Comparing Evaluative Strategies in Indonesian Halal Cosmetic Ads on TV vs. YouTube

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Abstract

This study investigates the evaluative strategies employed in Indonesian halal cosmetic advertisements across two contrasting media platforms: television and YouTube. Drawing on Appraisal Theory within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research explores how affective, judgmental, and engagement-based language constructs religious authority, consumer trust, and moral alignment in promotional discourse. A custom-compiled corpus of 20 advertisements from two major brands—Wardah and Safi—serves as the empirical base, enabling comparative analysis of tone, voice, and rhetorical technique.

Findings reveal that television ads prioritize institutional credibility and declarative judgment, often invoking religious certification and expert authority. In contrast, YouTube content emphasizes narrative intimacy, personal experience, and interactive engagement, positioning religious values as part of daily embodied practice. The study concludes that platform-specific affordances shape not only the form but also the cultural function of evaluative language, reflecting dual logics of Islamic branding: one rooted in hierarchy and legitimacy, the other in lifestyle and digital piety.

Keywords: halal cosmetics, evaluative language, Appraisal Theory, media discourse, Islamic branding, Indonesian advertising, YouTube marketing

1. Religious Branding and Media Convergence in Indonesia

In the last decade, the Indonesian beauty and personal care market has undergone a significant transformation with the rise of halal cosmetics—products that not only comply with Islamic legal requirements but also appeal to Muslim consumers' values of modesty, purity, and ethical production. As the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, Indonesia's halal certification has moved beyond food to become a powerful signal of religious alignment in the cosmetic and skincare industry. Brands such as Wardah, Safi, and Make Over Halal have emerged as leaders in integrating Islamic branding with modern marketing strategies, often featuring messaging rooted in spiritual assurance, natural purity, and moral responsibility.

This shift coincides with profound changes in Indonesia's media landscape, marked by increasing convergence between traditional mass media (notably television) and participatory digital platforms (primarily

YouTube and Instagram). While television retains credibility among older and more traditional audiences, YouTube has become a dominant force among younger, tech-savvy Muslim consumers who engage with influencer-led content, product reviews, and branded storytelling. The same halal brand may present itself very differently across these platforms—not only in terms of format and aesthetics, but more crucially in its language of persuasion.

At the heart of these shifts lies the dynamic interplay between religious identity and platform logic. On television, halal cosmetic ads are typically formal, centrally scripted, and focus on conveying trust, safety, and religious approval through authoritative figures such as dermatologists or hijab-wearing actresses. In contrast, YouTube ads often adopt a more personal tone, incorporating vlog-style narration, user testimonials, and emotional storytelling. These modes of delivery shape the ways evaluative language is deployed—how products are appraised, feelings are evoked, and moral judgments are subtly implied.

In this context, studying evaluative strategies across these two platforms offers not only linguistic insights but also a window into how contemporary Islamic consumer identities are constructed and mediated. It also enables us to understand how platform-specific communication styles reframe religious values in a marketing context—either as institutional authority or as personalized moral lifestyle. These discursive shifts are essential to understanding how halal branding both reflects and reproduces cultural-religious norms in Indonesia's rapidly hybridizing media economy.

2. Conceptual Foundations and Analytical Approach

2.1 Appraisal Theory as a Framework for Analyzing Evaluative Language

In order to capture the subtle persuasive mechanisms employed in halal cosmetic advertising, this study applies Appraisal Theory, a key framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Martin and White (2005). Unlike traditional semantic models that classify evaluation as isolated lexico-semantic choices, Appraisal Theory treats evaluation as a system of interrelated resources that help speakers or writers align with or disalign from their audience. This is particularly important in advertising, where the success of a message depends not only on what is said, but also on how stance, emotion, and authority are positioned through language.

The theory is structured around three subsystems:

Attitude, which includes:

- Affect (emotions): e.g., *"I love how fresh my skin feels"*

- Judgment (ethics or behavior): e.g., *"trusted by millions of Muslim women"*

- Appreciation (value/aesthetics): e.g., *"lightweight texture with a clean scent"*

Engagement, which refers to how speakers position their utterances in relation to alternative viewpoints—through expansive strategies like citation (*"according to dermatologists"*) or contractive ones like declaratives (*"this is the best halal option"*). This is crucial for brand positioning: whether the message claims universal truth or invites shared opinion can vary by platform.

