Gendered Language in Advertising: A Linguistic Analysis of Clinique Skincare Products for Men and Women

Yaling Deng

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: yalingdeng999@gmail.com

Abstract
This study examines the gendered language and visual representations in advertisements for Clinique skincare products targeted at men and women. Using a qualitative approach grounded in Mediated Discourse Analysis, the research analyzes these advertisements' linguistic and visual strategies. The findings reveal distinct differences in language use and visual elements: male-targeted advertisements typically use fewer words and straightforward language, focusing on the product's practical aspects, while female-targeted advertisements employ more descriptive and emotive language, emphasizing experiential benefits and prominently featuring models. Additionally, color schemes differ, with male advertisements using bold and contrasting colors and female advertisements favoring harmonious and pastel tones. These findings align with existing literature on gendered advertising and highlight the need for more inclusive marketing practices. The study suggests that brands should adopt gender-neutral language and visuals, diversify their color palettes, and promote messages of inclusivity and equality. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gendered language in advertising, particularly in the skincare industry. It underscores the importance of creating advertisements that challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, promoting gender equality.
Keywords: Gendered Language, Skin Advertising, Sociolinguistics, Visual Representation, Gender Stereotypes.

Introduction
Background
Currently, the skincare industry has undergone an expansion of gender-specific product lines, accompanied by distinct marketing strategies for both males and females (Theodoridis et al., 2013). In today's rapidly evolving market landscape, the significance of analyzing gendered language in advertising cannot be overstated. As the global skincare industry expands its reach, advertising strategies that incorporate gendered language and imagery play a pivotal

role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. This research aims to unravel the complex interplay between language, visual elements, and gender stereotypes, offering crucial insights for developing more nuanced and inclusive advertising strategies. Clinique, a well-known skincare brand, has skin care products for women and develops skin care products for men. Nevertheless, more research has yet to examine the language and visual representations employed in advertising Clinique skincare products, particularly for men and women.

Despite the extensive application of gendered marketing strategies, a detailed analysis of their impact on consumer decisions and societal norms remains underexplored, particularly within the skincare sector. This study addresses this gap by examining how gendered language in Clinique's advertising influences male and female consumers, potentially reinforcing or challenging traditional gender roles.

Gender differentiation constitutes a pervasive dimension wherein the experiences of individuals vary, as posited by (Liben and Bigler, 2002). Advertising is vital in shaping societal perceptions of gender and influencing consumer preferences (Dwita, 2018). Prior studies have demonstrated that gendered language in advertising perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces conventional gender roles. According to Simon (1996), linguistic strategies like word choice, tone, narrative, and social and cultural references construct gendered messages that resonate with the intended audience. It is crucial to comprehend these strategies and their implications for promoting gender equality and challenging harmful stereotypes.

Gender analysis in advertising has received some scholarly attention. According to Tang and Chan (2017), advertising is a visual or audible communication consisting of impersonal messages to promote a brand, product, service, or concept to the general public. Related studies have also analyzed gender stereotypes in advertisements (Sandhu, 2019). However, a more targeted inquiry into the gendered language in skincare product advertising is needed. Skincare products are frequently associated with beauty and self-care, making them a relevant context for examining how language contributes to constructing gender identities. This study endeavors to bridge the existing research gap and provide valuable insights into the gendered aspects of skincare marketing by analyzing the linguistic strategies and visual representations used to advertise Clinique skincare products for men and women.

Understanding the dynamics of gendered language in skincare advertising is of practical importance for marketers and advertisers in creating more inclusive and gender-sensitive campaigns (Shah, 2019). Furthermore, this investigation adds to the broader conversations concerning gender parity, buyer conduct, and the effect of marketing on societal perspectives of gender.

