

VERBAL METAPHORS USED IN INDONESIA MALE SKINCARE PRODUCTS ADVERTISEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research examines into how metaphor appears in Indonesian men's facial ads to convey meanings about confidence and masculinity, and modern male identity. The research focuses on selected advertisements from skincare brands such as Kahf, Garnier Men, and Pond's Men, which are widely used in Indonesia. The study applies a qualitative descriptive approach using verbal metaphor theory as the main analytical frameworks. The results show that metaphors are commonly used in verbal forms. Verbal metaphors such as "fight acne," "control oil," and "face the world" conceptualize skincare as a form of struggle or battle. The dominant conceptual metaphor identified is "SKINCARE IS WAR," where skin problems are represented as enemies and skincare products as tools for victory. Furthermore, the study reveals that these metaphors do not only function as persuasive advertising strategies but also contribute to the construction of a cultural myth of modern masculinity. In accordance with this myth, a "real man" is someone who is confident, physically active, and attentive of personal grooming. Thus, skincare is repositioned from a traditionally feminine activity into an essential aspect of masculine identity. In conclusion, metaphor influences customer perception and reinforces societal connotations of masculinity in modern Indonesian society, which is why it is important in Indonesian men's facial marketing.

Keywords: *Advertisement; metaphor; skincare*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's skincare market has expanded quickly in recent years, especially in products that are specifically designed for men. The fact that male grooming is no longer viewed as strange or inappropriate shows how society attitudes have changed. Instead, preserving one's appearance is increasingly associated with professionalism, confidence, and a contemporary way of life. Companies employ more inventive promotional techniques to draw in male customers as the skincare industry becomes more competitive.

One of the most effective strategies used in advertising is metaphor. Advertisers can convey difficult concepts in an understandable and memorable way by using metaphor by linking one concept to another. In men's facial advertisements, metaphor is not only used as a linguistic tool but also as a visual strategy that shapes how masculinity is represented. For example, skin problems such as acne and oil are often

metaphorically described as “enemies,” whereas skincare products are described as “weapons” or “protective tools.” These representations create powerful emotional and psychological links that shape consumer perception.

Advertisements from brands such as Kahf, Garnier Men, and Pond’s Men illustrate that the concept of masculinity is formed through images of strength, control, and activity. Male characters are often depicted as athletes, professionals, or active individuals in urban environments. Through this portrayal, skincare is seen not just as a cosmetic product, but as an integral aspect of a man’s ability to perform and succeed in everyday life. This reflects a wider cultural change in which masculinity is no longer defined only by physical strength, but also by appearance and self-care.

Metaphor in advertising has been studied in the past, but little research has been done especially on its use in Indonesian men's facial care ads. The majority of current research typically focuses on general commercial discourses or women's beauty products. Therefore, through investigating how metaphor is employed to create meaning in Indonesian men's skincare advertisements, this study seeks to close this gap.

In light of this context, the study's main objective is to identify and analyze the various metaphors that are employed in certain Indonesian men's facial advertisements and to explain how these metaphors create meanings associated with masculinity and contemporary male identity. By doing this, this study enriches the disciplines of semiotics, linguistics, and advertising studies, particularly in terms of comprehending how language and visual communication in general influence societal perceptions of gender and identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Metaphors

Metaphor stands as crucial type of figurative language used in communication, literature, and marketing. As indicated by Aristotle, metaphor is a comparison between two different things that transfers meaning from one object to another. Aristotle described how metaphor helps people understand abstract ideas by translating them into more familiar concepts. Since then, metaphor has become an important subject in linguistic and communication studies.

In modern linguistics, the concept of metaphor was further developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book *Metaphors*. They maintained that metaphor is a style of thinking as much as a stylistic element of language. People comprehend abstract events through concrete experiences, according to their Cognitive Metaphor Theory. Advertisements that use phrases like “battle pollution” or “fight acne” illustrate how skin conditions are viewed as adversaries in a conflict. This concept explores the influence of metaphor on individuals' understanding and interpretation of everyday experiences.

Metaphor can broadly be categorized into two forms: verbal metaphor and visual metaphor. Verbal metaphor exists in spoken phrases, taglines, or written content, whereas visual metaphor is conveyed through pictures, hues, symbols, and other visual components. As stated by Charles Forceville, visual metaphor is prevalent in advertising due to its ability to evoke powerful emotions and persuasive impacts. Advertisements frequently combine verbal and visual metaphors to deliver messages more effectively and attract consumers’ attention.

