

Lester's Multi-Layered Communication Perspectives of Skincare Advertisement on X (Formerly Twitter) By Top Malaysian Brands

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.102100078>

Received: 15 July 2026; Accepted: 20 July 2026; Published: 25 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the communication strategies employed in skincare advertisements posted on X (formerly Twitter) by top brands in Malaysia. Using Paul Martin Lester's (2013) six perspectives of communication which include personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, and critical, this research analyses 200 advertisements selected through purposive sampling based on high engagement within the last three years. The study aims to identify common keywords and themes associated with each perspective, conduct thematic analysis, and provide contextual examples. Findings reveal that the advertisements frequently leverage Personal, Technical, and Ethical perspectives to connect with consumers compared to the other remaining perspectives - Cultural, Critical, and Historical Perspectives. The research highlights how multilayered elements in skincare advertising influence consumer perception and behaviour in Malaysia's unique cultural context. Theoretically, this study contributes to understanding visual and non-visual communication aspects in advertising by applying Lester's model to postings of digital advertisements on social media. Practically, it offers insights for brands to refine their advertising strategies. Future research could explore similar analyses in other countries or industries to broaden understanding of visual communication dynamics.

Keywords: Skincare advertising; Communication strategies; X/Twitter; Lester's six perspectives of communication; Consumer perception.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, social media platforms like X have become pivotal for brands to engage with consumers. Skincare brands rely heavily on visual, rhetorical, and digital content to promote their products and connect with their audience. Multi-modal communication is a fundamental aspect of skincare advertisements, using images, colors, and symbols to convey product efficacy and appeal to emotions. Rhetorical strategies in these ads promote ideals like agelessness and flawlessness, influencing consumer perceptions and decisions in the beauty industry (Ellison, 2014; Wahyuni & Ayomi, 2024). Vibrant images of radiant, poreless skin or transformative before-and-after sequences not only highlight the promised results but also evoke a sense of aspiration and confidence in viewers by visually narrating a journey from imperfection to perfection. These elements create an emotional bond, encouraging consumers to envision themselves achieving similar beauty

standards through the product. Mohamad et al. () added that all appeals can be rhetorically created through the demonstration of persuasive communication through the interaction of logical, ethical, and emotional resources. These can be visible across lexical, sentential, and textual levels. Hence, these elements are also possibly reflected in the appeals of advertisements.

Skincare advertisements on X (formerly Twitter) by top Malaysian brands utilize the platform's dynamic features for targeted engagement and viral marketing. Studies highlight how social media advertising elements drive purchase intentions among Malaysian consumers, with advertisement components significantly impacting buying behavior for skincare products (Yeo et al., 2020; Jan et al., 2019). These include short, captivating video clips demonstrating quick application routines or user-generated content featuring local influencers, which build relatability by showcasing real-life transformations tailored to diverse Malaysian skin types and climates. This approach fosters community discussions and shares, amplifying brand visibility and prompting immediate interactions like likes and retweets that convert to sales.

To explore the elements of these advertisements, this study focuses on the rhetorical communication strategies used in skincare advertisements posted on X by top brands in Malaysia. By applying Lester's (2013) six perspectives of visual communication - personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, and critical - this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these advertisements are crafted to influence consumer behaviour.

Problem Statement

Malaysia's skincare market is experiencing significant growth, with consumers increasingly reliant on social media platforms like X for product discovery and inspiration (Yeo et al., 2020). However, there is a critical need for research specifically dissecting the communication strategies employed within skincare advertisements on X in this dynamic market. While studies acknowledge the impact of advertisement components on purchase intentions for skincare in Malaysia (Jan et al., 2019), they often neglect a focused analysis of the nuanced visual and rhetorical elements such as imagery, color, rhetoric, and symbolism, making it central to conveying product efficacy and emotional appeal on this platform. This oversight is pronounced given Malaysia's distinct cultural characteristics, which likely shape advertisement reception, yet remain underexplored in the context of X-based visual marketing.

Applying Lester's (2013) multi-perspective framework (personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, critical) offers potential for holistic analysis but reveals limitations in existing applications to general advertising research. Recent studies applying similar frameworks often encounter issues with cultural specificity and ethical considerations. For instance, analyses of beauty representations in skincare ads highlight struggles to balance aspirational imagery and rhetorical content with critical perspectives on unrealistic standards, sometimes overlooking local cultural nuances in favour of global themes (Wahyuni & Ayomi, 2024). Furthermore, research on controversial tactics like shockvertising underscores the ethical complexities and varying audience interpretations (personal and ethical perspectives) that frameworks must adequately capture across diverse contexts like Malaysia, which remain insufficiently addressed (Abd Rahman et al., 2024). Thus, there is a need for more in-depth research which can cater to the nuances and intricacies of skin care related advertisements in a specific context.

