductive and inductive methods. Among these research methods, descriptive and inductive methods played important roles in identifying features in layout and lexical choices.

3.3. Data Collection

The data for this research was collected from five official websites of reputational skincare brands which are founded in the United Kingdom namely Oskia London, Liz Earle, Charlotte Tilbury Beauty, Green People, and Evolve Organic Beauty. The researchers decided to choose these websites because, among lots of websites about skincare advertisements found on the Internet, they are all secure and reputable online shopping platforms. In order to prepare for the research, the samples were collected based on the following criteria (i) the samples must be the written texts of English advertisements which describe skincare products; (ii) only facial skincare products are chosen due to the scope of the study and (iii) the samples were collected from the listed official websites of the five prestigious brands in the United Kingdom.

With such criteria, 115 samples were chosen from the most popular skincare advertisements websites. Finally, such collected data were examined and analyzed in order to find out the discourse features in terms of layout and lexical choices.

3.4. Research Instrument

The tools for identifying and collecting data of the study were observation and documentary review. Along with this technique, the AntCont tool and Microsoft Excel software were used to investigate occurrence frequencies of word types such as Nouns, and Adjectives in lexical choices.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Layout of English Skincare Advertisements

4.1.1. Layout

An examination of 115 samples reveals four main components in their layout: the Headline (H), the Sub-headline (SH), the Illustration (I), and the Body Copy (BC). These components are obligatory and play a crucial role in creating the first impression on readers, thereby influencing their decision on whether to choose the products.

- Pattern 1: Headline + Sub-headline + Illustration + Body Copy
- Pattern 2: Headline + Illustration + Body Copy

The distribution of patterns of layout can be tabulated in the table below.

Table 1. Patterns of Layout

Patterns	Occurrences	Percentages
Pattern 1 (H+SH+I+BC)	40	34.8%
Pattern 2 (H+I+BC)	75	65.2%
Total	115	100%

It is depicted that pattern 2 takes the lead percentage, accounting for 65.2% which means that the majority of the Headline, the Illustrations and the Body copy are usually used by advertisers to build up a successful advertisement of their products bringing to the customers. Although making up the modest percentage with 34.8%, pattern 1 still commonly used. Both patterns contribute to the effectiveness of the advertisements in promoting the products to customers.

4.1.2. The Headline

Headlines are divided into three types namely direct headlines, indirect headline and combination headlines [14]. Direct headlines are informative and give information about the product, benefits or characteristics of the products. Below are some examples:

- (4.1) Bedtime Beauty Boost [16]
 (4.2) Skin Repair™ Light Cream 50ml [17]

In contrast to direct headlines, indirect headlines arouse readers' curiosity when they encounter the advertisements. The following examples illustrate this pattern:

- (4.3) Midnight Elixir. [18]
 (4.4) Get Up & Glow. [19]

4.1.3. The Sub-headline

The sub-headline is typically placed below the main headline in order to provide additional information about the product [14]. Advertisers use sub-headlines to supply further context and emphasize the value of the product,

thereby serving as an effective means of conveying the manufacturers' messages. In skincare product advertisements, sub-headlines appear frequently. In the collected data, 35 sub-headlines were identified in English skincare product advertisements. Some examples extracted from the dataset are presented below:

- (4.5) 10% Lactic Acid Micro-Peel [20]
 (4.6) 2% BHA Clarifying Treatment Tonic [21]

In these examples, the producers provide information about the main active ingredients contained in the products. Such information helps readers determine whether their skin is compatible with the product, particularly with regard to the concentration of ingredients such as *10% lactic acid* and *2% BHA*.

4.1.4. The Body Copy

The body copy is considered the core component of an advertisement, as it conveys detailed information about the product or service. In the collected data, the body copy includes various types of information, such as key benefits, active ingredients, usage instructions, certifications and results, prices, sizes, delivery and return policies, customer reviews, and shopping options. In addition, readers can take action through links that connect to online purchasing platforms or communication channels, for example by adding items to a shopping cart, writing reviews, or reading other customers' feedback before and after purchasing the products. However, not all of these components appear consistently in every advertisement. Some advertisements provide extensive information about product features, benefits, ingredients, usage, cautions, prices, sizes, and reviews, while others include only a limited number of these elements. Furthermore, these components are not arranged in a fixed order within the body copy.