Graduation, which intensifies or downscales meaning: e.g., *"truly radiant skin"* vs. *"slightly refreshing"*. Amplification is frequently used in both emotional appeals (*"absolutely safe"*) and quantifiable claims (*"99.9% purified ingredients"*).

This theory is ideal for comparing TV and YouTube advertising because it reveals how evaluative meaning is modulated to fit the expectations of each platform. For example, YouTube influencers tend to emphasize Affect and Engagement to create intimacy, while TV relies more heavily on Judgment and Graduation to convey certainty and compliance.

Moreover, Appraisal Theory is sensitive to religious discourse. Halal cosmetic brands often incorporate moral evaluations (*"modest beauty,"* *"Shariah-compliant"*) that align with Islamic values. Such expressions are not only marketing tools but also acts of cultural alignment, and Appraisal Theory provides a rigorous method for tracing how these alignments are linguistically realized.

2.2 Rationale for Comparing Mediated Communication Across TV and YouTube

The comparison between television and YouTube is not merely about content format—it reflects distinct semiotic regimes, audience structures, and discursive norms. These platforms represent different technological

ecologies and sociolinguistic expectations, which in turn shape how brands construct credibility, engage viewers, and activate emotional or religious registers.

Television in Indonesia remains a trusted source for older demographics and conservative communities. It is top-down, professionally curated, and adheres to national broadcasting standards that prioritize clarity, formality, and general appeal. Ads are tightly timed (15–30 seconds), often narrated by authoritative voices or celebrity figures in formal Bahasa Indonesia, and emphasize key product credentials like BPOM certification, halal approval, or dermatological testing.

YouTube, by contrast, allows for bottom-up, participatory, and personalized content, especially when used by beauty influencers or semi-professional brand collaborators. Content is often long-form (3–10 minutes), visually intimate, and emotionally narrative. Influencers frequently code-switch between Bahasa Indonesia and regional dialects or use English to signify cosmopolitanism. Evaluative expressions are embedded in informal storytelling: *"I was struggling with dry skin during Ramadan, and this saved me."*

This contrast justifies a linguistic comparison in two key ways:

1) Media logic shapes evaluation. The platform dictates how direct or indirect evaluative language must be. TV favors assertive and polished language, while YouTube prefers personalized, dialogic, and experiential narration. The evaluative language thus mirrors each platform's communicative ethos.

2) Platform rhetoric influences cultural framing. Halal branding on TV may emphasize institutional credibility (e.g., doctor endorsements, halal logos), while YouTube reconfigures religious identity as lifestyle-based, emphasizing user authenticity, modest routines, and everyday Islamic practice.

Understanding these platform-specific rhetorical strategies allows us to see how religious branding is tailored linguistically to different media ecologies, enabling halal cosmetic companies to resonate with both collective trust (TV) and individual resonance (YouTube).

3. Corpus Compilation and Cross-Media Data

Design

3.1 Selection of Comparable Advertisements from Two Leading Halal Brands

This study builds its linguistic analysis on a custom-compiled corpus of 20 halal cosmetic advertisements, selected from two leading Indonesian brands: Wardah and Safi. These brands were chosen not only for their market dominance and clear halal identity, but also for their consistent marketing presence across both television and YouTube. The dual-brand, dual-platform approach ensures analytical diversity while maintaining controlled comparability.

Each brand contributed 5 television commercials and 5 YouTube-based advertisements, chosen from the period January 2022 to January 2024. The television commercials were sourced through official brand channels and broadcast archives, while the YouTube materials were a mix of:

- Official long-form video ads,

- Sponsored influencer content (e.g., by Muslimah beauty creators), and

- Branded product reviews or skincare routines.

Ads were only included if they featured spoken Bahasa Indonesia, focused on halal-certified products, and targeted Muslim female consumers aged 18–35. Product types were matched to ensure genre parity—e.g., Wardah's sunscreen ad on TV was paired with its influencer-led sunscreen demo on YouTube. This parallel sampling strategy allows for cross-platform discourse tracking within similar product frames.

The final corpus includes:

- TV ads: ~3,200 words (average length: 30 seconds per ad, highly compressed and scripted)

- YouTube ads: ~6,800 words (average length: 3–6 minutes, unscripted or semi-scripted narrative content)

This discrepancy in length is itself analytically revealing, suggesting that YouTube's affordances promote more elaborated, affective, and evaluative expression than TV's compact rhetorical form.