Metaphor is seen as an effective strategy in advertising research because it creates emotional bonds between buyers and items. Advertisements tend to be more creative,

unforgettable, and impactful when metaphors are incorporated. For example, terms related to power, safety, and assurance are commonly found in skincare promotions to affect consumer attitudes. By using metaphorical expressions and visuals, marketers can shape the way audiences view identity, gender roles, and attractiveness.

According to these theories, metaphor is a crucial communication tool in advertising since it creates cultural identities and social meanings in addition to conveying facts. Therefore, studying metaphor in Indonesian men's facial advertisements is important to understand how language and visual depictions impact buyers and help form ideas about masculinity in modern culture.

Advertisement

Advertisement is a form of communication used by companies to promote products and influence consumer behaviour. It does not only provide information about a product, but also constructs meaning, values, and lifestyle representations. In modern society, advertisements play an important role in shaping public perception, especially through visual and narrative strategies.

The goal of ads is to capture the interest of the audience, spark their curiosity, and encourage them to take action. Additionally, societal and cultural values including gender roles, identity, and lifestyle are frequently reflected in commercials. As a result, advertising can be viewed as a social discourse as well as an economic tool. In modern society, advertising serves as an essential means of communication that markets products, influences buying choices, and molds general perceptions. The skincare market in Indonesia has grown significantly, particularly in goods aimed at men. Previously, facial-care products were often associated with women; however, changing lifestyles and social values have encouraged men to pay more attention to their appearance and personal care. As a result, many companies have created men's facial-care advertisements that emphasize masculinity, confidence, and modern identity in order to attract male consumers.

Skincare

The term "skincare" describes the methods and supplies used to preserve, shield, and enhance skin health. Facial wash products, hydrating lotions, sunblock, skin treatments, and various beauty formulations that enhance skin cleanliness, moisture retention, and safeguarding, and appearance are examples of skincare products. Dreno et al. (2016) state that skincare products perform a number of tasks, such as cleaning, calming, renewing, strengthening, and shielding the skin. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of a product is influenced by its ingredients, design, and purpose.

Skincare products have grown to be essential commodities in the beauty and personal care sector in addition to their practical uses. Their meanings might be connected to confidence, attractiveness, lifestyle, and social identity in addition to skin health and physical appearance. By presenting items through persuasive language, visual images, and symbolic representations, advertising plays a significant role in conveying these meanings.

Male faces that are clean, healthy, youthful, or handsome are often used in male skincare advertisements. These depictions can create links between skincare use and specific masculinity standards. For instance, Kenalemang-Palm (2023) shows how skincare ads aimed at males can simultaneously link skincare use to traditional masculine values while framing the male face as needing improvement. Therefore, male skincare advertising can be viewed as a communication tool that creates meanings

about male appearance and self-care in addition to being a way to promote cosmetic products.

METHOD

Research Design

The use and consequences of metaphors in Indonesian men's face wash advertising are investigated and analyzed in this study using a descriptive qualitative method. For this study, a descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate since it enables a thorough, methodical, and contextual analysis of how verbal metaphors create meaning and consumer perceptions in media texts.

Data Source and Selection Criteria

Digital video ads from the official YouTube channels of three of Indonesia's top men's face wash brands—Kahf, Pond's Men, and Garnier Men—serve as the main source of data for this study. Because these particular brands are the most well-known and frequently used items in the Indonesian men's grooming industry, they were chosen using a purposive sample technique. Verbal materials (spoken dialog, voiceovers, on-screen text) with metaphoric representations make up the corpus of data.

Because this study focuses on textual analysis of media content rather than human behavioral data, there are no traditional human respondents or participants involved. Instead, the "respondents" or subjects of analysis are the media texts themselves—specifically, the selected YouTube video advertisements. The target audience implied within these advertisements (Indonesian men aged 18–35) serves as the contextual reference point for evaluating the intended psychological and communicative effects of the metaphors utilized by the brands.

Research Instrument

The researcher (human instrument) is the main research tool in this qualitative investigation. Identification, observation, interpretation, and analysis of the complex nuances of metaphorical terms used in the advertisements are the primary responsibilities of the researcher. The researcher used a data categorization matrix based on recognized metaphorical analysis frameworks and an observation checklist to preserve objectivity and analytical accuracy. Verbal and visual clichés discovered throughout the videos were methodically recorded and categorized with the use of these technologies.

