

# SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF BEAUTY ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the description of the denotation and connotation sign contained in US beauty product advertisement. In completing this research, the writer uses 3 beauty product advertisement, namely: Maybelline New York, Revlon, and Estee Lauder as materials used to determine the meaning of denotation and connotation signs using Roland Barthes' (1964) theory. This study uses a qualitative approach to describe the semiotic phenomena of signs of denotation and connotation in US beauty product advertisement, including the depiction of signified and signifiers in beauty product advertisement based on denotative and connotative meanings. From the analysis, the writer conducted verbal and non-verbal analysis of words, pictures, and utterances of each beauty product advertisement. By using connotative meanings, advertisers and copywriters attempt to build an image for the consumer's perspective that each beauty product advertisement has their own characteristics in marketing their advertisements. Finally, the writer concluded that those 3-beauty product advertisements contain signs including words, pictures, and utterances. the writer also found that in the beauty products advertisement, many signs contain meanings. In understanding the sign, it is needed to understand the semiotic theory by Roland Barthes that consists of the concepts: denotation and connotation. Denotative is the first sign, and connotative is the second sign supported by myth. After analyzing verbal and non-verbal signs of beauty products based on Roland Barthes's semiotics theory, the writer finds that verbal signs are more dominant than non-verbal signs, but the differences are insignificant. Beauty Product informs both verbal and non-verbal, it makes the advertisement clearer and more interesting.

**Keywords:** *denotation, connotation, semiotic, beauty product advertisement*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool used by everyone in their daily life as a means to convey information and arguments to others. In this case, language cannot be separated from culture because language represents its nation and has a close relation to the attitude or behavior of groups of speakers of the languages. Language is a collection of symbols used to communicate in a group of people who speak the same language (Nuessel, 2006). Language can also be used as a tool to express through writing, such as writing poetry, songs, novels, and advertisements. The use of language to promote products and services is also an interest in advertisement (Noriega & Blair, 2008).

According to Saussure (Fiske, 2002), Languages are the most critical system of signs responsible for human communication, therefore the model for the study of other symbolic systems. Signs as objects of study can be in the form of several artifacts that have been interpreted holistically as a form, style, or genre, which in terms of cultural studies is called text. There are two signs produced by humans in communication, namely verbal and nonverbal signs. A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way. (Sebeok, 2001, p.11). A sign is something that to someone means something else. Anything that can be observed or made observable can be called a sign. Therefore, signs are not limited to objects. The presence of events, the absence of events, the structure found in something, a habit, all of these things can be called signs. The basic idea of semiotics is sign and symbol.

Semiotics, which is defined as a study of signs that aims to reveal the meaning on related symbols, it can be the basis for analyzing an advertisement. By using Barthes' (1964) semiotic approach, the research conducted by Rami Zarah Syahdini (2019) succeeded in analyzed the kind of sign in the video of Loreal Paris advertisement 2013, 2014, 2018 and comprehend the connotative meaning affects the concept beauty in Loreal Paris advertisement 2013, 2014, 2018.

Because it concerns signifier and signified meanings, the representation of signs is part of a "system of signs", which means that semiotics also examines how meaning is constructing and how reality is representing. Semiotics looks at how meaning and representations are constructed in different ways. Danesi (2002) states that the primary goal of media semiotics is to catalog and analyze the structures as they manifest themselves in media products in a variety of meanings. It also must be utilized to show how meanings in semiotics influence the reader's thoughts.

Multiple advertising impressions often not only offer a product but also provide a certain belief and value system (Williamson, 1978: 12). Culture has value here. Advertising, which is just a promotional activity for a product, has become a marketing activity for a set of values and beliefs. Advertisement has become a part of popular culture that creates and represents values, beliefs, and even ideologies.

Advertisement has also been designed as the most effective medium to use and designed by creative producers for perspectives, ideas, and beliefs to facilitate the process of value. Which itself occurs continuously in the circulation of production and exchange of value. And now, advertisement has dominated public spaces, media, and places such as malls and cafes.