Finally, this investigation thoroughly examines the language choices employed in marketing Clinique skincare items to males and females. By scrutinizing the linguistic and visual depictions, the research seeks to illuminate the formation of different gender advertisements. Through this investigation, a more profound comprehension of gendered language in skincare advertising can be achieved, leading to a more inclusive marketing approach and promoting gender equality. The findings of this research are anticipated to contribute significantly to academic discussions in marketing, sociolinguistics, and gender studies. By dissecting the linguistic and visual tactics employed by a major brand, this study highlights the decisive role of advertising in cultural representation and societal conditioning. Furthermore, it provides practical insights that can assist marketers in crafting campaigns that resonate with a diverse audience while promoting gender equality. This investigation is critical to marketing professionals seeking to enhance brand engagement and consumer

loyalty through gender-sensitive approaches. Additionally, gender advocates and consumer rights groups may find the results valuable for promoting greater awareness and advocacy against gender stereotypes in media. Ultimately, this research enriches academic literature and serves as a crucial resource for shaping the future of ethical and inclusive marketing practices.

The innovative methodology of this study lies in its integrated approach, which combines Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) with qualitative visual analysis, setting it apart from traditional studies that often examine linguistic or visual elements in isolation. By employing MDA, this research goes beyond surface-level analysis to understand the interplay between language, social practices, and cultural contexts in advertising. This theoretical framework is particularly adept at uncovering the subtle mechanisms through which gendered language and imagery influence consumer perception and behavior, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of gender construction in media. This study's unique contribution to the field is its focus on linguistic and visual representations as co-constructors of gender identities. This dual focus allows for a more holistic understanding of how gendered messages are crafted and perceived, providing richer insights into the dynamics of gender stereotyping in advertising. Applying this integrated analytical approach addresses a significant gap in current research and enhances the potential for practical applications, enabling marketers to design more inclusive and resonant advertising strategies.

Problem Statement

Despite the heightened consciousness and exertions to promote gender equality, gendered language in advertising remains exceedingly prevalent and reinforces stereotypical depictions of gender roles. The skin treatment industry, in particular, has encountered a significant expansion in gender-specific product lines, which mirrors the gender-based advertising methods embraced by organizations. However, there is a noticeable absence of comprehensive research that examines the linguistic strategies and implications of gendered language, specifically in advertising for skincare products that target men and women. Consequently, it is imperative to carry out a thorough examination to comprehend how language is used for the construction of gender identities and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in this specific situation.

Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions
Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to conduct a gender analysis of the language used in advertising for Clinique skincare products targeted at men and women, examining how gender is constructed and communicated through language and visual elements. Therefore, the objectives of this research are:

(1). To examine the gendered language patterns and visual representations employed in advertising Clinique skincare products for men and women.

(2). To analyze the functions of these gendered language and visual elements in advertisements.

Research Questions

(1). What are the different gendered languages used in the advertisements for Clinique skincare products?

(2). What visual elements and representations are used in the advertisements for Clinique skincare products to construct gender identities?

(3). How do gendered language and visual elements in advertising for Clinique skincare products influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchase decisions?

Literature Review

Gendered language in advertising has garnered significant scholarly interest, exploring various dimensions, from theoretical frameworks to practical applications. This section reviews vital studies and identifies research gaps relevant to the gendered language used in Clinique skincare product advertisements.

Stern (1993) discusses feminist literary criticism and the deconstruction of advertisements from a postmodern perspective, emphasizing the identification of gendered text in advertising. This critical approach reveals underlying gender biases and stereotypes often normalized in mainstream media. Thomson et al (2001); Jule (2008) contribute foundational insights into the interplay between language and gender, questioning the inherent gender biases present in language structures and providing comprehensive guides to understanding language and gender dynamics. Koslow et al (1994) investigate language effects in ethnic advertising, focusing on the implications of Spanish usage and accommodation theory, which can be extended to understand how language adapts to different cultural contexts in advertising. Piller (2003) highlights a shift in advertising from linguistic borrowings to other elements, which is crucial for understanding how advertisements incorporate multicultural and multilingual elements to appeal to diverse audiences. Ahrens (2009) investigates the intersection of politics, gender, and conceptual metaphors, offering insights into how language shapes these constructs and influences audience perceptions. Motschenbacher (2010) presents a poststructuralist perspective on language, gender, and sexual identity, emphasizing the discursive construction of heteronormativity and gender binarism in advertising. Behnam et al (2014) analyze the language of advertising in Persian and English, using functionalist interpretation and text typology to show how linguistic choices affect gender representation. Evans et al (2017) studied the effects of disclosure language in Instagram influencer advertising, finding that disclosure language like "Paid Ad" positively influences ad recognition and attitudes toward the brand. Wright (2023) explores the campaign rhetoric of Black women politicians, shedding light on how identity and experiential rhetoric are used in political discourse to challenge traditional gender roles. Research has shown that in hierarchical settings, female speakers often have a weaker voice than men, who are perceived as more powerful and persuasive (Bui, 2021). This perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes and reinforces traditional gender roles. Brands have been criticized for using subtly sexist language in their advertising, which can fuel gender stereotypes. For example, words like "competitive" and "aggressive" are often associated with masculinity, while "nurturing" and "supportive" are associated with femininity. Ridgway et al (2024) emphasize the need for a systematic approach to recruitment and retention to impact gender diversity effectively, suggesting that simply altering gendered language in job postings may not be sufficient. In international marketing, gender-inclusive language is crucial for tailoring messages to different locales. Brand positioning and cultural norms are essential for creating compelling and inclusive marketing campaigns. This is particularly relevant in global brands like Clinique, where advertisements must resonate with diverse audiences across different cultural contexts.