Therefore, this study attempted to address these research concerns by employing Lester's (2013) theoretical framework from a different angle and approach by performing a detailed analysis of visual elements in skincare advertisements posted on X by top Malaysian brands. It specifically investigates how visual rhetoric (e.g., transformative narratives, influencer content) conveys meaning and influences audiences within Malaysia's unique socio-cultural and market environment, themes inadequately explored in prior platform-specific research (Yeo et al., 2020). By examining the interplay of perspectives like the cultural (Malaysian beauty norms) and critical (deconstructing ideals), this research aims to move beyond general effectiveness metrics, providing actionable insights for brands to refine culturally resonant visual strategies and contribute meaningfully to visual communication theory in social media advertising within emerging markets.

Research Questions and Aim

The study is guided by three open-ended research questions:

RQ1: What are the most common keywords associated with each of Lester's six perspectives (personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, critical) in skincare advertisements posted on X by top brands in Malaysia?

RQ2: What major themes emerge from the thematic analysis of these advertisements when viewed through the lens of Lester's six perspectives, and their relationships with each other?

RQ3: What are some contextual examples of advertisements that illustrate each major theme identified across Lester's six perspectives?

These questions aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of visual communication strategies, focusing on frequency, thematic depth, and contextual relevance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework: Lester's Six Perspectives

Paul Martin Lester's (2013) multi-perspective model of communication provides a comprehensive framework for analysing visual messages. This multidimensional approach is particularly potent for dissecting advertisements because it moves beyond superficial aesthetics to uncover the layered strategies and meanings embedded within them. By systematically examining an advertisement through these distinct yet interconnected lenses, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of how the ad functions visually and rhetorically to persuade, inform, and connect with its target audience.

The framework's strength lies in its ability to reveal the complex interplay between the creator's intent, the technical execution, the cultural context, and the ethical implications inherent in any visual promotional effort. The six perspectives are:

Table 1: Theoretical Framework: Lester's Six Perspectives

PERSPECTIVES	DESCRIPTION
Personal Perspective	How the advertisement appeals to individual viewers' personal experiences, emotions, or identities
Historical Perspective	How the advertisement references or is influenced by historical events, trends, or styles.
Technical Perspective	The technical aspects of the advertisement, such as production quality, use of technology, or visual effects.
Ethical Perspective	The moral and ethical considerations in the advertisement, including truthfulness, respect for diversity, and social responsibility.
Cultural Perspective	How the advertisement reflects or challenges cultural norms, values, and symbols in Malaysia.
Critical Perspective	How the advertisement might be critiqued from a societal point of view, considering issues like gender stereotypes, consumerism, or environmental impact.

Personal perspective is applied to advertisements by analysing how the advertisement appeals to individual viewers' personal experiences, emotions, identities, or aspirations (e.g., evoking desire, nostalgia, self-doubt, or confidence through relatable imagery or narratives). As for Historical Perspective, it is used to examine how the advertisement references, revives, or is influenced by historical events, artistic trends, advertising styles, or societal norms (e.g., using vintage aesthetics, referencing past campaigns, or challenging outdated beauty ideals). Technical Perspective focuses on the technical aspects of the advertisement's creation and presentation, such as font size and style, content technicality, camera work, lighting, editing, special effects, graphic design, platform-specific features (e.g., X's video formats), and overall production quality.

Ethical Perspective evaluates the moral and ethical considerations within the advertisement, including its truthfulness (claims vs. reality), respect for diversity (representation of race, age, body type), social responsibility (promoting unrealistic standards), and avoidance of harmful stereotypes. Cultural Perspective investigates how the advertisement reflects, reinforces, or challenges the specific cultural norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and symbols prevalent in its target market, particularly within the Malaysian context (e.g., interpretations of beauty, modesty, religious sensitivities, local symbolism). Critical Perspective critiques the advertisement from a broader societal viewpoint, considering its potential impact on issues like perpetuating gender stereotypes, promoting excessive consumerism, reinforcing unattainable beauty standards, or overlooking environmental/sustainability concerns in its messaging. This ethical dimension is particularly relevant to skincare advertising because ethos-oriented resources are associated with credibility, competence, authority, and respect toward readers or audiences (Mohamad et al., 2023).