In the era of digitalization of information through media, technology is now increasingly widespread, especially advertising plays a major role in shaping the cultural image through the onslaught of advertisements that offer a visual lifestyle (Chaney, 2011: 19). Advertisements convey lifestyle messages in the form of the image of the subject. In creating individuals as subjects by way of interpellation, advertising creates, as the term put forward by Althusser, profoundly unconscious, things (commercial products) deeply unconsciously embedded in the individual, where a product that is used (consumption) is transformed into something natural (Althusser, 2008: 48).

Advertisement as part of the cultural industry played a role as apparatus to construct meaning by inserting a value in a product. Advertising organizes and controls meaning into signs that could be incorporated into the product. In this way, advertising becomes a sign production system of a product designed to provide value by differing meanings following each product. For example, in addition to the functional value of products, is also included with symbolic values, including wealth, family, and beauty.

One example of advertising is a beauty advertisement. In terms of its purpose, advertising has the aim of influencing and persuading new potential consumers to use the products offered, namely cosmetic products or beauty products. To influence and persuade new end users to use beauty products, advertisements not only used text, but also used attractive signs, images, and utterances. Beauty advertisements also vary greatly in their mythical meanings; therefore, the writer is interested in explaining the meaning of advertisements using the semiotic method.

The many forms of advertising carried out by beauty manufacturers, visual advertising for beauty products, especially on YouTube, is believed to have an impact on the effectiveness of product promotion. Therefore, advertising is considered to have some ideas through the cooperation of visual images and language presented in advertising. Beauty advertisement manufacturers used their creativity to create beauty ads. Especially when it comes to producing ads with a specific message. Beauty product advertisements originating from the United States has an interesting meaning. It considering that the United States is the fourth largest country in the world when viewed from a wider area than Indonesia, reaching 9.37 million square kilometers. With such an area, the United States also has a variety of races and ethnicities.

The diversity of races and cultures made the people of the United States have a variety of skin colors. With the diversity of skin colors, it is a fact that the beauty standards of the United States are different from other countries. If the French standard of beauty is famous for the natural beauty of its women. Minimalist makeup and natural messy hair already make them look beautiful. Thus, beauty standards in the United States are more difficult to determine. The choice of a thin or curvy body, long and short hair, dark and light skin, to the choice of thick or natural makeup all come back to each individual. There is no specific beauty standard that represented the country aka everything is free to express. Naomi Wolf (1991) mentions in her book *“The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Use Against Women”*, that according to myth, women are conditioned to always be able to look beautiful and attractive. To fulfill this desire, women are willing to spend a lot of money to maintain their physical appearance. This results in beauty being used as a standard for evaluating women, including in media.

When viewing an advertisement, one could interpret words in advertisements to the deepest meaning. Signs in the language of beauty commercials could be used to examine connotative meaning in beauty advertisements. A sign has a reference that refers to something than itself. However, the sign conjures up more than just its reference; it also conjures up its sense-meaning or the meanings or connotations associated with the brand (O’Shaughnessy, 2004). According to Saussure (Fiske, 2002), a sign consists of a signifier and a signified, and it is a physical entity with a meaning. The signified is the mental meaning to which the sign refers; the signifier is the sign's representation as we interpret it—marks on paper or sounds in the air. The use of advertising as a means of communication and linking advertising with semiotic analysis seems to be an interesting topic to discuss.

With the background of these beauty standards that are influence by culture and even advertising, cosmetic companies in the United States create beauty product advertisements with various meanings 3 examples of beauty product that has been chosen by the author to be researched, namely Maybelline, Revlon, and Estee Lauder. The researchers have a reason to use 3 beauty products in this study because these products are well known and widely used in various countries, one of which is Indonesia.

The same studies apply semiotic theory regarding advertising, the first is Sulistiani (2015) who analyzed how Indonesia is branded through the representation of its beauty in the advertisement of Miss World 2013 entitled *“Bring Indonesia’s Beauty to the World”*. And the second previous study using the same Roland Barthes theory is Khalid (2021) which analyzed cigarette advertisements and describe the denotations and connotations. What distinguishes this research from previous research is the formulation of a more complex problem that refers to Roland Barthes'

theory. namely the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth. and the data used by researchers is more global and no one has researched it before.