Despite the comprehensive studies available, several research gaps remain unaddressed. Firstly, there is a noticeable lack of focus on the skincare industry within the broader context of gendered language in advertising. Given the close association of skincare products with beauty and self-care, this context offers a unique perspective for examining gendered language. Secondly, most existing research analyzes either linguistic or visual elements of advertisements in isolation. An integrated analysis of how visual and linguistic elements construct gender identities would provide a more holistic understanding. Thirdly, there is limited research on how gendered language and visual elements in skincare advertising influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchase decisions. Understanding these dynamics can offer practical insights for creating more effective and inclusive marketing strategies. Lastly, while some studies address the use of language in multicultural contexts, there is a need for more detailed cross-cultural comparisons of gendered language in skincare advertising. This would help understand how different cultural norms and values influence gender representation in advertisements. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the gendered language in advertising Clinique skincare products for men and women, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on gender equality and marketing practices.

The researches highlight the pervasive impact of gendered language on societal perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. It reveals the need for brands and advertisers to be mindful of their language use to create more inclusive and diverse messaging. This study's focus on Clinique's skincare product advertisements will add valuable insights into how gendered language and visual representations are used in this specific context, aiming to promote more inclusive marketing practices and contribute to gender equality.

Methodology
Research Design
This study employs a qualitative approach grounded in the Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) theoretical framework, as Scollon suggested 2001. MDA is particularly suitable for this study because it focuses on the interplay between language, social practices, and cultural contexts. This approach allows a nuanced analysis of how gendered messages are constructed and perceived in skincare advertising. Qualitative research is ideal for this study as it provides deep insights into how language and visual elements interact to create and perpetuate gendered identities.

Analytical Framework
MDA provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing language usage in mediated settings such as advertising. It emphasizes the need to consider language's broader social and cultural contexts. In advertising, language is a means of communication and a tool for shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. By employing MDA, this study can meticulously investigate how linguistic strategies, visual representations, and gendered language are employed in Clinique skincare product advertisements to convey specific gendered messages. This framework will help identify the subtle nuances in language and visuals that contribute to constructing gender identities.

Data Selection and Procedure
This research primarily uses data from the official website of Clinique Malaysia (https://www.clinique.com.my). The selection of advertisements from this website ensures

that the data is relevant to the Malaysian market and reflects local cultural and social norms. The advertisements selected for this study were chosen based on their prominence on the Clinique Malaysia website and their precise targeting of different genders. The visibility and frequency of the advertisements on the website determine prominence. Advertisements featured on the homepage or prominently displayed in product categories are considered more influential and thus selected for analysis. This selection ensures that the advertisements represent Clinique's marketing strategies and align with the research objectives of examining gendered language and visual representations. The transcription process involves converting visual and textual elements from the advertisements into analyzable data. This includes noting down all textual content and describing visual elements in detail. The process will use tools such as NVivo to code and categorize data. The textual content will be transcribed verbatim, including all headlines, body text, and disclaimers. Visual elements will be described in color schemes, layout, model presentation, and product placement. This comprehensive transcription will enable a thorough analysis of the advertisements' linguistic and visual components.