The Multilayered and Holistic Role of Lester's Model in Advertisements

This model is particularly useful for analysing advertisements because it allows for a holistic understanding of how multi-layered elements convey meaning and influence audiences. Lester's framework was identified to be used in the past studies, focusing on visual communication theories relevant to advertising, with his model being a key reference in studies on advertisements (Lester, 2013; Abd. Rahman, 2024). This is supported by Yu et al. (2022) who conducted on-the-spot investigation and analysis of print advertisements in the media environment, to explore the communication design ideas in print advertisements. Their experiment showed that for different groups of people, the acceptance of print advertisements in the new media environment is not the same.

Furthermore, it can be argued that optimizing multi-layered communication design is crucial for improving the quality of digital advertising, promoting the advertising media industry. The digital transformation in marketing, especially for mobile phones, revolves around adapting visual and textual elements to fit local cultures (Arshad & Naseer, 2019). By combining powerful images, concise text, national celebrities, and localized information such as language and currency, marketers effectively address cross-cultural communication challenges and enhance consumer engagement and advertisement effectiveness. Multi-dimensional digital communication design effectively increases the effect of publicity in online advertising, improving advertising effectiveness (Zhang, 2021). At its heart, these perspectives from various past authors on the significant role of visual communication underscore that visuals are powerful semiotic tools being the carriers of meaning that shape perceptions, behaviors, and economies but their effectiveness hinges on holistic analysis (Lester, 2013), audience-tailored design (Yu et al., 2022), and continuous localisation approach (Arshad & Naseer, 2019).

Past Studies on Visual Communication in Advertisements

Several studies have explored various aspects of advertisement analysis, though few have specifically used Lester's model. Segijn et al. (2024) investigated the technical evolution of digital advertisements. The researcher noted the increasing use of high-quality visuals and interactive elements to engage audiences. These innovations maximize audience engagement and allow brands to deliver more personalized, memorable, and effective advertising experiences. However, the growing reliance on advanced technologies also raises new challenges around consumer data privacy and ethical advertising practices.

Fahmy et al. (2020) examined the cultural impact of various types of advertisements in Malaysia. It was discovered that local brands often incorporate traditional Malaysian elements to resonate with consumers. In addition, Malaysian local brands frequently incorporate traditional cultural and religious elements in their advertisements to create a strong connection with consumers by reflecting their identity, values, and social norms. In terms of Technological and Creative Expertise, one of the challenges from this study was to create culturally relevant visuals that are simultaneously appealing and respectful and requires mastery of both creative skills and deep understanding of Malaysian society, adding complexity for advertisers.

Some past studies have highlighted the critical role of ethical marketing and product quality perception in shaping consumer-brand relationships and fostering corporate brand loyalty, while also cautioning against misleading advertising practices that can undermine consumer trust and ethical consumption behaviors. Lee and Jin (2019) examined whether the quality and consumer-perceived product quality of a consumer-brand relationship affects corporate brand loyalty. Data from a panel of 1,200 consumers who had multiple experiences with a company's products and brands were used. It was found that Skincare advertisements sometimes exaggerate product benefits or make unsubstantiated claims, which can mislead consumers and erode trust in brands. Ethical marketing requires transparency and accuracy in advertising content to avoid deceiving consumers (Chang, 2019; Lee & Jin, 2019). Chang (2019) further maintains that claims in advertising, when not substantiated, can also mislead consumers and affect their ethical consumption behaviors. Thus, misleading advertising and exaggerated claims not only damage consumer trust but also negatively influence consumers' ethical purchasing decisions, underscoring the importance of honesty and transparency in marketing.

Furthermore, some research specifically within the Malaysian skincare context underscores the critical interplay of cultural and ethical perspectives in visual communication. Nielsen (2021), analysing studies on advertising effectiveness drivers, found that Creative quality, which heavily relies on compelling and well-designed visual content, remains the most important factor driving sales lift in advertising campaigns. Culturally resonant visuals significantly boost engagement and recall among Malaysian audiences, yet ethical pitfalls remain prevalent. Complementing this, Wahyuni and Ayomi (2024), analyze how beauty is represented in 3 L'Oréal Paris skincare advertisements sourced from L'Oréal Paris's official YouTube account. The study focused on the visual and verbal signs that communicate idealized beauty standards. Visual elements such as the choice of models, colors, and imagery emphasize skin that is blemish-free and well-maintained, reinforcing the ideal of being flawless. The interplay of verbal and non-verbal signs in the ads crafts a compelling message of inclusive beauty, which transcends narrow cultural or racial standards. This study provides insights into the strategic use of visual signs in advertising to communicate beauty ideals while embracing multicultural representation.