4.1.5. Illustration

Illustrations refer to the pictures or photographs accompanying an advertisement, which enhance its visual appeal. They constitute an important component because they attract readers' attention and help create the first impression of the product. In the advertisements analyzed, the images are presented clearly, colorfully, and attractively. They are often displayed in large sizes and prominently feature the product in order to help readers remember both the product name and its visual appearance. An example is presented below:



The image on the left shows the entire bottle of the product, including the product name "*Gentle Face Exfoliator*" and the brand name "*LIZ EARLE*", which enhances brand recognition and may increase consumers' confidence in the product. The image on the right illustrates

the texture of the cream when applied to the skin. Presenting multiple images is an effective advertising strategy, as it allows readers to visualize both the external packaging and the internal content of the product, including its color and texture. Such visual information may influence consumers' evaluation of the product in addition to the benefits highlighted in the advertisement.

4.2. Lexical Features of English Skincare Advertisements

4.2.1. Evaluative Adjectives

The collected data indicate that evaluative adjectives occur in both positive and negative forms; however, positive adjectives appear with considerably higher frequency. These positive adjectives are mainly used to describe the benefits of the products as well as the properties of their ingredients. The distribution of evaluative adjectives in English skincare product advertisements is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Evaluative Adjectives

Types	Occurrences	Percentages
Positive Adjectives	1297	89.3%
Negative Adjectives	155	10.7%
Total	1452	100%

As shown in Table 2, positive adjectives significantly outnumber negative ones, accounting for 83.67% and 16.33% of the data, respectively. This finding suggests that advertisements for skincare products tend to employ a wide range of positive evaluative adjectives. In practice, advertisers use such adjectives to highlight the quality, characteristics, and benefits of skincare products. The use of positive evaluative language can also enhance readers' engagement and create a more appealing impression of the advertised products. The following examples illustrate the use of positive adjectives in the collected data:

(4.8) **Light** in texture but **rich** in essential cell nutrients in addition to hydrating, ... [16]

In this example, light and rich function as positive evaluative adjectives that describe desirable features of the product. These adjectives highlight the product's beneficial properties, suggesting that it can improve the user's skin condition when applied regularly, particularly at night. The collected data reveal that a wide range of positive adjectives are employed in the advertisements, such as rich, luxurious, advanced, unique, youthful, strong, active, natural, bright, young, gentle, healthy, and luminous. The frequent use of these positive adjectives helps attract readers' attention and enhances the persuasive appeal of the advertisements, thereby encouraging potential consumers to consider purchasing the products. At the same time, negative adjectives also appear in skincare advertisements, although they are used less frequently. These adjectives typically describe undesirable skin conditions that the products are intended to address. Examples found in the data include blemished, puffy, dark, and clogged. The following example illustrates this usage:

(4.9) **Blemish** prone skin or a daily moisturiser for warmer months or hormonal skin. [23]

The use of the negative adjective "*blemish*" highlights an undesirable skin condition and draws attention to the product's suitability for individuals who experience such problems, for example acne or spots. By referring to these conditions, the advertisement implicitly positions the product as a potential solution. To further enhance the persuasive force of the message, advertisers frequently employ the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives to attract consumers' attention to particular products. The following examples illustrate this strategy:

(4.10) *This ultra-gentle, reactive-feeling skin looking calmer, clearer and healthier.* [24]

(4.11) *Our gentlest eye cream.* [25]

The distribution of these forms of evaluative adjectives is presented in the pie chart below:

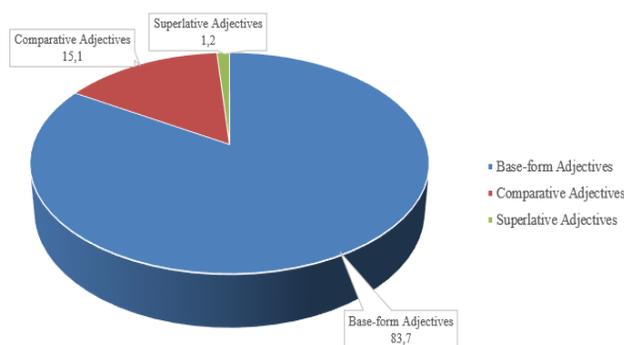


Figure 1. Forms of Evaluative Adjectives

As shown in Figure 1, the base form of evaluative adjectives is used most frequently, accounting for 83.7% of the data. This finding indicates a strong tendency for advertisers to describe product qualities directly through positive attributes, which highlights the desirable features of the products and helps promote them as attractive choices for consumers. In contrast, comparative and superlative forms occur less frequently. The former account for 15.1% of the data, whereas the latter represent only 1.2%. This suggests that advertisers generally prefer straightforward positive descriptions rather than explicit comparisons with other products.

4.2.2. Verbs Denoting Benefits of English Skincare Products Advertisements

Advertising frequently relies on verbs that convey improvement, transformation, or solutions, which form an important part of the persuasive appeal of the product [15]. The use of verbs denoting benefits aims to present readers with a general view of the advantages offered by the advertised products. The distribution of the occurrences of these verbs in the data is presented in the table below:

Table 3. Distribution of Verbs Denoting Benefits

Verbs Denoting Benefits	Occurrences	Percentages
Care	135	18.9%
Help	166	23.2%
Protection	102	14.3%
Treatment	312	43.6%
Total	715	100%

Most advertisements for English skincare products highlight the benefits and qualities that the products can offer to consumers. This is often achieved through the use of verbs such as *provide*, *stimulate*, *nourish*, *nurture*, *support*, *revitalise*, *hydrate*, and *soothe*, which describe the functions and advantages of the products. These verbs help emphasize the positive effects that the products are expected to deliver. Some examples are presented below:

(4.12) *Hydrate, visibly **revitalise** and **refresh** thirsty ...* [21]

(4.13) *This age defying ingredient also supports...and **soothe** and calm any signs of irritation.* [23]

In addition to verbs denoting care, the use of verbs expressing the notion of “*help*” is also a notable feature in skincare product advertisements. Various lexical items are employed to convey this meaning, including synonyms such as *assist*, *aid*, *offer*, and *bring*. These verbs are used to emphasize the supportive role of the products in improving skin conditions. The following examples are taken from the collected data:

(4.14) *FGF spurs these cells into action, **aiding** firmness and resilience within the skin.* [26]

(4.15) *TGF- β orchestrates the skin's structural proteins, **helping** to minimize...* [27]

The use of verbs denoting “*protection*” is an important feature in skincare product advertisements, as such verbs emphasize the protective and defensive effects of the products. These lexical choices highlight the ability of the products to safeguard the skin from potential damage or external factors. Below are some examples:

(4.16) ***Protects** skin's ecosystem from ...* [28]

(4.17) *Colloidal Silver & Prebiotics help **prevent** blemishes and support a healthy skin micro-biome.* [22]

Verbs denoting the treatment benefits of skincare products occur frequently in the advertisements. These verbs describe the functional effects that the products are expected to deliver. Examples include *reduce*, *remove*, *lift*, *firm*, *tighten*, *brighten*, *boost*, *strengthen*, *relieve*, *refresh*, *absorb*, *purify*, *rejuvenate*, *transform*, *tone*, *resurface*, *revitalise*, *replenish*, and *soften*. The following examples are extracted from the collected data:

(4.18) *Encapsulated Ascorbyl Tetraisopalmitate... penetrates deeply to visibly **firm** and **brighten**.* [29]

(4.19) ***Replenishes** and **restores** the lipid barrier for softness.* [28]

These verbs are used to emphasize the functions of the products in addressing skin concerns, improving skin conditions, and alleviating common skin problems. By incorporating verbs denoting treatment, advertisers are able to convey more specific and precise messages about the therapeutic or beneficial effects of the products.