Data Analysis

The transcribed data will be analyzed using thematic analysis within the MDA framework. This involves identifying recurring themes and patterns related to gendered language and visual elements. Thematic analysis will focus on how these elements construct and reinforce gender identities in the advertisements. Specific attention will be paid to linguistic strategies such as word choice, tone, and narrative. For example, the study will analyze how adjectives to describe products differ between male-targeted and female-targeted advertisements. Visual strategies will also be scrutinized, including color schemes, model presentation, and product placement. The analysis will examine how these visual elements contribute to the overall gendered message of the advertisements.

Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations include ensuring the confidentiality of any sensitive information and obtaining permission from Clinique to use their advertisements in this research. The study will ensure that all data is used solely for academic purposes and that the advertisements are not altered or misrepresented in any way. Additionally, the research will adhere to ethical standards for qualitative research, including informed consent, respect for privacy, and avoiding harm to participants. This study uses publicly available advertisements, so the risk of ethical issues is minimal. However, the research will still adhere to best practices to ensure integrity and respect for all stakeholders.

Findings and Results
Differences of languages in advertisements

This study examines the initial display images of advertisements for the same series of moisturizing products on Clinique's official website.
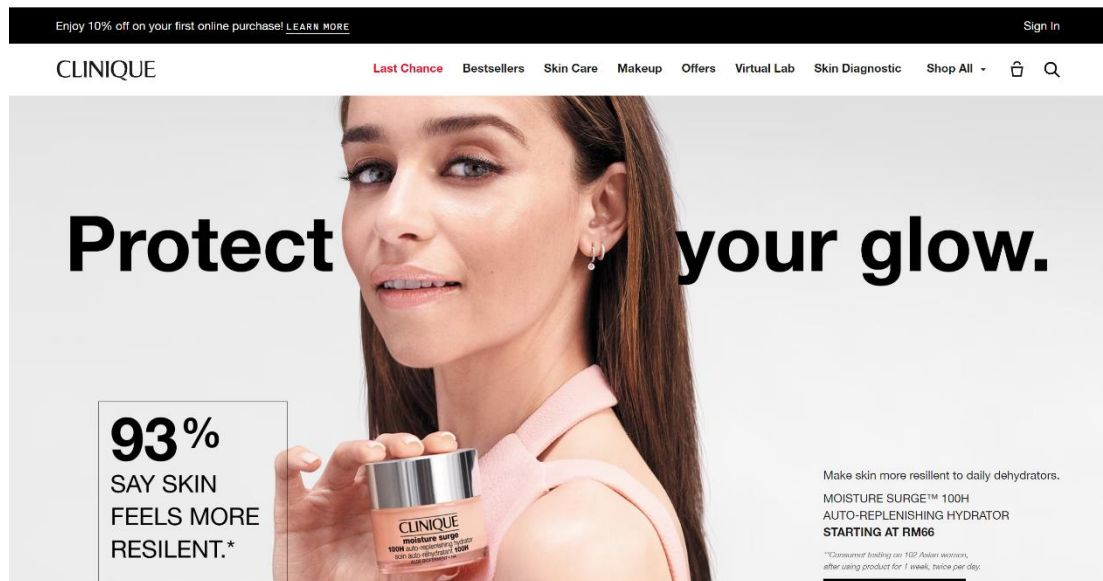
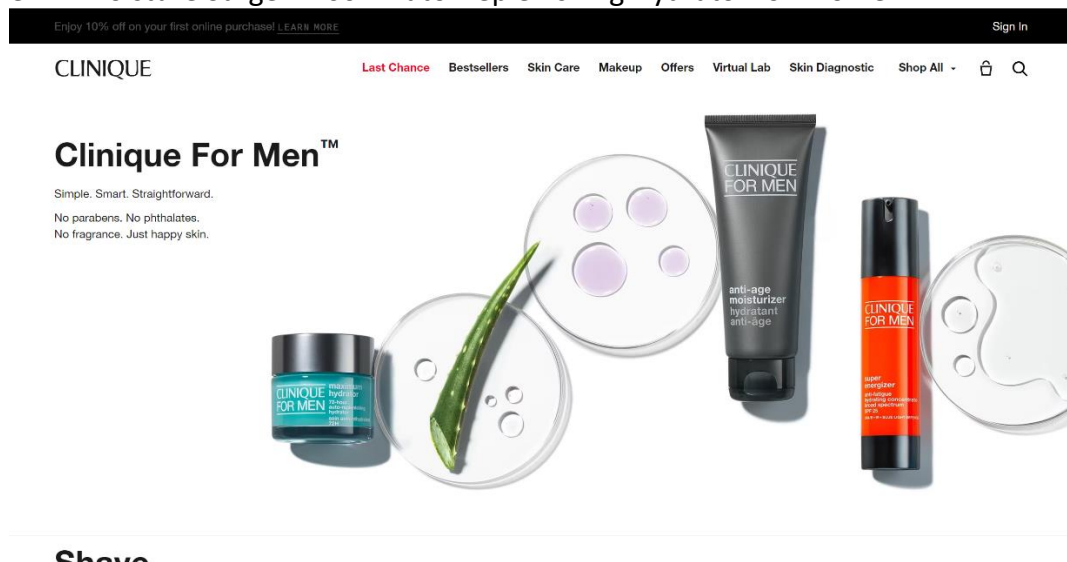Figure 1.1 Moisture Surge™ 100H Auto-Replenishing Hydrator for Women