Based on the explanation above, advertisements have denotative and connotative meanings, through the relationship between signs, signifiers, and signifieds will demand us towards the hidden meaning of the beauty product advertisement. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting the study entitled Semiotic Analysis of 3 Beauty in the United States. The three existing global product that has emerged in the United States are Maybelline, Revlon, and Estee Lauder. The researcher also interested in Roland Barthes theory in relation the semiotic analysis for the subject and beauty advertisement for the object because, for women, beauty and cosmetics are essential to everyday life.

## **METHOD**

This research method discusses the methodology used in this study. It consists of several parts dealing with research design, data sources and data analysis. The research method should help the writer gain access to the research methods used in this thesis. This research is a qualitative approach to describe the semiotic of the denotative and connotative significance of 3 beauty products in advertising in the United States, including lipstick of Maybelline, the foundation of Revlon, and night cream Estee Lauder. The researcher used a qualitative approach because the author is interested in studying how in 3 honest market advertising there are designations and connotations, such as myths, and how the advertiser. This research did not focus on advertising in general, but on denotation and connotation, so the researchers limit themselves to research problems. The object of this research is three beauty product advertisements from the United States, namely: Maybelline New York, Revlon, and Estee Lauder. The research data use signs consisting of verbal signs and non-verbal signs, and analyze using Roland Barthes's semiotics theory. Source of data in the form of this sign, consisting of words and images.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This part discusses semiotic theory, which used signs of beauty introduction. The researcher found that each denotation and connotation have its different characteristics. The next content is a connotative meaning which is found based on the signs and the relation with the concept of beauty. Based on the above signs, this chapter is divided into several advertisements. It includes Maybelline New York – Gigi Hadid | New Super stay Matte Ink Lipstick Birthday Edition on the verbal sign and non-verbal sign with the utterance, Revlon – Revlon UltraHD Vinyl Lip Polish

on the verbal sign and non-verbal sign and Estee Lauder – Pure Color Illuminating Shine Lipstick on the verbal sign, non-verbal sign.

### **Maybelline New York - Gigi Hadid | New Super Stay Matte Ink Lipstick Birthday Edition**

The advertisement of Maybelline New York by Gigi Hadid has the meaning on the verbal sign, non-verbal sign, with utterances.

#### **1.1.1 Verbal Sign**



Source: <https://youtu.be/t7z7bF-M-WA>

This image is shown at the start scene of the 15-second video play. The verbal sign in this video is indicated by the word "Maybelline" with the addition of the word "New York". The denotation meaning of "Maybelline" is indicated the name of the brand.

The connotation means that based on history, the name Maybelline is created because of a combination of the names Maybel and Vaseline. Maybel itself is the name of TL Williams (CEO)'s younger sister, while vaseline is the ingredient that Maybel often used as an ingredient in her eyelash curler (its first product). And the word "New York" is to show where the brand is coming from. This verbal sign is even more valid by being marked by a background that shows the New York City building. Word "Maybelline New York" is written in capital letters to show and claimed to the public that the brand is a beauty brand originating from abroad, namely in New York.

In this scene, the meaning of denotation is also seen which is shown by the role of a woman who is walking carrying a balloon dressed in pink in deep red collaboration and wearing make-up that looks bolder.

The connotation in the scene of the woman wearing a party dress carrying a balloon interprets that the woman will attend a birthday party. and the color of the pink dress used connotes femininity, romance, and affection. The color of the clothes is also the favorite color of teenagers. It could be concluded that the cosmetic brand Maybelline has a colorful color image, such as its lipstick product which matches the

advertising tagline which has many various colors. and Maybelline products could still be used by women in their teens.



Source: <https://youtu.be/t7z7bF-M-WA>

In this scene, there is a verbal sign “Superstay Matte Ink Lip Color” which has a denotative meaning and showed the product series from the Maybelline brand. the name of the product series.

The connotative meaning is believed if you wear the lipstick it would stay all day and not be easily lost because the ink did not disappear. The product name label would also suggest that if you want to use lipstick that doesn't wear off all day, you have to use Maybelline lipstick with that series. The colors offered in the picture above are also many and more colorful. The goal is to make it more attractive to users. The dominant colors in the lipstick pictures are pink, purple, and red, which have connotations of femininity, royalty, and liveliness. the meaning of the color interprets that the product is suitable for use by an active teenager who needs long-lasting lipstick due to playing around.