4.2.3. Addressing Terms and Personal Pronouns

In English skincare product advertisements, writers frequently employ personal pronouns in particular ways. The pronoun “*we*” is typically used to refer to the advertisers or manufacturers, while “*you*” usually refers to

the readers or potential consumers. Personal pronouns such as *you*, *your*, *we*, and *our* in English skincare product advertisements (ESPAs) contribute to a warm and friendly tone, thereby reducing the distance between advertisers and readers. Through this strategy, advertisements create a sense of closeness and direct engagement with the audience. The use of address terms such as “*you*” and “*your*” gives the impression of a friendly conversation between the advertiser and the consumer, which may foster a more positive attitude toward the advertised product. A few examples are presented below:

(4.20) *The ultimate night treat, this is **your** dream night cream for soft and glowing skin.* [31]

(4.21) *This SPF30 moisturiser is the facial sunscreen for **you**.* [32]

The use of personal pronouns such as “*you*” and “*your*” creates a sense of personal engagement, giving readers the impression that the message is directed specifically at them. This strategy helps establish a feeling of closeness and attentiveness, suggesting that the manufacturer is concerned with the readers’ individual needs and is willing to provide assistance.

In addition to the second-person pronouns “*you*” and “*your*,” the use of first-person pronouns such as “*we*,” “*our*,” and “*my*” is a direct way for advertisers to present themselves and take responsibility for their products. Through these pronouns, advertisers position themselves as the source of the message and establish a sense of credibility when introducing skincare products to potential consumers. In this way, the advertisement functions partly as a form of self-presentation, informing readers about the brand and the products it offers.

(4.22) ***We** hand-harvest **our** roses to prevent petal bruising....* [23]

(4.23) ***Our** superior blend of mixed molecular weight Hyaluronic Acid plumps and hydrates.* [30]

The use of first-person pronouns in English skincare advertisements emphasizes the quality and benefits of the products. Moreover, such pronouns help create a sense of closeness and friendliness between advertisers and potential buyers. The distribution of first-person pronouns in the collected data is presented in the table below.

Table 4. Distribution of First and Second Pronouns

Personal Pronouns	Occurrences	Percentages
First Personal Pronouns	183	46.9%
Second Personal Pronouns	207	53.1%
Total	390	100%

The table shows that second-person pronouns occur more frequently than first-person pronouns in English skincare product advertisements. Second-person pronouns account for 53.1%, whereas first-person pronouns represent 46.9% of the data. This suggests that advertisers tend to address consumers directly, thereby creating a friendly and engaging tone. Such a strategy helps reduce the distance between advertisers and consumers and may encourage potential customers to purchase the products.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the discourse features of English advertisements for skincare products (EAFSPs) through an analysis of their layout structures and lexical choices. The findings indicate that most advertisements follow a recognizable pattern, commonly employing the Headline–Illustration–Body Copy (H+I+BC) layout, which reflects advertisers' preference for concise yet visually appealing formats that attract readers' attention.

Lexically, the advertisements show a strong tendency toward the use of positive evaluative adjectives that highlight the beneficial qualities and selling points of the products. These choices enhance the persuasive effect of the advertisements and help construct a favourable brand image. In addition, verbs denoting benefits, particularly those related to treatment and support functions, emphasize the transformative effects of skincare products. The frequent use of personal pronouns also contributes to the interpersonal dimension of the discourse by creating a sense of closeness between advertisers and consumers.

The study provides insights into how language is strategically used in advertising discourse to achieve persuasive purposes. It also offers practical implications for English language teaching and learning, especially in ESP, media studies, and advertising communication. Future research may adopt a comparative approach across different product categories or cultural contexts to identify broader patterns in advertising strategies.

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