Figure 1.2 Moisture Surge™ 72H Auto-Replenishing Hydrator for Men

From Figure 1.1, "PROTECT YOUR GLOW" is prominently placed in the center of the advertisement, emphasizing the product's ability to enhance women's skin glow, thereby highlighting its efficacy. In contrast, Figure 1.2 features "Clinique For Men" at the most prominent position, focusing more on the product's target audience than its efficacy. In the introductory text of Figure 1.1, "93% SAY SKIN MORE RESILIENT" is positioned in the lower left corner, presenting user feedback and underlining the product's effectiveness. Conversely, Figure 1.2 includes the statement "Simple. Smart. Straightforward. No parabens. No phthalates. No fragrance. Just happy skin," using simple adjectives and straightforward language to appeal to male consumers. Using phrases like "No + noun" and "Just + noun" indicates a direct communication style in male-targeted advertisements. Figure 1.1 includes multiple product-related text introductions on the right side, such as the product's name and price, suggesting that female advertisements provide more detailed product information than male advertisements, which are more succinct.

Differences in Visual Elements of Advertisements

In Figure 1.1, a female model dominates the advertisement, holding the product, which is not centrally placed. This placement indicates that the model's presence is crucial in demonstrating the product's efficacy in women's advertisements. In contrast, Figure 1.2 shows no models but focuses on the product and its derivatives, suggesting that male advertisements prioritize the product over the model presentation.

Color choice is another distinguishing factor. In Figure 1.1, the advertisement uses a consistent pink color scheme, matching the model's skin tone, makeup, and clothing to the product. This creates a harmonious visual appeal aimed at female consumers. Figure 1.2, however, uses bold colors like blue, gray, and orange, creating a visually striking combination that appeals to male consumers. This indicates that female advertisements favor color harmony, whereas male advertisements opt for visual impact through bold color contrasts.

The texture depiction in the advertisements also differs. Figure 1.2 for men includes images showing the actual texture of the product, providing a tangible sense of the product's physical attributes. In contrast, Figure 1.1 for women does not include such details, focusing more on the model's portrayal of the product. This suggests that the physical and visual specifics of the product might influence male consumers. In contrast, female consumers are swayed by the model's embodiment of the product's benefits.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the gendered language and visual representations in advertising Clinique skincare products for men and women. We analyzed these elements to understand how gender identities are constructed and reinforced through marketing strategies. The findings reveal significant differences in the language and visual elements used in advertisements targeted at different genders, which align with existing literature and contribute new insights to the field.