The next verbal sign in this scene is to show the denotative meaning of a woman who is showing the color of lipstick used. accompanied by the word "No Transfer" which is confirmed not to stick easily as evidenced by his hand-code after touching her lips.

The picture also has a connotative meaning in which the woman's facial expression shows a sense of confidence because she might not worry about her lipstick being easily lost. The color of the lipstick used is red, which means strength or resilience. It could be concluded that the lipstick product is very durable and has proven not to transfer.



The last verbal sign in this Maybelline advertisement is indicated by the sentence "New Matte Ink & Ink Crayon Birthday Edition Lip Color" which has a denotation meaning indicating a new product series from the Lips series using the Birthday Edition Lip Color tagline.

The connotative meaning of the sentence and the image of the new lipstick showed that the latest lipstick from Maybelline with a birthday edition is suitable to be used as a birthday gift or to be used when attending birthday events. The addition of a glitter motif on the lipstick packaging signifies the feel of a birthday. The color of the lipstick packaging is dominant with pink and light blue color. Where the color pink means femininity, romantic, and affection. And light blue color which means youth. It could be concluded that the New Matte Ink & Ink Crayon Birthday Edition Lip Color product is very suitable to be used as a birthday gift idea for female friends who are in their teens or youth. The lipstick product that is given also gives the meaning of affection to that person. And the person who has been given the lipstick feels special with the product that has been given.

### 1.1.2 Non-Verbal Sign





In this scene, there is a non-verbal sign that has a denotative meaning of a group of women dancing at a party to celebrate a birthday.

The connotative meaning of this scene is also quite interesting. where in the scene some women of different races. It could be seen in the shadow of the woman in the back row with curly hair and black skin. while the 2 women in front are also of different races. where the girl in the pink dress is probably someone who has that intention, with straight blonde hair and white skin. his friends dancing in front of him are also of different races because they have thick lips and exotic skin. one more thing, one woman in the back also looks to be of a different race, such as the race of Europeans who has yellow skin. In terms of connotations, the scene concludes that young people in the United States are friends regardless of ethnicity and race. They remained friends properly and happily. including the conclusion on the Maybelline Birthday Edition lipstick product that has entered and is still suitable for use by skin tones of various races. lipstick products that are more universal and have many colors are offered for each person's preference.



In the scene above, the non-verbal sign is shown that there is a collage of pictures of several lips with different activities. its denotative meaning is lips with various lipstick colors on display while eating cake, blowing a trumpet, biting their lips, drinking using a straw, and eating snack sticks.

The picture has a connotation meaning if you do these things even if you used Maybelline lipstick products it is still guaranteed that it would last and not be lost. This scene is evidenced by the myth that in the past, lipstick if used for eating and drinking, would be easily lost. The lipstick colors shown by the different lip shapes due to racial differences are still suitable for use with color preferences that match the skin tone. It could be concluded that Maybelline lipstick products that provide a variety of shades would ensure that they stay on the lips and are not easily lost.

### 1.1.3 Utterances

There is a sign are included the utterances:

Number	Utterances
1	Made to keep to the party going up to 16 hours wear

There is a signified meaning in the above utterances.

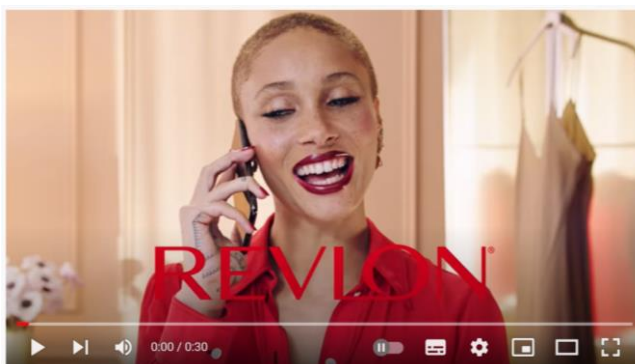
Utterance analysis 1.

There are utterances "Made to keep to the party going up to 16 hours wear" which showed that Maybelline lipstick products are claimed to last up to 16 hours. And made for the anniversary edition. In addition to product ideas that are suitable for use as birthday gifts, usual activities during birthday events are more active than usual. eating cake, dancing, kissing, prone to make lipstick disappear. Therefore, in the advertisement, the utterances are inserted so that people are more confident about the quality of the Maybelline Birthday Edition lipstick products.