Data Collection Procedure

The method of gathering data adhered to a structured procedure consisting of three distinct stages, which are:

1. Search and Retrieval: Identifying and compiling active video advertisements from the official Indonesian YouTube channels of Kahf, Pond's Men, and Garnier Men.
2. Screening: Watching the collected videos to screen and select advertisements that explicitly utilize conceptual, textual, or visual metaphors to market their product benefits.
3. Transcription: Documenting all spoken elements, such as narrations, conversations, and textual elements or captions.

Data Analysis

The gathered data was processed using qualitative content analysis, specifically focusing on conceptual domain mapping. The analysis was executed through the following sequential steps:

1. Data Identification and Transcription

The researcher thoroughly examined the video recordings and electronic data information retrieved from YouTube. All verbal elements, including slogans (e.g., Pond's Men's "Sukses dimulai dari penampilan"), voiceovers, and YouTube descriptions (e.g., Kahf's "Wajah bersih, pikiran jernih, siap hadapi Jalan Yang Kupilih"), were transcribed verbatim into text.

2. Data Reduction and Coding

The unprocessed written data was filtered to isolate specific metaphorical expressions. Unrelated media components were eliminated and resulting only the structural tropes that represent skincare through non-skincare concepts. These expressions were then coded based on their underlying themes (e.g., life journey, combat/battle, and professional success).

3. Conceptual Domain Mapping

Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the isolated codes were systematically mapped from their Source Domains (the concrete concepts borrowed by the advertisement) to their Target Domains (the actual skincare product or benefit being promoted). The mapping was categorized as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1. The mapping

Skincare Brand	Advertisement Mapping
Kahf	Maps a broader life journey and mental clarity (Source Domain) onto the physical act of facial cleansing (Target Domain).
Garnier Men	Maps a physical combat against bacteria and rapid action (Source Domain) onto product effectiveness and acne prevention (Target Domain).
Pond's Men	Maps professional and social success (Source Domain) onto personal physical appearance (Target Domain).

4. Contextual and Identity Interpretation

The mapped metaphors were analyzed in relation to their socio-cultural context in Indonesia. The researcher interpreted how these linguistic and visual structures communicate deeper associations between men's grooming, male identity, and modern social aspirations.

5. Synthesis and Conclusion Drawing

In the final step, the differences and patterns across the three brands were synthesized. The researcher compared how each brand distinctively shapes the perception of masculinity and product efficacy, transforming these qualitative insights into the final research conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The three advertisements chosen for this analysis are Pond's Men Indonesia 30s TVC, Garnier Men Acno Fight, and Kahf Face Wash #JalanYangKupilih. Although all three

promote facial skincare items for men, they express different relationships among skincare, masculine identity, and societal aspirations. The Kahf commercial links washing one's face to a more comprehensive life journey. "*Wajah bersih, pikiran jernih, siap hadapi Jalan Yang Kupilih*" ("Clean face, clear mind, ready to face the path I choose") is its YouTube description, which links having a clear head and a clean face to being prepared to confront one's chosen road.

The Garnier Men Acno Fight commercial highlights the battle against germs that cause acne and makes claims about the product's quick action and efficacy. The employment of both verbal and visual components to convey these product benefits is documented in the public marketing description and a published multimodal study. The Pond's Men commercial, on the other hand, clearly links success and appearance with the slogan "*Sukses dimulai dari penampilan*" ("Success begins with appearance").

Verbal and Visual Metaphors Used in Indonesian Men's Facial Skincare Advertisement

Kahf face wash #JalanYangKupilih

The Kahf advertisement's spoken language offers a strong foundation for recognizing conceptual analogies. The phrase "*Jalan Yang Kupilih*" ("The Path I Chose") utilizes the idea of a road or pathway to represent an individual's choices and direction in life. In this situation, the path is seen as a symbol for self-improvement, responsibility, and the chase of personal goals instead of merely a literal roadway. The phrase "*Wajah bersih, pikiran jernih*" ("Clean face, clear mind") creates a connection between having a tidy appearance and possessing a clear mindset. While a clean face is a literal product benefit, a clear mind represents a broader psychological state. Putting these things together makes people think that taking care of your skin is linked to feeling mentally prepared and confident. The following conceptual mappings can therefore be proposed as in Table 2.

Table 2. Conceptual metaphor mapping of Kahf face wash

The concept	Description
LIFE IS A JOURNEY	life is seen as a journey that individuals choose and pursue.
MENTAL CLARITY IS PHYSICAL CLEANLINESS	The state of having a clean face relates to mental clarity.
SKINCARE IS PREPARATION FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES	cleaning one's face is presented as a way to get ready for daily obligations.

