A semiotic intertextual analysis of beauty influencers' communication strategies on youtube: uncovering meaning and influence by using Pierce's framework

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to conduct a semiotic intertextual analysis of beauty influencers on YouTube. Specifically, the study centers on two prominent beauty influencers, Andra Alodita, and Kornelia Meilinda, and their strategies for effectively promoting recommended lipstick products. The research was conducted employing a qualitative approach, utilizing Peirce's semiotic theory. The findings reveal that beauty influencers strategically employ visual elements to convey meaning and captivate viewers' attention. Both Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda meticulously craft their content, considering factors such as color schemes, backgrounds, and object placement. They adopt distinct approaches to reviewing lipstick products tailored to diverse audiences and preferences. This multiplicity of perspectives enhances the complexity of semiotic elements within beauty influencer content and broadens the spectrum of meanings conveyed to viewers. Furthermore, the findings underscore the significance of semiotic intertextuality as a potent tool for beauty influencers to shape meaning, influence perceptions, and resonate with their extensive audience. These findings offer valuable insights for marketers, brands, and content creators seeking to leverage semiotics' potential in shaping beauty trends and consumer behavior.

1. Introduction

YouTube has evolved into a powerful platform that not only entertains, but also makes an impact on its massive audience [1]–[4]. Within this digital platform, beauty influencers have emerged as major characters, engaging millions of viewers with their makeup tutorials, product reviews, and lifestyle material [5]–[7]. A beauty influencer is a person who has a large following and impact in the beauty and cosmetics industry [8]–[10], notably on social media platforms such as YouTube [11]. The rise of beauty influencers on YouTube has not only changed the way we view and consume beauty products, but has also had a tremendous impact on consumer behaviour and the development of cultural trends [12]. The beauty influencers have also developed a fan base that has a big impact on the preferences and trends of a global audience [13]. Their videos represent a distinctive form of communication that amalgamates performance, language, and visual elements to engender compelling content, which resonates with viewers [14]. In this instance, the beauty influencers harness the potency of visuals to proficiently convey their message [15], [16]. By means of meticulously crafted makeup tutorials and aesthetically pleasing product demonstrations, they exemplify the transformative potential inherent in beauty products [17]. Besides, the use of vibrant colors, intricate designs, and captivating aesthetics add to the appeal of their content, keeping viewers interested and eager for more.

Through the analysis of visual features within beauty influencer videos on YouTube, it becomes possible to discern the methods employed by these influencers to convey beauty ideals, capture trends, and evoke emotional responses in their audiences. Despite its widespread popularity and influence, a substantial gap remains in the existing literature, wherein systematic examinations of the communication strategies utilized by beauty influencers on YouTube are lacking. Therefore, delving into the underlying meanings, symbolism, and intertextual relationships can yield valuable insights into the construction of beauty ideals.

In this research, a semiotic intertextual analysis of beauty influencers' communication strategies on YouTube was conducted, with a particular focus on uncovering meaning and influence. Semiotics examines how signs and symbols produce meaning [18]–[21]. In addition, semiotics provides a framework for understanding the network of signs, gestures, visual aspects, language choices as well as other communicative tools used by beauty influencers to transmit messages and construct narratives. Semiotics is particularly relevant when investigating the communication strategies used by beauty influencers. By evaluating the semiotic features of their communication strategies, it is possible to uncover meaning and influence in the content of beauty influencer. Through this perspective, we can understand the strategies used to shape audience perceptions, influence consumer behaviour, and contribute to the construction and change of cultural meanings. Based on the previous studies, the research on semiotic analysis of Indian television advertisements has highlighted the differential impact to the audience that advertisements can utilize the following elements, including themes and colors [22]. Understanding the language and impact of semiotics on consumers enhance the effectiveness and targeting of advertisements. The study on visual semiotics analysis on television adsvertisement also found that contained message in each video scene that is combined with the emphasis of verbal text and has its own meaning to trigger emotions [23]. Furthermore, the semiotic analysis of selected scenes in ASUS™ advertising video revealed the presence of denotative and connotative meanings, which were employed throughout the data to effectively convey messages associated with the promotion of commercial products [24]. Concerning, the research on semiotic intertextuality, a study found that intertextuality in advertising refers not just to verbal communications but also to non-verbal iconic aspects to construct messages. It is a type of metaphoric semiosis in visual communication that depends on pre-existing texts [25].

