

REFERENTIAL FUNCTION IN ENGLISH COSMETICS ADVERTISEMENTS

CHỨC NĂNG QUY CHIẾU TRONG QUẢNG CÁO MỸ PHẨM TIẾNG ANH

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Abstract - Cosmetics advertisements use language strategically to inform and persuade consumers. Drawing on Roman Jakobson's model of communicative functions, this study examines the referential function in 134 English-language cosmetics advertisements from L'Oréal Paris, Estée Lauder, Olay, and Shiseido, collected from official brand websites and product packaging. Using qualitative content analysis supported by quantitative frequency counts, the study investigates how referential language presents ingredients, technological features, and product-related claims. The findings show that the referential function is mainly realized through ingredient descriptions, scientific claims, and product-effect statements. These features contribute to product credibility and create an appearance of objectivity. The study concludes that referential language in cosmetics advertising functions as an informational-persuasive hybrid, presenting product claims as information while simultaneously supporting persuasive purposes.

Key words - Cosmetics advertisements; referential function; Jakobson's communicative functions; advertising discourse.

1. Introduction

The language of advertisements has attracted considerable attention from linguists because advertisements use language not only to inform but also to persuade consumers. In cosmetics advertising, this dual function is particularly visible because product descriptions often combine information about ingredients, technologies, and expected effects with persuasive claims about beauty, care, and effectiveness. As Cook [1] states, advertisements appear widely in everyday life and can therefore be considered both a commercial activity and a linguistic phenomenon.

From a linguistic perspective, advertising discourse provides a useful context for studying how language performs different communicative purposes. Jakobson [2] proposes a model of six communicative functions of language: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. Among these functions, the referential function is especially relevant to cosmetics advertisements because it appears to present factual information about products while also contributing to credibility and persuasion.

Although the language of advertising has been widely studied, previous research has mainly examined rhetorical strategies, general persuasive techniques, or audiovisual advertisements. Little attention has been paid to how the referential function operates in written English cosmetics

Tóm tắt - Quảng cáo mỹ phẩm sử dụng ngôn ngữ nhằm cung cấp thông tin và thuyết phục người tiêu dùng. Dựa trên mô hình chức năng giao tiếp của Roman Jakobson, nghiên cứu khảo sát chức năng quy chiếu trong 134 quảng cáo mỹ phẩm tiếng Anh của L'Oréal Paris, Estée Lauder, Olay và Shiseido từ các trang web chính thức và bao bì sản phẩm. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phân tích nội dung định tính kết hợp thống kê tần suất định lượng để xem xét cách ngôn ngữ quy chiếu trình bày thành phần, đặc điểm công nghệ và các tuyên bố về sản phẩm. Kết quả cho thấy chức năng này chủ yếu được thể hiện qua mô tả thành phần, tuyên bố khoa học và phát biểu về hiệu quả sản phẩm, góp phần tạo dựng độ tin cậy và cảm giác khách quan. Nghiên cứu kết luận rằng ngôn ngữ quy chiếu trong quảng cáo mỹ phẩm vừa cung cấp thông tin vừa phục vụ mục đích thuyết phục.

Từ khóa - Quảng cáo mỹ phẩm; chức năng quy chiếu; chức năng giao tiếp của Jakobson; diễn ngôn quảng cáo.

advertisements, especially in website descriptions and packaging texts. In particular, previous studies have often treated the referential function primarily as a means of conveying product information, without sufficiently examining how referential expressions contribute to the construction of credibility and persuasive meaning in cosmetics advertising discourse.

To address this gap, the present study focuses on the referential function in English cosmetics advertisements. Using advertisements from four major cosmetic brands, namely L'Oréal Paris, Estée Lauder, Olay, and Shiseido, this study examines how referential expressions are used to present product ingredients, technological features, and product-related claims, and how such expressions contribute to the construction of credibility and persuasive meaning in cosmetics advertisements.

This study extends previous research on communicative functions in advertising discourse by examining the referential function not only as a means of conveying product information but also as a discourse resource that contributes to persuasion. It also contributes to the study of advertising discourse by comparing the realization of referential expressions across website descriptions and packaging texts, thereby providing a more detailed account of how textual format shapes the lexical and syntactic realization of referential meaning in written cosmetics advertising discourse.