3.2 Criteria for Categorizing Content by Platform, Tone, and Audience Reach

Each advertisement was categorized along three interrelated dimensions, designed to reflect not just platform features, but discursive positioning:

(a) Platform Logic

TV content is centrally produced, edited, and constrained by time slots and broadcast norms, making it more linear, polished, and one-directional. It often features celebrity figures (e.g., Dewi Sandra), with third-person narration and official slogans (e.g., *"trusted halal beauty from nature"*). YouTube content, on the other hand, includes direct speech, unscripted commentary, and a "vlog" aesthetic. Influencers film in personal spaces and use informal camera angles, sometimes involving viewer call-outs, unboxing, or "first impression" reactions.

(b) Affective Tone

The tone scale was constructed from five linguistic indicators: personal pronoun use (e.g., "saya" vs. "kami"), sentence modality (imperative vs. declarative), explicit judgment (e.g., "the best," "harus dicoba"), intertextual references (e.g., quotes, endorsements), and visual setting (lab, home, prayer room). TV ads were consistently more authoritative and professional, while YouTube videos displayed a casual, intimate, and testimonial tone.

(c) Audience Reach and Engagement

YouTube videos were analyzed for engagement metrics: view count, likes, shares, and comment volume. For example:

- Wardah's *Everyday Sunscreen* ad on YouTube had 1.4 million views, 3.2K likes, and over 1,000 comments, many echoing key phrases like *"halal and smooth"* or *"good for wudhu"*.

- By contrast, the TV version had no such interactive feedback, though brand surveys suggest similar reach in broadcast terms.

Such contrast justifies our analysis: where TV controls message, YouTube facilitates dialogic co-construction of value—a core dimension of evaluative discourse in digital Islamic branding.

3.3 Annotation of Linguistic Data with a Focus on Evaluative Markers

All advertisement texts were transcribed and manually coded according to Appraisal Theory, focusing on three major domains: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Evaluation was analyzed at the clause level, identifying emotional terms, moral judgments, and degrees of intensification. For instance, the phrase *"lembut dan menyerap cepat"* (*soft and quickly absorbed*) was tagged as Appreciation, while *"halal terjamin"* (*guaranteed halal*) reflected both Judgment and Graduation.

The analysis revealed distinct platform preferences. YouTube ads featured more Affect-laden expressions, such as *"aku merasa lebih percaya diri setelah pakai ini"* (*I feel more confident after using this*), emphasizing personal experience and emotional resonance. TV ads leaned toward Judgment and Graduation, emphasizing product authority and measurable benefits through phrases like *"100% halal dan aman"* (*100% halal and safe*). This difference in evaluative density and distribution supports the hypothesis that media environments influence not only message form but also the linguistic encoding of value.

By integrating these coded evaluative resources with attention to platform logic and rhetorical tone, the corpus offers a robust foundation for analyzing how Islamic branding adapts linguistically across television and YouTube, balancing religious appeal with audience-specific strategies.

4. Media-Specific Evaluation Patterns and Persuasive Tactics

The analysis of evaluative language across Indonesian halal cosmetic advertisements reveals distinct rhetorical patterns shaped by media platform logic. While both television and YouTube serve as vehicles for religious branding, their persuasive tactics differ in frequency, intensity, voice, and value positioning.

Across the corpus, affective and judgmental expressions appear with notable variation in both density and tone. YouTube advertisements, particularly those led by influencers, display a higher frequency of affective resources, often embedding emotional experiences into narrative frames. Phrases such as *"aku merasa adem banget setelah pakai ini"* (*I feel really cool after using this*) or *"ini bikin aku percaya diri saat keluar rumah"* (*this gives me confidence when going outside*) are common. These expressions are subjective, intimate, and delivered with verbal hedging or emphasis, drawing viewers into an empathetic identification with the speaker. By contrast, television ads tend to foreground judgment, positioning the product as ethically superior or

scientifically validated: *"100% halal, direkomendasikan ahli kulit"* (*100% halal, recommended by skin experts*) or *"kepercayaan Muslimah sejak 1995"* (*trusted by Muslim women since 1995*). These statements communicate security, reliability, and collective legitimacy rather than personal transformation.