## 1.2 Revlon – Ultra HD Vinyl Lip Polish

The advertisement of Revlon – Candid Foundation has the meaning on the verbal sign and non-verbal sign.

### 1.2.1 Verbal Sign



Source: <https://youtu.be/8cJfaVr7BH0>

In the picture of the scene there is a verbal sign in the form of utterances "Oh yeah I'm on my way". The denotation in the picture

shows a woman who is receiving the phone from her friend to leave immediately. And in its connotative meaning, the woman is in the house wearing a casual home dress with make up that is not too thick, but uses red lipstick to keep it looking fresh. The woman was receiving the phone from her friend to immediately go to hangout. In the background of the video, there are also 2 suit dresses hanging from the open wardrobe and indicating that the clothes are clothes that have been prepared to go. The picture also has the Revlon brand name clearly visible on the actress position. The light shown in the picture is daytime where you can see a reflection of light from outside. The brand name is deliberately placed in the middle and is large enough to make it more eye-catching so that viewers immediately know that the video is a Revlon advertisement.



Source: <https://youtu.be/8cJfaVr7BH0>

The denotation in the following image shows a new lipstick series consisting of several colors. and the verbal sign in the form of the words " New Revlon UltraHD Vinyl Lip Polish " indicates the name of the lipstick product. The word "New" which is highlighted in red indicates that the Revlon lipstick product in the advertisement is the newest product. One word is distinguished in color so that the public notices that Revlon has a new product. and the meaning of the connotation in the picture is in the unusual colors of the lipstick. such as purple, blue and black. The colors in this Revlon lipstick have a bold and strong character. If in general the lipstick colors are only red, pink, and nude brown, then Revlon releases lipsticks with eccentric colors. A white background is used in the image so that the lipstick color shown looks clearer and more detailed.

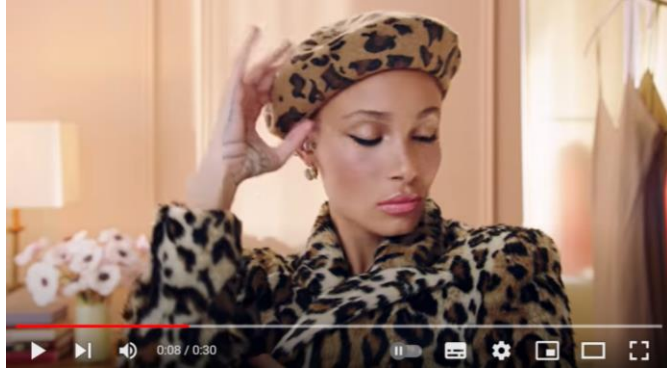


In that scene there is a denotative meaning of a woman showing her lipstick color. The connotation of the scene can be seen from the way the zoom shot on the lips of the actress gives a clear visual image. The background is blurred so as not to distract the main image on the color of the lipstick on the lips. the use of a verbal sign in the form of the word "Intense Color" is also to convince the viewer that the color produced by the lipstick is more intense.

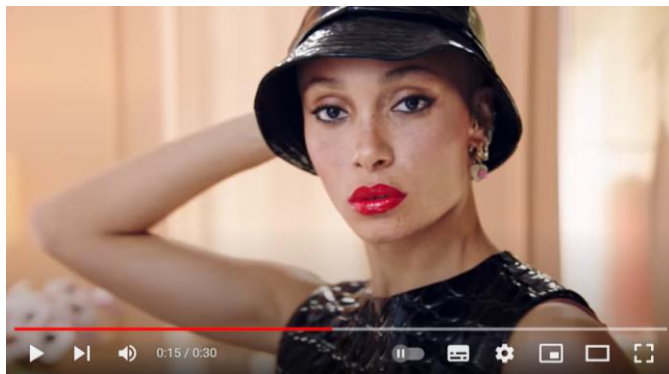
### **1.2.2 Non-Verbal Sign**



In this scene, a non-verbal sign can be seen which has a denotative meaning of a woman who is opening a lipstick pouch and wants to put it on. The connotation of this scene means that the woman is going out and has to wear make-up. it can be seen in the make up pouch that there are not only 1 or 2 lipstick colors, But there are more than 3 lipsticks owned. With the amount of lipstick that is owned by the woman can indicate that the woman is very dynamic and expressive. She likes to wear lipstick by changing colors according to her mood, dress, and other conditions. This concludes that Revlon lipstick has many colors to offer to be the choice of consumers.