2. Research Questions

- In order to achieve these aims, the study is guided by the following research questions:
- How frequently does the referential function occur, and how is it distributed across website descriptions and packaging texts?
 - How does referential language contribute to persuasive meaning in cosmetics advertising?

To address these research questions, the study employs qualitative content analysis supported by quantitative frequency counts of cosmetics advertisements.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Theoretical Background

Advertising language has long been recognized as a strategic form of discourse that combines informational and persuasive elements [1]. In particular, Ringrow [3] notes that cosmetics advertisements frequently employ a mixture of emotional appeal, stylistic creativity, and scientific claims in order to enhance credibility and attract consumer attention. Jakobson’s model of communicative functions provides a widely used framework for examining how language performs different communicative purposes. According to Jakobson [2], verbal communication involves six functions: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. Each function corresponds to a specific element of the communication process and reflects a particular orientation of language toward context, speaker, audience, message, channel, or code. In advertising discourse, these communicative functions often interact to construct persuasive messages and shape consumer perception.

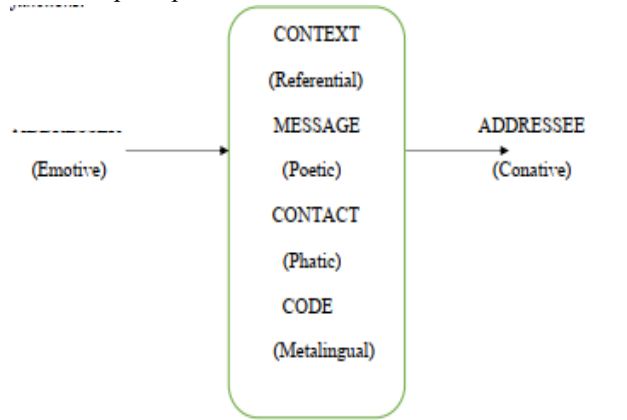


Figure 1. Roman Jakobson’s model of verbal communication and communicative functions [2]

3.1.1. Referential Function

The referential function is oriented toward context and is generally used to provide descriptive information about objects, situations, or events [2]. In advertising discourse, however, this function should not be understood simply as the transmission of neutral facts. Rather, referential language often creates an appearance of factuality by presenting product-related claims as information. In cosmetics advertisements, the referential function is commonly used to present ingredients, technological

features, product effects, and product details. These expressions help construct credibility and reliability by making the product appear scientifically supported and functionally effective.

Linguistically, the referential function is often realized through declarative sentences, scientific terminology, numerical expressions, and descriptive statements. In cosmetics advertisements, this function frequently appears in ingredient descriptions, scientific claims, and product-effect statements such as “With Hibiscus Morning Bloom, peptides and exclusive Moringa Extracts, you’ll re-ignite your youth power for multi-benefit action” and “With Sea Lavender Flower Extract, it helps naturally renew and replenish while you sleep”. Typical referential expressions also include lexical patterns such as “contains vitamin C,” “clinically proven,” “dermatologist-tested,” “reduces wrinkles,” and “hydrates skin for 24 hours”. Expressions such as “clinically proven” and “dermatologist-tested” may presuppose scientific validation, while claims such as “reduces wrinkles” and “hydrates skin for 24 hours” create a credibility effect by presenting expected product outcomes in measurable or verifiable terms. In this way, referential expressions do not merely describe products; they also contribute to the persuasive impact of cosmetics advertisements by emphasizing product effectiveness and technological innovation.

3.1.2. Emotive Function

The emotive function is oriented toward the addresser and reflects the speaker’s attitudes or emotional stance toward the subject [2]. In cosmetics advertising, it is often realized through evaluative and affective expressions such as “supremely comfortable, sensuously smooth and creamy” and “feels weightless and ultra comfortable”. These expressions help create positive emotional associations with the product and support its persuasive appeal.