Further studies highlight the significant impact of personal and critical perspectives on consumer response to skincare visuals. Abd Rahman et al. (2024) explored Malaysian viewers' interpretations of controversial "shockvertising" tactics based on Lester's Six Perspectives in Visual Communication theory, which examines personal, historical, technical, cultural, ethical, and critical perspectives. The study used a quantitative approach with 250 respondents who rated their perceptions of a "SlimmeWhite" skincare TV advertisement. The sample represents viewers who have seen the controversial advertisement. The findings indicated that personal, technical, and ethical perspectives most significantly influenced viewers' attitudes toward the advertisement and were key factors contributing to the perception of controversy. (Abd Rahman et al., 2024) Technical aspects such as visual style, production quality, and attention-grabbing elements played a major role in viewer responses. (Abd Rahman et al., 2024) However, Excessive focus on visual appeal can sometimes overshadow the core message, making ads memorable for their looks but weak in conveying substantive content. Visual communication plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer engagement and strengthening brand relationships on social networking sites. A quantitative study Kujur and Singh (2020) using survey methods examined how different types of visual content, that is informative, entertaining, and rewarding, impact users interacting with brands on platforms like Facebook. By analyzing responses with advanced modeling techniques, the research found that compelling and relevant visuals significantly boost consumer interaction and loyalty. However, the fast pace of social media and diverse audience preferences present ongoing challenges for maintaining user interest. Additionally, focusing on a single platform limits the generalizability

of the findings, indicating the need for broader exploration across various social media channels. Overall, effectively tailored visual content is essential for successful digital marketing and building strong connections between consumers and brands.

Based on the discussion of the past studies, it can be concluded that cultural and ethical factors are crucial in advertising, with studies highlighting the use of traditional Malaysian elements to foster strong consumer-brand connections, while ethical marketing emphasizes honesty to avoid misleading claims that damage trust and influence ethical consumption (Fahmy et al., 2020; Chang, 2019; Lee & Jin, 2019). The reviewed past studies provide valuable insights into specific facets of advertisement analysis, that is cultural resonance (Fahmy et al., 2020; Nielsen, 2021), ethical concerns (Chang, 2019; Wahyuni & Ayomi, 2024), technical execution (Segijn et al., 2024), personal impact, and critical reception (Abd Rahman & Mohamad, 2024) in which they remain fragmented, examining individual perspectives in isolation. None integrate Lester's (2013) comprehensive multi-perspective framework to holistically dissect how these dimensions (personal, historical, technical, ethical, cultural, critical) interact within a single advertisement, particularly within the dynamic context of skincare marketing on X in Malaysia.

There has been a shift and trend towards more personalized and culturally relevant advertising on social media. Brands are increasingly using data analytics to tailor their messages to specific demographics, including in Malaysia. Nielsen (2021) maintains that Malaysian consumers value authenticity and transparency in skincare advertising, particularly on social media platforms. These trends were identified through recent articles and reports, ensuring alignment with the current market dynamics starting 2025. Therefore, the present research aims to bridge this gap by systematically applying Lester's framework to analyze skincare advertisements on X.

METHOD

This research was conducted based on descriptively quantitative, qualitative, and thematic research design as the researcher attempted to investigate the multidimensional and multi-layered perspectives of communication in digital advertisements. The investigation was guided by Lester's (2013) six perspectives of visual communication, which provide a structured framework for analyzing the advertisements. This approach was chosen to allow for deep, interpretive analysis of visual content, aligning with the qualitative nature of the study.

The sample consists of 200 visual advertisements selected from the top 10 skincare brands in Malaysia with high engagement on X platform: Lumi Beauty, Jane Chuck, Cuura, Kayman Beauty, Nita Cosmetics, Confidence Cosmetics, Simplisiti, dUck Cosmetics, Elianto, and Kamelia Cosmetics. These brands were identified through searches for "top 10 skincare brands in Malaysia" on platforms like Buro247.my and Engkah.com, ensuring relevance to the Malaysian market as of August 2025. Advertisements were sourced from the brands' official X accounts and selected based on high engagement (total likes, retweets, quotes, and replies) within the last three years (from August 2022 to August 2025). Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the selected advertisements met the criteria of being visual, promotional, and relevant to skincare products, with high engagement defined as posts with significant interaction metrics, reflecting consumer interest.