In this scene shows the denotation of a woman who is posing by wearing a leopard motif. The connotation in this scene means that the woman will immediately go hangout wearing a leopard outfit and wearing a soft lipstick color. The outfit on the woman is enough to distract attention, the leopard motif is a bold shirt motif, therefore the woman simply wears lipstick with a soft nude color.



In this scene there is a non-verbal image that shows the denotative meaning of a woman posing in a black outfit complete with a bucket hat. The connotative meaning in the picture depicts a woman showing her make-up with red lipstick. The woman wears a black sleeveless shirt and wears a hat. the clothes are suitable for holidays during the day in an open room. the hat he was wearing also served to keep it from getting hot. It can be concluded that Revlon lipstick with red or bold color is suitable for use with neutral color clothes such as black.



In this scene there is a denotative meaning that describes a woman holding glasses. The connotation in the image means that the woman has out of the box tastes. Shiny colored clothes. And wears green glasses. even though not all women are confident wearing green glasses. The image in the ad video is also always in the middle position which aims to make the viewer clearer about the color of the lipstick being worn. It can be concluded that the revlon lipstick product has a free character and is out of the box.

### 1.3 Estee Lauder – Pure Color Illuminating Shine Lipstick

The advertisement Estee Lauder – Pure Color Illuminating Shine Lipstick has the meaning on the verbal sign and non-verbal sign

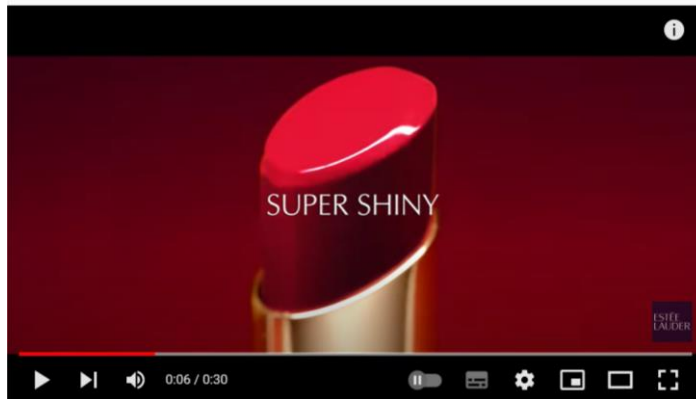
#### 1.3.1 Verbal Sign



Source: <https://youtu.be/XQB5lKp3jas>

In this third video in the Estee Lauder series advertisement Pure Color Illuminating Shine Lipstick there is a denotative meaning shown on the verbal sign in the form of the word "Estee Lauder" which means the name of the beauty brand. As for the connotation meaning in the picture, it is found on the

background of the maroon color which means nobility. while the font color on the writing is gold which means luxury. It can be concluded that the Estee Lauder brand is an expensive brand and only certain people can afford Estee Lauder products.



Source: <https://youtu.be/XQB5IKp3jas>

In this scene, There is a verbal sign that is indicated by the word "Super Shiny" and has the meaning of a lipstick image that shows a shiny result. As for the meaning of the connotations in the image, it can be seen from the zoom angle of the image that was shot on the lipstick section. To make it look shiny, and make the viewer of the advertisement more confident about the shiny results that are believed in the advertisement.

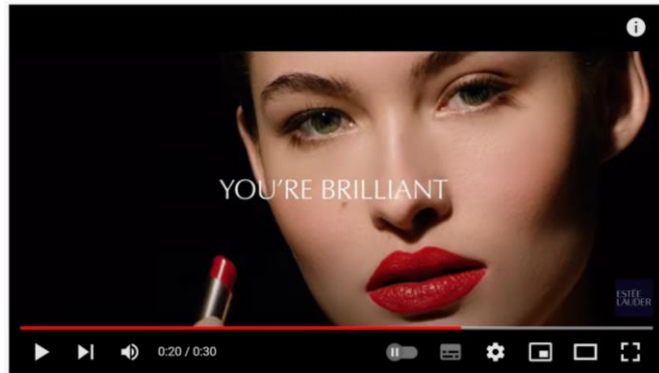


Source: <https://youtu.be/XQB5IKp3jas>

In this picture there is a verbal sign with the word "Super Sexy" which means that the lipstick color of Estee Lauder products produces beautiful and charming colors. As for the denotation meaning in the picture, it is a woman who is wearing red lipstick. And the connotation meaning in the image is from the way the woman's lips are zoomed in when she is wearing red