3.1.3. Conative Function

The conative function is oriented toward the addressee and is used to influence the audience’s behavior or elicit a response [2]. In cosmetics advertisements, this function often appears in imperatives and directives such as “Discover our full collection of anti-ageing creams” and “Apply to clean skin after other treatments”. Such expressions directly address consumers and guide their actions.

3.1.4. Phatic Function

The phatic function focuses on establishing or maintaining contact between the speaker and the audience [2]. In cosmetics advertisements, it is often realized through rhetorical questions or attention-getting expressions, such as “Are you getting the most out of your retinol?” and “Did you know that the hours around midnight is when skin cells start to repair?” These expressions simulate interaction and help maintain audience engagement.

3.1.5. Poetic Function

The poetic function focuses on the form of the message and is commonly associated with stylistic and aesthetic

effects [2]. In cosmetics advertisements, it may appear in slogans using repetition, rhythm, or parallel structure, such as “Glow with every drop. Shine with every smile”. and “Beauty that’s fearless. Ageless. Limitless”. Such stylistic choices make advertising messages more memorable and appealing.

3.1.6. Metalingual Function

The metalingual function is concerned with clarifying the code used in communication [2]. In cosmetics advertisements, it may appear when technical or scientific terms are briefly explained, as in “SPF means sun protection factor”. This function helps consumers understand product-related terminology and supports communication between advertisers and consumers.

Although these communicative functions can be discussed separately for analytical purposes, they often overlap in actual advertising discourse. In cosmetics advertisements, referential expressions may work together with emotive, conative, poetic, phatic, and metalingual elements to construct credibility, desirability, and persuasive meaning. The present study therefore focuses on the referential function not as a purely informational category, but as a central resource through which cosmetics advertisements present product-related claims and support persuasion.

3.2. Previous Study

Previous studies have applied Jakobson’s communicative functions to various communicative contexts, including advertising discourse, speeches, oral traditions, and language acquisition, showing that the model can be used to examine different types of communication [4] - [6]. In advertising discourse, these studies generally indicate that referential and conative functions are often used to present product information and encourage consumer response, while emotive and poetic functions support emotional appeal and stylistic creativity. However, many of these studies tend to identify the presence of communicative functions rather than examine how these functions work together to construct persuasive meaning.

Several studies have also examined rhetorical and linguistic strategies used in advertisements. These studies show that cosmetics advertisements frequently employ scientific terminology, evaluative adjectives, present-tense verbs, and stylistic devices such as repetition, hyperbole, and metaphor to construct product effectiveness, credibility, and desirability [7], [8]. In the Vietnamese context, research has also examined advertising language from discourse and rhetorical perspectives, focusing on emotive language, scientific vocabulary, and persuasive strategies in commercial advertisements [9] - [11]. More recently, Hoa and Hoa [12] examined the discourse features of English advertisements for skincare products, focusing on their layout structures and lexical choices and showing how these features contribute to persuasive effects. Cross-cultural studies on advertising discourse have further shown that persuasive strategies such as metaphor, rhyme, and wordplay are widely used across languages and cultures, although their use may vary

depending on cultural context [13]. These studies provide useful insights into the persuasive nature of advertising language, but they have not fully explained how apparently informational expressions may also function persuasively in cosmetics advertisements.

Although previous studies provide valuable insights into advertising discourse and cosmetics advertising language, most research focuses on audiovisual advertisements, selected rhetorical features, or general persuasive strategies. In particular, the referential function has often been treated as a means of presenting product information, while its role in constructing credibility and persuasive meaning has received less attention. Relatively few studies have systematically examined how the referential function operates in written English cosmetics advertisements, especially in website descriptions and packaging texts. Therefore, the present study applies Jakobson’s communicative framework to analyze written English cosmetics advertisements, focusing on how referential language presents product-related claims as information and contributes to persuasion in advertising discourse.

4. Methods

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic approach to examine how the referential function is realized in English-language cosmetics advertisements. The analysis is grounded in Jakobson’s model of communicative functions [2], which explains how language performs different communicative purposes in discourse.