Interpretation of Findings

The analysis revealed that male-targeted advertisements use fewer words and more straightforward language structures, focusing on the product's practical aspects, such as ingredients and efficacy. This reflects traditional masculine stereotypes of practicality and straightforwardness. In contrast, female-targeted advertisements use more descriptive language and focus on the experiential benefits of the product, such as improved skin resilience, catering to the stereotype of women being more concerned with beauty and self-care experiences. The visual elements in advertisements further highlight gender differences. Female advertisements often feature models prominently, suggesting that the model's appearance is integral to conveying the product's benefits. This aligns with the societal expectation that women's beauty is central to their identity. On the other hand, male advertisements focus on the product itself, implying that men are more influenced by the product's functional attributes rather than its associative image. Color choices also play a significant role in reinforcing gender norms. The use of harmonious and pastel colors in female advertisements versus bold and contrasting colors in male advertisements underscores the stereotypical association of women with softness and men with strength and impact. This differentiation in color schemes supports Piller's (2003) observation that advertising language has shifted from mere linguistic borrowings to more nuanced visual and contextual elements.

Relationship to Existing Literature

The findings resonate with the existing literature on gendered language in advertising. Stern (1993) emphasized the importance of identifying gendered text in advertisements, a concept reflected in the study's distinct linguistic strategies. For example, the use of phrases like "PROTECT YOUR GLOW" in female-targeted advertisements and "Simple. Smart. Straightforward" in male-targeted ones highlights the differential approach in addressing male and female consumers, supporting Simon's (1996) assertion that word choice and tone are crucial in constructing gendered messages. The findings align with Koslow et al.'s (1994) exploration of language effects in ethnic advertising, extending their ideas to gender-specific contexts. This study confirms that gendered language adapts to cultural contexts and gender expectations, with male advertisements employing direct language. In contrast, female advertisements use more elaborate and emotive expressions. The visual analysis also supports Motschenbacher's (2010) poststructuralist perspective on gender and visual identity. The consistent use of color schemes, model presentation, and product placement in gender-specific advertisements demonstrates how visual elements are meticulously designed to reinforce heteronormativity and gender binarism.

Implications for Marketing and Gender Equality

The findings of this study have significant implications for marketing strategies and the promotion of gender equality. Advertisers and brands need to be conscious of the stereotypes they may be perpetuating through the use of gendered language and visual elements in their advertisements. By adopting more inclusive marketing approaches, they can contribute to breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

One of the key takeaways from this study is the stark difference in language used in male-targeted versus female-targeted advertisements. Male advertisements tend to use fewer words and more straightforward language, focusing on the practical aspects of the product. In contrast, female advertisements use more descriptive and emotive language, emphasizing experiential benefits. Brands should consider adopting a more balanced approach, using neutral and inclusive language. For instance, instead of highlighting traditional masculine traits such as "strength" or "simplicity," advertisements could focus on universal benefits like "effectiveness" and "quality," which appeal to all genders.

The visual elements of advertisements also play a crucial role in reinforcing or challenging gender norms. This study found that female-targeted advertisements often feature models prominently, while male-targeted advertisements focus more on the product. To promote gender equality, brands could diversify their visual strategies by featuring a more comprehensive range of models that do not adhere to traditional gender roles. Additionally, presenting products to emphasize their benefits to all users, regardless of gender, can help dismantle stereotypes. For example, showcasing both men and women using the same skincare product can normalize the idea that skincare is essential for everyone.

Color choices in advertisements also contribute to gender stereotyping. Using pastel and harmonious colors in female-targeted advertisements versus bold and contrasting colors in male-targeted ones reinforces traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. Brands should experiment with more neutral and varied color palettes that do not cater to specific gender norms. This can help create a more inclusive visual identity that appeals to a broader audience. For instance, using a mix of colors traditionally associated with both genders in a single advertisement can subtly challenge the viewer's perceptions and promote inclusivity.

Marketing campaigns should be designed to be inclusive and gender-neutral. This involves the language, visuals, overall message, and branding. Campaigns focusing on universal themes such as self-care, health, and well-being can appeal to a diverse audience. For example, a campaign emphasizing skincare benefits for maintaining healthy skin, regardless of gender, can be more inclusive and effective. Brands like Clinique can lead by example by creating advertisements highlighting skincare's importance for everyone, promoting a more inclusive and diverse image.