lipstick. The red color and the lips have a sensual meaning and aim to make the viewer clearer when the Estee Lauder product is used. It can be concluded that from the way the picture was taken, it proves that Estee Lauder's products have very good results and make lips look more sexy.



In this picture there is a verbal sign shown on the word "You're Brilliant" and has the meaning denotation a picture of a woman who is wearing lipstick and showing the result of her lipstick to the camera. The meaning of the connotation of the image can be seen from the facial expressions and words shown in the scene. The look in the woman's eyes has the meaning of being brave and confident so that it brings out her aura of beauty and looks brilliant. It can be concluded that Estee Lauder products are not ordinary products. adjust the camera light also adds to the impression of highlighting which has the meaning of stealing attention. Advertisement made with a glam impression also make the value of Estee Lauder products more expensive.

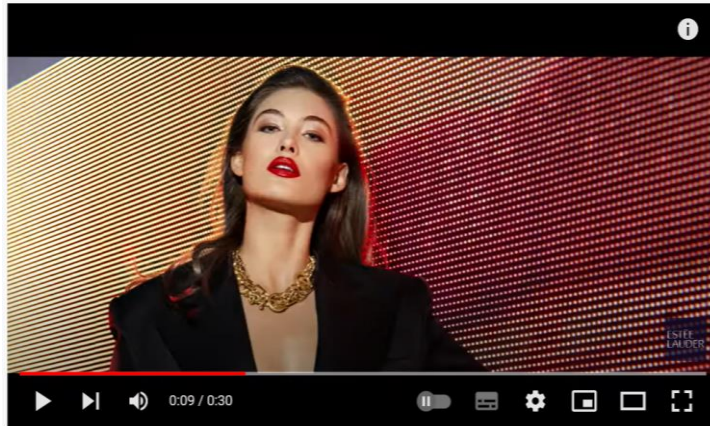


In this scene there is a verbal sign shown in the name of the product. and the denotation describes the latest lipstick product from estee lauder. The connotation meaning in the picture can be seen from the color of the lipstick packaging which is gold. On the background of the LCD, you can also see a



picture of the lips and the photo shoot is taken from the far side. so that all parts of the lipstick product can be seen. The meaning of the gold color gives the meaning of luxury and makes the product look more expensive.

### 1.3.2 Non-Verbal Sign



Source: <https://youtu.be/XQB5IKp3jas>

In the scene there are non-verbal signs indicated by gestures. The denotative meaning in the picture is a woman wearing a black dress standing looking down. The connotations in the picture can be seen from the black women's clothes and wearing gold necklaces which make the look more gorgeous. Complete with beautiful make-up, red lips give a more outstanding value. The light support adds to the impression of luxury but is still pleasing to the eye. The fierce pose also makes the woman more daring to do what's best for herself.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the observation and evaluation, the conclusion can be concluded. The object of this research is 3 beauty products from the US, there are Maybelline New York, Revlon, and Estee Lauder. This research is an analysis using Roland Barthes' theory by analyzing the denotation and connotation meanings. Based on the analysis of the advertisement, the researcher could be concluded that those 3-beauty product advertisements contain signs including words, pictures, and utterances. the writer also found that in the beauty products advertisement, many signs contain meanings. In understanding the sign, it is needed to understand the semiotic theory by Roland Barthes that consists of three concepts: denotative, connotative, and myth. Denotative is the first sign, and connotative is the second sign supported by myth. After analyzing verbal and non-verbal signs of beauty products based on Roland Barthes's semiotics theory, the writer finds that verbal signs are more

dominant than non-verbal signs, but the differences are insignificant. Beauty Product informs both verbal and non-verbal, it makes the advertisement clearer and more interesting.

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