The first mapping is the clearest metaphorical candidate. The second is a potential conceptual connection that necessitates additional contextual examination, while the third signifies a more extensive reading of the advertisement's persuasive message.

Garnier men acno fight

The Garnier Men Acno Fight commercial employs words related to combating and conquering skin issues. According to a multimodal analysis of the advertising, the phrases "*melawan jerawat*" and "*bunuh kuman penyebab jerawat*" frame acne and the bacteria that cause it as issues that need to be resolved. This language suggests the conceptual metaphor:

SKIN PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES.

In this metaphor, acne is shown as an enemy and the skincare product as a tool to combat it. By showing the product as a tool in the fight against a skin problem, the word "*melawan*" (to fight) gives it a purpose that goes beyond just cleaning. Separating the literal product claim from the metaphorical framing can be done. The language of fighting offers a simple, active way for customers to understand the product's stated function, which addresses acne-related issues.

The advertisement also employs verbal claims such as "*Gue dan jutaan cowok udah buktiin*" ("Me and millions of guys have proven it") and "*Buktikan sendiri*" ("Prove it yourself"), which invite consumers to consider other users' experiences and try the product themselves. These expressions are persuasive appeals, although they are not necessarily metaphors in themselves.

Pond's Men Indonesia 30s TVC

The phrase "*Sukses dimulai dari penampilan*" ("Success begins with appearance") appears in the Pond's Men advertisement. This assertion establishes a connection between achievement and physical attractiveness. Unlike the more obvious journey metaphor in Kahf or the fighting metaphor in Garnier Men, the Pond's Men tagline is not intrinsically metaphorical. At first, it can be seen as a relationship between appearance and social achievement. It could be a metaphor or not, depending on the broader context and whether appearance is used to symbolize a more generic idea, such as competence, confidence, or social value. A possible conceptual mapping to investigate is:

GOOD APPEARANCE IS A RESOURCE FOR SUCCESS.

According to this concept, a person's look can be a tool for achieving their social or professional objectives. It is not a literal claim that skincare ensures success; rather, it is a suggested analytical interpretation. The visual study should look at how the commercial portrays masculine looks and whether it links grooming to confidence, social acceptance, or professional success. Instead of being deduced only from the tagline, these relationships must be developed from the actual scenes (see table 3).

Table 3. Comparative table among three advertisements below.

Advertisement	Main verbal pattern	Metaphor
Kahf	Life-path language and the association between a clean face and a clear mind	Life is a journey
Garnier Men	Fighting acne and getting clear of microorganisms that cause it	Skin problems are enemies
Pond's Men	Linking appearance with success	Good appearance is a resource for success.

The preliminary comparison shows that the advertisements use different conceptual frames: personal journey, combat against skin problems, and appearance as a resource for achievement.

Meanings of Metaphors Used in Indonesian Men's Facial Skincare Advertisements

The actual purpose of facial cleanliness is not the only connotation the metaphor conveys. The commercials can link skincare to social goals, problem-solving, and personal growth through spoken words and their interaction with visuals.

Kahf: Skincare as personal readiness

The phrase "*Jalan Yang Kupilih*" ("The Path I Chose") in the Kahf commercial shows life as a journey shaped by the choice, we make. "*Wajah bersih, pikiran jernih*" ("Clean face, clear mind") connects clean skin with a clear mind. One interpretation of the combined message is that skincare is one aspect of personal preparation. In the advertisement's larger narrative, facial cleansing is linked to being prepared to meet life's obstacles rather than just being a simple hygiene practice. Because it places skincare inside a larger lifestyle narrative, the significance of this relationship is significant. The consumer is invited to see the product as compatible with personal ambition and everyday responsibilities.

Garnier Men: Skincare as a means of overcoming problems

Garnier Men Acne Fight uses words about combating acne and getting rid of acne-causing germs to build a problem-solution relationship. Skin issues are framed by the combat metaphor as challenges that can be actively overcome. The product is marketed as a useful tool for overcoming these challenges. The advertised product may seem practical, action-oriented, and pertinent to men's daily issues as a result of this framing. The declared product purpose and the metaphorical language of struggle and victory combine to create the persuasive meaning. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the advertisement's meaning should remain distinct from the scientific validity of individual efficacy claims, which would require separate evidence.