Qualitative content analysis was used to identify linguistic expressions that present product-related information and claims about product ingredients, technological features, and product benefits, while quantitative frequency counts were employed to observe recurring linguistic patterns across the corpus. In this study, referential expressions are understood as linguistic expressions that present product-related information or claims, including ingredients, technological features, product effects, and other descriptive product details. The combination of qualitative discourse analysis and quantitative frequency analysis allows the study to examine both linguistic patterns and their distribution across the advertisement corpus.

4.2. Data Collection

The dataset consists of 134 English-language cosmetics advertisements collected from the official websites of four international brands: L’Oréal Paris, Estée Lauder, Olay, and Shiseido. The corpus was collected from two textual sources: official website descriptions and short verbal texts appearing on the front side of product packaging. These brands were selected due to their global reputation, extensive use of persuasive advertising language, and regular presentation of product information in English on official websites and packaging texts. The advertisements mainly promote skincare products and typically range from 50 to 150 words in length. Skincare

advertisements were selected because they commonly contain ingredient references, scientific claims, and product-effect statements, which are relevant to the analysis of the referential function.

All texts were manually extracted from official brand websites to ensure authenticity. Only verbal content was included in the corpus, while multimodal elements such as layout, images, and audiovisual components were excluded because the present study focuses specifically on the linguistic realization of the referential function.

For analytical purposes, the sentence was defined as the basic unit of analysis. Short phrases or statements appearing on the front side of product packaging were also treated as analytical units because they function as complete promotional messages in advertising discourse. The collected texts were segmented into sentences and short packaging phrases/statements, resulting in a corpus of 1,396 analytical units, including 1,070 units extracted from website descriptions and 326 units derived from packaging texts.

In addition to extended website descriptions, short promotional statements appearing on product packaging were also included when available on the official brand websites. As a result, the corpus contains two textual layers: website descriptions (W) and packaging texts (P). This distinction enables the study to examine how referential expressions are distributed across different types of advertising texts.

4.3. Data Analysis

After data collection, the advertisement texts were segmented into analytical units consisting of sentences from website advertisements and sentences or short phrases appearing on the front side of product packaging. Each unit was coded according to Jakobson’s communicative functions: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, poetic, and metalingual. When more than one communicative function appeared in the same unit, all relevant functions were coded rather than assigning only one dominant function. This allowed the analysis to reflect the multifunctional nature of advertising discourse. This coding procedure provided the basis for the subsequent linguistic analysis, in which the identified referential expressions were examined not only as lexical or syntactic forms but also as discourse resources that help construct product credibility and persuasive meaning.

The analysis focused primarily on the referential function. Referential expressions were identified as linguistic units that present product-related information or claims about product ingredients, technological features, product effects, or other descriptive product details. These expressions were then analyzed in terms of their lexical and syntactic realization and their discourse function in constructing credibility and persuasive meaning.

The study examined common linguistic patterns used to realize referential expressions, including scientific terminology, descriptive adjectives, numerical expressions, and present-tense declarative statements. Frequency counts were calculated by counting the number

of analytical units in which referential expressions occurred. Percentages were then calculated in relation to the total number of analytical units in the corpus and in each text type. Frequency analysis was conducted to identify the distribution of referential expressions across the corpus and to compare their occurrence across different advertising text types, namely website descriptions and packaging texts. After the frequency analysis, qualitative interpretation was used to explain how referential expressions helped present product-related claims as credible, informative, and persuasive.

4.4. Coding Framework

To examine referential expressions, this study classified them into three categories: scientific terms and ingredients (R1), product effects (R2), and product-related information or details (R3). The coding criteria and examples are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding framework for referential expressions

Sub-code	Functional Category	Coding Criterion	Example Phrases
R1	Scientific terms and ingredients	Ingredients, formulas, technologies, testing procedures, or scientific terms	“This cream contains <i>hyaluronic acid</i> ”; “ <i>SPF 30</i> ”; “ <i>dermatologist-tested</i> ”
R2	Product effects	Claimed product effects or benefits	“ <i>Reduces wrinkles</i> in 7 days”; “ <i>Hydrates skin</i> ”
R3	Product-related information and details	Product specifications, origin, suitability, product form, or usage information	“ <i>50 ml</i> ”; “ <i>Made in Korea</i> ”; “ <i>Refill size</i> ”

When one analytical unit contained more than one referential category, multiple coding was applied. This coding framework helped answer the research questions by identifying the main types of referential expressions and explaining how they contribute to persuasive meaning in cosmetics advertisements.