To capture posts with the strongest consumer resonance, high-engagement advertisements were operationalized as those falling within the top quartile of total interactions (likes, retweets, quotes, and replies) per brand, after which two independent researchers coded the visual and textual elements in NVivo using Lester's six perspectives framework until a high level of inter-coder reliability was established. Inter-coder agreement was formally evaluated using Cohen's kappa (> 0.80), with any discrepancies resolved through iterative discussion to ensure consistent, objective categorization across the dataset. While qualitative research traditionally prioritizes contextual narrative, incorporating frequency counts allows for a systematic mapping of dominant communication patterns across a substantial visual corpus without reducing the analysis to pure statistics. However, because purposive sampling on X naturally favors viral, highly interactive media from established brands, the dataset inherently carries a sampling bias toward mainstream marketing strategies while potentially underrepresenting niche, emergent brands or subtle, low-engagement visual approaches.

In terms of the instrument, NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used for coding and analyzing the advertisements. Manual coding was performed to identify themes and keywords associated with each of Lester's six perspectives. For RQ1, frequency analysis was conducted to identify common keywords and themes. For RQ2, thematic analysis was used to identify major themes within each perspective. For RQ3, specific advertisements were selected as contextual examples to illustrate each major theme. The coding process involved creating nodes for each perspective and sub-nodes for specific themes or keywords identified during analysis, ensuring a systematic approach to qualitative data management.

Data collection involved retrieving posts from each brand's X account, filtering for visual advertisements (posts containing images or videos of products with promotional text), and selecting the top 20 by engagement for each brand, totaling 200 advertisements. The selection process considered posts from August 2022 to August 2025, ensuring alignment with the three-year criterion. For analysis, each advertisement was coded in NVivo based on the six perspectives. Frequency analysis was conducted for RQ1 to identify common keywords and themes, such as "you" for personal perspective or "natural" for ethical perspective. Thematic analysis was used for RQ2 to identify major themes and their correlations, such as combining personal and cultural appeals. For RQ3, specific advertisements were selected as contextual examples to illustrate each major theme, providing detailed descriptions of visual elements and messaging.

FINDINGS

Finding 1: Descriptive Frequency

After analysing 200 skincare advertisements, frequent keywords have been identified based on six perspectives by Lester (2013). To summarise the occurrences and instances of these keywords, a detailed table with each perspective, common keywords, and frequencies is presented as follows.

Table 2: Lester's Perspectives, Common Keywords, and Instance Frequencies

No.	Perspective	Common Keywords	Frequencies
1.	Personal (CP)	"You", "Your skin", "Feel", "Transform", "Personal care"	145 instances
2.	Technical (TP)	"Advanced", "Technology", "Innovation", "Formulation", "Science"	132 instances
3.	Ethical (EP)	"Safe", "Natural", "Clinically tested", "Cruelty-free", "Sustainable"	120 instances
4.	Cultural (CuP)	"Malaysian", "Tradition", "Local ingredients", "Cultural Beauty & Modesty"	110 instances
5.	Critical (CrP)	"Empowerment", "Self-love", "Inclusivity", "Body positivity", "Realistic beauty"	95 instances
6.	Historical (HP)	"Timeless", "Heritage", "Traditional", "Legacy"	78 instances

As shown in Table 2, Personal Perspective (PP) was portrayed through online digital advertisements with frequent use of second-person pronouns with 145 instances. These include pronouns such as "you" and "your" to evoke a direct sense of emotions in the viewers. The advertisements were identified to use these words with personalised tone and words which focused on creating the feeling of individual identity and personal transformation. Impactful technical words related to Technical Perspective (TP) with 132 instances such as "Advanced", "Technology", "Innovation", "Formulation", and "Science" were also used to illustrate the scientific and innovative advancements of the products, thus highlighting its effectiveness and credibility to the users. With a total of 120 instances, words related to Ethical Perspective (EP) were seen in the advertisements

through words such as "safe ", "natural," and "clinically tested," which are used to appeal to the users who would purchase products based on transparency, dependability, trust, as well as certifications.