Pond's Men: Skincare as a resource for social achievement

The Pond's Men tagline, "*Sukses dimulai dari penampilan*," ("Success begins with appearance") creates a link between success and looks. One interpretation of the main message of the advertising is that it presents physical appearance as a potentially useful asset in social situations. One could argue that having a well-groomed appearance enhances one's confidence or how they are perceived by others. A crucial point is also raised by this association: does the commercial only encourage personal maintenance, or does it suggest that physical appearance is a necessary prerequisite for social success? The slogan's interaction with the visual narrative will determine the response.

The three advertisements can therefore be distinguished by their dominant proposed meanings:

Table 4. The difference of purposed meanings

Skincare Brand	Purposed Meaning of Skincare
Kahf	Kahf associates skincare with personal readiness and the pursuit of one's chosen direction.
Garnier Men	Garnier Men associates skincare with taking action against skin problems.
Pond's Men	Pond's Men associates appearance with aspirations for success.

These differences suggest that male skincare advertising can communicate meanings that go beyond skin health.

The Use of Metaphor Create Persuasive Effects in Indonesian Men's Facial Skincare Advertisements

By using familiar ideas to explain product benefits, making messages easier to understand, and linking products to consumers' goals, metaphors can aid in persuading.

Kahf: Persuasion through personal aspiration

Facial washing can be linked to a broader story of individual direction and preparedness through Kahf's journey metaphor. Instead of being marketed only as a cleansing product, the product is linked to the consumer's route of choice. This strategy might persuade customers to view skincare as an integral component of their everyday lives and personal growth. Its persuasive power resides in tying a useful product to a personally significant goal.

Garnier Men: Persuasion through problem–solution framing

Garnier Men frames acne as a problem that the advertized product can solve by using language that is combat-oriented. Its calls to action, such as "*Buktikan sendiri*," ("Prove it yourself") encourage viewers to give the product a try, and its efficacy claims offer a clear justification for doing so. The product's purpose can be instantly understood thanks to the metaphorical frame: a problem exists, the product is offered as a solution, and the customer is encouraged to take action. The practical attractiveness of the advertisement might be strengthened by this combination. The metaphor alone doesn't tell us if the product really works or if people will buy it.

Pond's Men: Persuasion through social aspiration

Its persuasive power comes from associating the product with a result that consumers could find valuable outside of skincare: projecting a positive image of oneself in social and professional contexts. Customers may be persuaded by this tactic to see grooming as an investment in their public persona. However, it can also support the notion that success is largely determined by one's physical appearance, which should be questioned rather than taken for granted.

Table 5. Comparative discussion of persuasive strategies

Brand	Proposed persuasive strategy	Potential persuasive effect
Kahf	Aspirational framing	Links skincare to lifestyle and personal objectives.
Garnier Men	Problem–solution framing	Makes the product seem appropriate to a certain skin issue.
Pond,s Men	Social-aspiration framing	Links skincare to the ideal image of a prosperous guy.

These results suggest that the three ads may use several persuasive strategies: affiliation with social achievement, practical problem-solving, and identification with personal objectives. Verbal cues are crucial for figuring out metaphorical meaning in all three of the ads. Kahf uses the idea of a journey to frame life, Garnier Men uses the

language of battle to frame skin issues, and Pond's Men links success with attractiveness. These frames offer several perspectives on the function of skincare in men's life.

Additionally, the first results imply that skincare promotion may contribute to the creation of contemporary masculine identities. The commercials link facial care to human responsibility, action, attractiveness, and aspiration rather than only portraying it as a hygiene routine. In terms of persuasion, the ads seem to place skincare within more general consumer incentives, such as self-improvement, resolving personal issues, and projecting a positive social image. These interpretations offer a basis for comprehending how metaphors might give skincare messages significance to their target audiences.

CONCLUSION

The preliminary analysis addresses three key research questions: it reveals potential metaphors and metaphorical frames related to travel, battle, and appearance-related success within the linguistic data; demonstrates how commercials link skincare to social goals, personal preparedness, and skin problem resolution; and highlights the persuasive power of aspirational, problem-solution, and societal aspiration framing, though further audience research is required to measure its true impact. The study's major contribution establishes that metaphors enable male skincare advertising to convey meanings extending beyond the products' literal functions. By connecting skincare with broader life experiences and social goals, advertising creates specific associations between physical appearance, masculinity, and contemporary men.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used AI Tools e.g. Claude in order to help the writers to translate the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of publication.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interest or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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