5. Findings

Within the scope of this study, the analysis focuses on how the referential function is distributed and realized in English cosmetics advertisements. This section presents the main findings regarding how referential expressions are used to describe ingredients, product effects, and factual product information.

5.1. Distribution of Referential Function in the Cosmetic Advertisements

Table 2. Distribution of the Referential Function in the Corpus

Communicative Function	Frequency	Percent (%)
Referential (R)	1,010	72.3
Total Units	1,396	100.0

The referential function appears in 1,010 out of 1,396 analytical units, accounting for 72.3% of the corpus. This high proportion indicates that cosmetics advertisements frequently employ apparently factual descriptions to present product-related information and claims. Such expressions typically refer to product ingredients, product effects, and other product-related details.

5.2. Distribution of Referential Expressions across Website and Packaging Texts

Table 3. Distribution of Referential Expressions across Website and Packaging Texts

Type	Total Units	Referential	Percent (%)
Packaging (P)	326	194	59.5
Website (W)	1,070	816	76.3

Table 3 presents the distribution of referential expressions across packaging and website texts. The results show that the referential function occurs in both text types, but with noticeably different frequencies. In packaging texts, 194 referential expressions were identified, accounting for 59.5% of the 326 analytical units. In contrast, website texts contain a substantially higher proportion of referential expressions, with 816 instances representing 76.3% of the 1,070 units.

These results indicate that referential language plays a central role in cosmetics advertising discourse, particularly in website descriptions where advertisers have more space to elaborate on product information. In packaging texts, referential expressions are typically realized in highly condensed lexical units, such as ingredient specifications or technical product information, for example “4% Niacinamide” or “1.0 FL.OZ / 30 ml”.

By contrast, website texts tend to express referential information through expanded declarative clauses that combine ingredient references with descriptions of product effects or benefits, as illustrated by “Formulated with 4% Niacinamide, the formula helps even skin tone”. Such constructions allow advertisers to present product information in a more detailed and explanatory manner.

In general, the findings suggest that while both text types rely on referential expressions to communicate product information, packaging texts favor concise informational units, whereas website texts employ more elaborated linguistic structures.

5.3. Distribution of Lexical and Syntactic Patterns in Referential Function

Table 4. Distribution of Lexical Categories Realizing the Referential Function

Functional Category	Code	Frequency (N=1,010)	Percent (%)
Scientific terms and ingredients	R1	317	31.4
Product effects	R2	643	63.7
Product-related information and details	R3	192	19.0

Note. A single analytical unit may contain more than one referential category; therefore, the total frequency may exceed the number of referential units.

Table 4 shows the distribution of lexical categories realizing the referential function in the corpus. Among the three categories, referential expressions of product effects (R2) occur most frequently, accounting for 63.7% of the referential expressions. This suggests that cosmetics advertisements strongly emphasize product performance and expected outcomes. Referential expressions of scientific

terms and ingredients (R1) represent 31.4%, indicating the importance of scientific credibility in advertising discourse. In contrast, factual product-information expressions (R3) appear less frequently, accounting for 19.0%.

5.4. Distribution of Lexical and Syntactic Patterns in Referential Function by Text Type

Table 5. Distribution of Referential Lexical Categories by Text Type

Referential Function \ Text type	Scientific terms and ingredients (R1)		Product effects (R2)		Product-related information and details (R3)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Packaging (P) (N=194)	69	35.6	69	35.6	54	27.8
Website (W) (N=816)	248	30.4	574	70.3	138	16.9

5.4.1. Referential expressions of scientific terms and ingredients (R1) and syntactic patterns

Such expressions occurred more frequently in packaging texts (35.6%) than in website texts (30.4%). At the lexical level, scientific and ingredient-related expressions in packaging texts were typically realized as condensed formula-based units consisting of numerical specifications and technical ingredient names, such as “SPF 50+ UVA/UVB” and “4% Niacinamide”. These compact lexical forms foreground scientific precision and enable rapid information uptake within the spatial constraints of product labels.