In addition, the advertisements also incorporated Cultural Perspective (CuP) incorporated Malaysian religious, cultural, and traditional elements in their products through the usage of traditional or local ingredients as well as advertisement campaigns. The perspective was demonstrated with 110 instances to echo with consumers from local regions by applying terms such as "Malaysian", "herbal", and "tradition." Furthermore, the element of Critical Perspective (CrP) was also demonstrated in some advertisements addressing societal expectations, and issues by highlighting words connotating the ideas of "inclusivity", "self-love", and "positive body image". These are reflected through 95 instances of keywords such as "empowerment" and "self-confidence" in an attempt to challenge wrongly-believed beauty standards and norms. Finally, 78 instances of Historical Perspective (HP) were displayed by some advertisements by referencing historically-denoted words such as "timeless", "legacy" or "heritage", thus creating a feeling of continuity and trust.

It can be concluded from these findings that skincare brands in Malaysia mostly showed common words or key phrases frequently used to project personal, technical, and ethical appeals to the brand users as the most important perspectives. These rhetorical techniques in advertisements help connect with consumers at a deeper level. The frequencies of portraying these attributes related to technical advancements allow these brands to build trust, leading to their high engagement rates on social media platforms.

Finding 2: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of the 200 online advertisements on X platform involving two levels disclosed 1) several dominant themes across Lester's six perspectives and 2) Inter-connected Perspectives Formation through three relevant emerging concepts referred to as "Trust Triad" in this research.

Table 3: Lester's Six Perspectives and Identified Dominant Themes

No.	Perspective	Identified Dominant Themes
1.	Personal	Individuality, emotional appeal, and personal connection were mostly evident with digital advertisements characterising consumers as individual and unique users through their journeys of personal skincare routines. <i>(often accompanied with cultural elements for greater lingering impact)</i>
2.	Technical	High emphasis was placed on scientific advancements, innovative ingredients, and cutting-edge technology, with many advertisements highlighting research-backed claims or advanced formulations, correlating with ethical claims of safety.
3.	Ethical	Transparency in ingredients, cruelty-free claims, and sustainability were key themes, often aligning with cultural values of environmental responsibility and personal health.
4.	Cultural	Incorporation of Malaysian cultural elements, such as traditional patterns, local ingredients, or cultural symbols, was common, helping create a sense of familiarity and relevance, correlating with personal appeals for emotional connection to their roots.
5.	Historical	Advertisements frequently referenced traditional Malaysian skincare practices or historical beauty ideals, creating a sense of continuity and trust, often linking to ethical themes of heritage preservation.
6.	Critical	Some advertisements challenged traditional beauty standards by promoting inclusivity, diversity, and self-love, often tying to personal and cultural themes to address societal expectations.

Based on Table 3, it shows several important and dominant themes for each multi-layered perspective model by Lester (2013). Analysis of personal perspective revealed dominant themes which include individual, emotional, personal connections shown by the advertisements. Users were unique with their individual journeys in their skincare usage. To show the credibility of products, technical perspective of the products was also seen in the advertisements through the presentation of research claims and safety in using the products accompanied with the ethical information needed by consumers in terms of the ingredients, and its effect on the environment. These three perspectives indicate the attempt to make their products user-friendly with reliable undertones.

In addition, cultural and historical perspectives were demonstrated through traditions and heritage closely associated with Malaysian culture by connecting products with their roots as Malaysia is strongly rooted in their value for old folks' way of preserving their beauty. Being the least presented perspective, the critical element of the product advertisements were seen through the challenges by acknowledging inclusive, and diverse beliefs in product effectiveness and overcoming society expectations. Despite being the last three perspectives with the least occurrences, these perspectives remain relevant to the present age of digital age advertisement depending on the user types and target groups.

Table 4: Inter-perspective Formation of a "Trust Triad"

No.	Identified Themes	Correlated Perspectives		Emerging Concepts
1.	Emotional Feelings	Personal + Cultural	→	<i>Relatability</i>
2.	Credibility Values	Technical + Ethical	→	<i>Legitimacy</i>
3.	Progressive Features	Historical + Critical	→	<i>Relevance</i>

In addition, the deeper thematic analysis revealed three emerging concepts discovered through inter-perspective correlations in which Malaysian skincare brands demonstrated dual-layered and multi-layered perspectives in their advertisements, referred to as "Trust Triad". These elements created holistic narratives by projecting three different emerging senses which include 1) *Relatability*, 2) *Legitimacy*, and 3) *Relevance*. Emotional Anchors were identified through a combination of personal - cultural perspectives aiming to bring about a sense of relatability the main emotional driver. Advertisements by these brands incorporated personalisation with unique traditional elements with the idea of recasting and promoting the product through the emotionally-embedded and culturally-rooted narratives of storytelling to the users. The theme was also presented through a combination of credible features in terms of technical and ethical aspects to develop a sense of legitimacy and trust towards the products. Finally, an identified theme of progressive values was applied to create a sense of relevance through the combined elements of historical and critical perspectives.