Brands have a powerful platform to influence societal norms and perceptions. By consciously avoiding gender stereotypes and promoting messages of equality, they can contribute to broader social change. This involves critically assessing all aspects of advertising, from the choice of words and images to the overall narrative. Brands should aim to create advertisements that empower all individuals and promote positive representations of all genders. For instance, avoiding language that implies superiority or inferiority based on gender and instead focusing on individual needs and preferences can help promote gender equality.

As Ridgway et al. (2024) pointed out, simply altering gendered language may not be sufficient to achieve gender diversity. A more systematic approach is necessary, which includes revising recruitment and retention strategies within the marketing and advertising industry. Ensuring that diverse voices are represented in the creative process can lead to more inclusive and innovative advertising. Brands should invest in training and development programs emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion and creating a workplace culture that values and promotes gender equality.

Conclusion
Summary of Findings
For the analysis of men and women of Clinique skin care products, we can conclude that, first of all, in terms of language selection, male product advertisements tend to use fewer words and more superficial language structures. Women's product advertisements tend to use more words to describe the product's use and efficacy. This also reflects that male consumers pay more attention to the product and its ingredients. In contrast, female consumers care more about the product's feeling of use and efficacy. The second is the visual display in the advertisement. According to the findings, we know there are no male product advertisement models to display the product, but we choose to put the product itself first. On the contrary, in female product advertisements, the model replaces the product in its main location. It can be seen that models rarely influence the purchasing tendency of male consumers, while female consumers will desire to purchase through the display of models. Moreover, the color matching of male product advertisements is also bolder, while the colors in female advertisements tend to use the same color system to achieve unity. It can be seen that male consumers may be affected by the visual impact, while female consumers are more inclined to color harmony.

Implications for Practice
This study underscores the significant role of advertising in shaping societal perceptions of gender, emphasizing the need for marketing strategies that promote gender equality and challenge prevailing stereotypes. By adopting gender-neutral language and visuals, brands can play a pivotal role in breaking traditional gender norms. Instead of reinforcing strength and resilience as exclusively male traits, these attributes could be depicted as universal and

applicable across all advertisements, promoting a more inclusive understanding of gender roles.

Diversifying visual strategies, such as incorporating a broader range of models in terms of gender identity, age, race, and body type, extends beyond mere marketing ethics; it contributes to the ongoing academic discourse in gender studies. By challenging conventional beauty standards and gender norms, these practices can provide rich data for gender studies research, offering insights into how societal norms evolve in response to changes in media representation. Furthermore, employing neutral and varied color palettes can dismantle subtle cues reinforcing gender stereotypes, providing a practical application of theories that advocate for gender fluidity and inclusivity.

In the context of gender studies, the implications of this research are profound. It suggests avenues for interdisciplinary collaboration between marketers and gender researchers to design and study campaigns that consciously avoid perpetuating stereotypes. Such collaborations can lead to developing new theoretical frameworks that better understand the interplay between consumer behavior and gender identity. Additionally, educational campaigns highlighting the importance of breaking down gender barriers can serve as live case studies for examining the impact of such initiatives in real-time, offering empirical data that can enrich academic theories and discussions.

Engagement with consumers to gain feedback on advertising's impact on gender perception can also guide future gender studies research, providing a basis for empirical studies that explore the long-term effects of inclusive advertising on societal gender norms. Training marketing teams in gender sensitivity not only ensures the practical application of gender studies' theoretical insights but also enriches the professional practice, making it a potent tool for societal change.

Through these integrated efforts, the bridge between commercial interests and academic research in gender studies can be strengthened, leading to more effective strategies that promote both market success and social progress in understanding and implementing gender equality.

Limitations and Recommendations
While this study provides deep insights into the gendered language and visual elements in Clinique skincare advertisements, it is primarily qualitative. It focuses on a specific series of products from one brand. This may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider combining quantitative and qualitative methods to validate these findings across a broader range of products and brands. The study's focus on the Malaysian market may also not capture the full spectrum of global advertising strategies.

Future research could explore the impact of gendered advertisements on consumer behavior through surveys or experiments to provide more comprehensive insights. Cross-cultural comparisons of gendered language in skincare advertising would enhance understanding of how cultural norms influence gender representation. Additionally, examining the long-term effects of inclusive and gender-neutral advertising on brand loyalty and consumer perceptions would be valuable.

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