In contrast, website texts tend to embed ingredient references within expanded descriptive clauses that combine ingredient naming with functional explanations. For example, “Formulated with 1% LHA + Salicylic Acid, the formula helps rebalance your skin” illustrates how scientific terminology is integrated into a fuller propositional structure. Such constructions allow advertisers to connect ingredient information directly with product effects and provide more elaborated explanations.

At the syntactic level, packaging texts frequently employ highly compressed constructions, often realized as verbless or minimally verbal informational units, such as “Amino Acid + Waterlily”. By contrast, website texts tend to use full declarative clauses in which ingredient references are syntactically embedded within complete propositions, as in “With IntuiGen Technology, it helps significantly reduce the look of key signs of ageing”.

In summary, packaging texts prioritize condensed lexical units and reduced syntactic forms, whereas website texts employ fuller declarative structures that integrate scientific references into explanatory discourse.

5.4.2. Referential expressions of product effects (R2) and Syntactic Patterns

Referential expressions of product effects appeared far more frequently in website texts (70.3%) than in packaging texts (35.6%). At the lexical level, product-effect expressions in website texts were typically realized through expanded benefit statements that explicitly described product performance or user outcomes, such as “Instantly evens skin, blurs pores, and hydrates for 24

hours” or “96% of women agreed skin feels immediately nourished”. These expressions combine effect-related verbs with measurable or time-bound outcomes, allowing advertisers to elaborate on product performance in a more informative and persuasive manner.

In packaging texts, by contrast, references to product effects tend to appear as short, high-impact benefit phrases, such as “*Perfectly Clean*”, “*Up to 24H Redness Eraser*”, or “*Grips makeup-No shine*”. These compact lexical forms compress product benefits into concise statements that can be easily processed by consumers within the spatial constraints of packaging labels.

At the syntactic level, website texts typically realize product-effect expressions through full declarative clauses in which effect-related verbs function as the main predicate, often accompanied by temporal markers or quantified claims. For example, constructions such as “*Instantly evens skin and hydrates for 24 hours*” or “*99% of women said their skin felt deeply hydrated immediately*” explicitly specify product outcomes and reinforce the appearance of measurable effectiveness.

By contrast, packaging texts frequently employ reduced declarative phrases or elliptical constructions, often realized as evaluative adjective phrases (e.g., “*Perfectly Clean*”), numerical-effect combinations (e.g., “*Up to 24H Redness Eraser*”), or short parallel verb phrases (e.g., “*Grips makeup-No shine*”). These compressed syntactic forms prioritize brevity and memorability while maintaining strong promotional impact.

In summary, referential expressions of product effects display clear lexical and syntactic contrasts across text types. Website texts tend to employ expanded declarative clauses that elaborate product performance, whereas packaging texts rely on condensed lexical units and reduced syntactic constructions to communicate key product benefits efficiently.

5.4.3. Referential expressions of product-related information and details (R3) and syntactic patterns

Product-related information expressions (R3) occur more frequently in packaging texts (27.8%) than in website texts (16.9%), although they are present in both text types as basic informational statements identifying product characteristics. At the lexical level, packaging texts typically realize factual information through highly condensed nominal expressions specifying volume, suitability, or product specifications, such as “150 ml” or “Suitable for Sensitive Skin”. These expressions usually follow patterns such as numerical value + measurement unit or adjective + suitability phrase, presenting factual information in a highly economical and standardized form appropriate for product labels.

By contrast, website texts tend to express factual product information through short declarative clauses that provide minimal contextual framing. Examples include statements such as “*Designed to be used anywhere, anytime, just add water*” or “*Now available in a refill size*”. These constructions allow advertisers to introduce additional product details while maintaining a relatively objective and informational tone.

At the syntactic level, packaging texts frequently employ nominal constructions or reduced informational phrases in which factual details appear as isolated lexical units rather than full sentences. Such compressed structures enable essential product specifications to be communicated quickly and efficiently within the spatial constraints of packaging. Website texts, in comparison, more commonly employ simple declarative clauses, often structured as be + adjective, be + available, or past participle constructions (e.g., designed to + V). These syntactic forms embed factual information within complete propositions while preserving a neutral and descriptive presentation.