Finding 3: Contextual Analysis

To understand and contextualise the occurrences of each perspective, specific examples were analysed and selected for each major theme. This assists with a more detailed view of occurring themes and emerging sub-themes reported in the previous analyses.

Table 5: Lester's Six Perspectives, Specific Contextual Examples, Engagement Notes

	Types of Perspectives	Contextual Examples	Meaning	Engagement Notes
1.	Personal Perspective	Lumi Beauty's advertisement promoted the tagline "Your skin, your story through a close-up of a person's face."	Promoting the importance of individuality and	Posted on X with high engagement

			emotional experience	in 2023.
2.	Technical Perspective	Cuura's advertisement underscored "clinically tested" ingredients with before-and-after facial images.	Emphasizing technical and scientific advantages	Noted for high engagement in 2022.
3.	Ethical Perspective	Nita Cosmetics' advertisement foregrounded the use of "100% natural ingredients" and a cruelty-free concept.	Drawing customers' attention to be consciously ethical users	Posted with strong interaction metrics in 2023.
4.	Cultural Perspective	Simplisiti's advertisement presented the founder as the product user with a moderate and traditional Malay woman undertone and modern packaging.	Upholding Malaysian culture as an Islamic and progressive beauty reference	Posted with a strong engagement rate in 2024.
5.	Historical Perspective	Kayman Beauty's advertisement blended "ancient Malaysian beauty secrets" with present-day scientific formulations.	Fusing tradition with modern innovation	Posted with increased likes and retweets in 2024.
6.	Critical Perspective	Confidence Cosmetics' advertisement campaign displayed several models with different skin tones and body types.	Promoting a sense of inclusivity and self-love	Posted with high engagement in 2025.

As shown in Table 5, six specific examples were presented for 6 different themes to contextualise the employment of Lester's (2013) perspectives in Malaysian skincare advertisements with high-engagement levels by popular Malaysian local brands on X platform. These examples of Malaysian skincare advertisements the different elements used to reflect various types of communication perspectives in a multidimensional but complex manner. One significant example of Personal Perspective (PP) is from Lumi Beauty in 2023 whose advertisement showed extreme close-ups of the model's skin textures accompanied with customer skincare stories in their attempt to create the impact of personal narratives in their ad campaign. Technical Perspective (TP) can be exemplified in the Cuura's advertisements which displayed before and after the usage of their clinically-proven products in their emphatic attempt of their scientific and technical advantage compared to other products.

An example of Cultural Perspective (CuP) is seen to be used by a popular brand founded by a well-known Malaysian singer, Siti Nurhaliza, by showcasing her SimpliSiti's brand advertisements in 2024 through a moderate and traditional Malay woman in trying to project the original beauty and modesty of Malaysia culture in their skincare routine with modern packaging. In 2024, Kayman Beauty mixed traditional and scientific elements in their advertisements through the visual placement of "*ramuan herba*" or herbal ingredients next to foregrounded shots showing the modern lab testing process, thus creating a visual element of Historical Perspective (HP) through a synergic combination between heritage and scientific evidence. The final contextual example involves the manifestation of Critical Perspective (CrP) shown by Confidence Cosmetics in 2025. They presented models of all ages with all sorts of skin types, tones, and body types in their attempt to promote the concept of inclusivity in their brand products.

When these examples were analysed in a holistic manner, they are a reflection of how important multi-layered choices of communication such as the use of close-ups, the projection of cultural symbols, the emphasis of technical proofs, and the varied types of models in conveying complex concepts and ideas in digital

advertisements through the lens of Lester's approach. These example advertisements campaign confirms the conscious and non-conscious employment of rhetorical and visual techniques used by popular Malaysian brands by balancing the concept of tradition with new ideas, the idea of individuality with inclusion, while meeting other needs such as ethical and technical needs where relevant. As a result, these selected campaigns showed authenticity and innovativeness through multifaceted approaches in their digital campaigns.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted nature of visual communication in skincare advertising on X in Malaysia. By applying Lester's six perspectives, we uncovered how brands use various strategies to connect with consumers on personal, cultural, and ethical levels while showcasing technical advancements. The personal and cultural perspectives were particularly prominent, reflecting Malaysia's emphasis on community and tradition, aligning with recent trends noted by Nielsen (2021) and Grazia Malaysia (2025). Ethical considerations, such as transparency and sustainability, were also significant, aligning with global trends toward conscious consumerism, as discussed by Chang (2019).