The two platforms also differ significantly in how they construct engagement and voice. On television, the voice is typically institutional—using third-person narration, celebrity endorsements, or expert testimony to assert a neutral, impersonal authority. The viewer is cast as a general recipient of knowledge rather than a participant in meaning-making. In contrast, YouTube videos shift toward relational voice, often characterized by direct address, informal language, and conversational cues. The speaker uses "I" and "you" to collapse distance: *"kalau kamu punya kulit sensitif, ini bisa banget dicoba"* (*if you have sensitive skin, you should really try this*). This rhetorical stance invites identification and co-experience, aligning the product with everyday routines rather than abstract standards. The result is a form of digital intimacy that renders the brand message more immersive and emotionally persuasive.

Perhaps most tellingly, the use of religious and moral appeals differs not just in frequency but in form. Television advertisements tend to invoke formal religious language, often referencing Shariah compliance, certification bodies (e.g., MUI), or general moral superiority. For example, Safi's TV ad includes the line *"terinspirasi oleh sains dan kecantikan halal"* (*inspired by science and halal beauty*), blending moral and epistemic authority. In contrast, YouTube ads frame religious identity in practical, lived terms, often connecting product use to daily Muslim practices such as wudhu, prayer, or fasting. Statements like *"ini sunscreen-nya nggak luntur pas wudhu"* (*this sunscreen doesn't wear off during ablution*) serve as experiential moralization, where religious compatibility is not only claimed but demonstrated within daily rituals.

These differences highlight how evaluative language is tailored to the expectations of each media environment. Television emphasizes credibility, institutional alignment, and declarative trust-building. YouTube leverages relatability, affective resonance, and narrative authority. While both platforms construct halal identity as central, they do so through divergent rhetorical pathways: one via endorsement and institutional judgment, the other via embodiment and personal affect. This divergence reflects not only branding strategy, but also how audiences are positioned discursively as subjects of religious-modern femininity in Indonesia's evolving consumer landscape.

5. Toward a Culturally-Informed Understanding of Platform Rhetoric

The comparative analysis of evaluative strategies in Indonesian halal cosmetic advertising across television and YouTube underscores how media platforms do not merely transmit messages—they reshape the cultural articulation of religious identity and consumer values. In this study, evaluative language serves as a critical lens for observing how halal beauty brands modulate tone, authority, and morality to fit divergent communicative ecologies.

Television advertisements promote a vision of Islamic modernity anchored in collective trust, institutional credibility, and moral clarity. The evaluative rhetoric in this context is often declarative, formal, and embedded in nationalized narratives of Muslim womanhood. By invoking medical experts, halal authorities, and legacy claims (e.g., "trusted since 1995"), the TV format reinforces hierarchical communication and frames halal beauty as a domain of professional endorsement and religious reassurance. The audience is positioned as a passive recipient of certified truths—a Muslim consumer who should believe because the institution guarantees.

Conversely, YouTube represents a platform where religious values are performed through narrative, intimacy, and peer-based credibility. The rhetoric here is dialogic and affect-laden, inviting viewers to co-construct meaning through personal testimony, modest storytelling, and everyday spiritual references. Evaluative expressions in YouTube ads are not just descriptive but relational: speakers draw from their own skincare experiences during Ramadan, mention the ease of applying sunscreen before prayer, or reflect on emotional satisfaction after switching to halal-certified products. These moments do not assert religious legitimacy abstractly—they embody it.

Such differences reflect broader shifts in digital piety, where religious consumerism becomes increasingly localized in self-expression, lifestyle

practices, and micro-authenticities. While both platforms affirm halal identity, their rhetorical routes reveal a dual logic of persuasion: one emphasizing *compliance and authority*, the other highlighting *resonance and embodiment*. This duality reflects the hybrid nature of Indonesian Muslim femininity, where ethical self-care, religious values, and beauty aspirations coexist across mediated spaces.

By understanding how evaluative strategies adapt to platform-specific affordances, we also gain insight into how brands navigate the tension between institutional Islam and everyday Muslim practice, between standardization and personalization, between marketing and meaning. Future research might expand this inquiry to other regions or media forms, exploring how gendered religiosity and digital media intersect in shaping contemporary moral economies.

In sum, the study affirms that platform rhetoric is not just a matter of style or form—it is deeply cultural. It reflects how Indonesian Muslim consumers are addressed, imagined, and mobilized through language. And it reveals how halal branding operates not merely as a regulatory label, but as a linguistic performance of ethical modern life in the Muslim world's largest media market.

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