In conclusion, factual product-information expressions across both text types rely on relatively simple lexical choices and straightforward syntactic configurations. However, packaging texts prioritize condensed nominal units that present specifications directly, whereas website texts tend to employ short declarative clauses that frame product information within brief explanatory contexts.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that referential expressions constitute a substantial portion of the advertisement corpus, highlighting the central role of apparently factual product descriptions in cosmetics advertisements. Through references to ingredients, technological components, product effects, and basic specifications, advertisers present information that creates an appearance of objectivity, thereby contributing to the construction of informational credibility in cosmetics advertisements. This finding answers the first research question by showing that the referential function occurs frequently and plays a central role in both website descriptions and packaging texts.

However, the analysis also shows that these informational statements are not entirely neutral. Many referential expressions combine product-related information and claims with evaluative lexical choices that emphasize product effectiveness and desirable outcomes. References to ingredients, technological features, and product performance frequently include temporal markers, quantitative claims, and positive evaluative terms, which strengthen the persuasive appeal of the advertisement. The higher proportion of referential expressions in website descriptions suggests that this text type gives advertisers more space to explain product effects and connect them with scientific-looking information, while packaging texts tend to present such meanings in shorter and more condensed forms.

From a functional perspective, this pattern indicates that the referential function in cosmetics advertising does not operate independently from persuasion. Instead, apparently factual product descriptions often function as a linguistic strategy through which persuasion is indirectly realized. By emphasizing ingredients, scientific terminology, measurable product effects, and credibility claims, advertisers construct a discourse that presents the product as technologically advanced, scientifically credible, and functionally effective. In pragmatic terms,

scientific terms and testing-related expressions help create epistemic authority, while product-effect statements often work as implicit claims about effectiveness and reliability.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that cosmetics advertisements employ scientific terminology and product-related information to construct credibility and persuasive appeal [7], [8]. However, the present study extends earlier research on communicative functions in advertising discourse [4]-[6] by demonstrating that the referential function does not merely serve to identify or transmit product information. Rather, apparently informational expressions operate as persuasive discourse resources, and their realization varies according to textual format: website descriptions allow more elaborated claims, whereas packaging texts rely on condensed linguistic forms. This comparison provides a more detailed account of the relationship between referential meaning, textual format, and persuasion in written cosmetics advertising discourse.

In summary, the findings suggest that in cosmetics advertising discourse, the referential function operates as an informational-persuasive hybrid. Referential expressions do not merely provide information but also contribute to persuasion by constructing credibility, reliability, and product desirability. Through the combination of apparently factual description and product-effect claims, cosmetics advertisements present product claims as both informative and trustworthy, thereby enhancing the persuasive impact of the advertising message. This directly addresses the second research question, which concerns the role of referential language in creating persuasive meaning in cosmetics advertising.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated how the referential function is realized in English-language cosmetics advertisements, with particular attention to its role in written advertising discourse. The findings indicate that referential expressions function not only to present product-related information but also to construct credibility and persuasive meaning. Although their realization differs across website descriptions and packaging texts, they consistently contribute to both informational and persuasive purposes in cosmetics advertising.

The main contribution of this study is to demonstrate that the referential function in cosmetics advertising operates as an informational-persuasive hybrid. Rather than merely conveying product information, referential expressions also contribute to persuasion by constructing credibility through scientific claims, measurable product-effect statements, and other apparently factual expressions.

This study has several limitations. The dataset includes only English-language cosmetics advertisements from four international brands, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the analysis focuses exclusively on written texts, while multimodal elements such as images and visual design were not examined.

Another limitation is that the coding and interpretation of referential expressions may involve a certain degree of researcher subjectivity, although the coding criteria were clearly defined.

Future research may expand the dataset to include more brands, product categories, and languages in order to enable cross-cultural comparisons. Further studies could also incorporate multimodal analysis or examine advertising discourse in social media and influencer marketing contexts, particularly how influencers combine product information, personal experience, and persuasive claims in cosmetics promotion.

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