Campaigns depicting "personal skincare journeys" (e.g., acne recovery narratives) incorporated *local ingredients* like *pegaga* (centella), resonating with national identity while evoking personal pride being a tactic aligning with Fahmy et al.'s (2020) finding that *cultural personalization* boosts relatability in collectivist markets like Malaysia. This fusion was approved by consumers based on the highest levels of advertisement engagement. This conclusion underscores the effectiveness of this perspective to be utilised to forge greater bonds with their loyal consumers. Brands leveraged scientific claims (technical perspective) to substantiate sustainability pledges (ethical perspective), such as highlighting "biodegradable packaging tested in lab conditions", addressing rising eco-consciousness (Chang, 2019).

Technical-ethical and historical-critical linkages further established brand credibility while navigating societal expectations. Simultaneously, references to traditional practices (historical perspective) like *ramuan* herbalism were paired with inclusive casting (critical perspective), subtly challenging colonial beauty legacies while promoting local heritage. However, this incurred tension: heritage-focused ads risked tokenism if traditional elements were superficially added without authentic ethical action (Wahyuni & Ayomi, 2024) (Abd Rahman et al., 2025), revealing a key industry challenge.

The critical perspective signaled a pivotal shift toward socially conscious branding in Malaysia's market. Campaigns promoting diversity (e.g., featuring *tudung*-wearing models or mature users) or self-love explicitly countered Eurocentric ideals, correlating with higher percentage shares than product-centric ads (Nielsen, 2021). These ads often integrated personal testimonials (e.g., "My scars, my strength" narratives) to humanize critical messaging, demonstrating how brands like Confidence Cosmetics embedded societal critique into individual empowerment, making it a strategy, Abd Rahman & Mohamad (2024) linked to reduced consumer skepticism.

As for the context-related findings, personal perspective through extreme close-ups of diverse skin textures paired with user-generated testimonials shows visual intimacy fostered emotional bonds by inviting viewers to project their own narratives onto the product. This is a form of leveraging X's interactive features to amplify relatability (Yeo et al., 2020). Such tactics highlight advertisers' strategic emphasis on individual identity to drive engagement in a crowded market. The examples further illustrate how brands navigate Malaysia's unique cultural landscape through historically rooted or critically progressive visuals. (Abd Rahman et al., 2025) This duality honored Malaysia's beauty heritage while asserting modernity, being a tactic Fahmy et al. (2020) noted resonates deeply in postcolonial markets seeking cultural authenticity.

Conversely, Simplisiti's use of moderate islamic cultural perspective is shown by the founder as the model of the products, visually asserting the country's islamic cultural beauty with pride. While effective locally, such symbolism risks superficiality if disconnected from genuine values of the products, which is an ethical tension observed in Wahyuni and Ayomi's (2024) analysis of heritage commodification. Cuura's technical perspective leveraged stark before-after imagery and "clinically proven" data overlays (Segijn et al., 2024), using visual

"proof" to build trust in science-driven claims. Similarly, Nita Cosmetics' ethical perspective emphasized transparency via cruelty-free badges and ingredient close-ups, aligning with Chang's (2019) findings on rising Malaysian demand for responsible branding. While praised for challenging monolithic beauty standards (Abd Rahman & Mohamad, 2024), its high engagement also underscored consumer appetite for brands addressing social equity.

Theoretical Implication and Future Research Recommendation

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on visual communication by demonstrating the applicability of Lester's model in analyzing social media advertisements, building on Fahmy et al. (2020) and Segijn et al. (2024). It also provides insights into how cultural contexts influence advertising strategies, offering a nuanced view of Malaysia's market dynamics. Practically, brands can use these findings to refine their advertising approaches, focusing on elements that resonate most with Malaysian consumers, such as cultural relevance and ethical considerations, as observed in high-engagement posts from 2022 to 2025.

For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in other countries to compare how visual communication strategies differ across cultures, potentially expanding on the global trends identified. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of these strategies through consumer surveys or experiments could provide further insights, building on the methodological approaches of Segijn et al. (2024). Another avenue could be examining how emerging technologies like augmented reality influence visual communication in advertising, addressing the technical perspective in greater depth.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of a multiperspective approach in understanding visual communication in advertising. By integrating Lester's model with real-world data from X, it offers a nuanced view of how skincare brands in Malaysia engage with their audience through visual content, reflecting the current landscape of visual communication elements of skincare advertisements in 2025.

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