In this study, the semiotic analysis is conducted by using Peirce's semiotics theory. Peirce's semiotics, commonly known as semiotic theory, is a framework for philosophy developed by Charles Sanders Peirce [26], [27]. The focus of the theory is the interpretation of signs and symbols [20], [28]. The signs symbolize something other than their own existence in the context and provide meaning to the audience. Peirce classified signs into three categories: the representamen (the sign itself), the object (what the sign refers to or represents), and the interpretant (the meaning created in the audience's mind) [27]. The Pierce's semiotics theory also known triadic model is illustrated in the Fig. 1. Based on the triangular representation in Fig. 1, it clearly depicts the connection of these three aspects in the signifying process. The interaction of the representamen, object, and interpretant creates a dynamic and continual cycle of meaning-making in which signs are used to communicate ideas, convey information, and generate understanding. The importance of Peirce's semiotics in this research lies in its ability to identify the underlying layers of meaning and the interpretive process behind the beauty influencers' content. Understanding how signs are constructed, understood, and related to other texts provides vital insights into how beauty influencers change perceptions, influence customer behavior, and establish their power within the beauty business and online community. Intertextuality, on the other hand, refers to the interconnectedness of texts or the reference of one text to another [30], [31]. It implies that a text is not isolated, but rather, it is both influenced by and exerts influence upon other texts, thus giving rise to a network of meanings and interconnections. In the context of this study, Peirce's semiotics can be employed to investigate how beauty influencers on YouTube utilize signs and symbols in their content. Simultaneously, intertextuality explores how these signs reference and interrelate with other texts, encompassing beauty trends, cultural references, and societal norms. Prior research has identified a notable absence of dedicated studies specifically focused on the intertextual semiotic analysis of beauty influencers on YouTube. Consequently, this research gap presents an opportunity to explore and investigate the semiotic dimensions of the content generated by beauty influencers on YouTube. Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze the semiotic intertextuality within the realm of beauty influencers on YouTube, drawing upon Peirce's semiotic theory. This research delves deeper into how intertextuality impacts the interpretation of signs within the semiotic process.
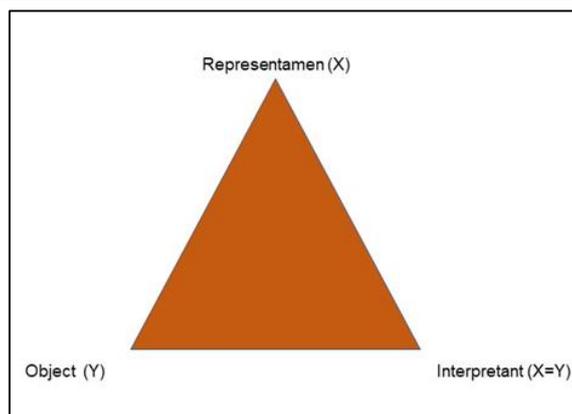
Fig. 1. Pierce's Triadic Model [29].

2. Method

This research employed a qualitative approach. In the process of data analysis, this study was grounded in Peirce's semiotic theory to discern how intertextuality influenced the interpretation of signs within the semiotic process. The semiotic process encompasses the comprehension of how signs (Representamen/R) establish connections with their intended meanings (Object/O) and how these meanings are perceived by the audience (Interpretant/I). This study delved into how this triadic process unfolded in the context of beauty influencer content on YouTube. The research subjects comprised two prominent beauty influencers, namely Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda. The selection of only two beauty influencers stemmed primarily from practical constraints and the research's specific focus. The primary objective of this qualitative study, utilizing a semiotic intertextual analysis approach, was to conduct a thorough investigation. Furthermore, these influencers were chosen due to their substantial subscriber bases, each boasting over 2,000 followers, rendering them representative figures among well-known beauty influencers on YouTube. Additionally, their similar ages facilitated a comparative exploration of their content and viewpoints. In the process of data collection, this study involved capturing and analyzing specific videos from the YouTube channels of the two influencers. The YouTube video link for Andra Aldodita can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vCyvRtgf_o, while the link for Kornelia Meilinda's video is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq4B8ClPqBk. Within the scope of this study, attention was focused on assessing one frame from each short video produced by each beauty influencer. These particular frames were meticulously chosen due to their significance in illustrating various aspects of recommended lipstick application. Given the brevity of the videos, it was reasoned that examining a single frame from each video would yield valuable insights into the messages conveyed by the beauty influencers concerning recommended lipsticks. The videos were sequentially evaluated over a predefined time frame to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various elements within the content related to the use of recommended lipsticks. The specific facets analyzed in this study encompass visual components, textual content, product endorsements, and makeup techniques, representing some of the specific elements addressed in the videos.

3. Results and Discussion

The discussion in this research involved an analysis of two specific scenes featuring beauty influencers, namely Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda. These scenes were treated as textual material, representing segments of the beauty influencers' explanations within their videos. The first scene selected for this study is extracted from Andra Alodita's review of Wardah's matte lip cream. In this particular scene, Andra demonstrates the application of Wardah lipstick products, showcasing their long-lasting and matte finish qualities. This segment has a duration of approximately fifteen seconds, allowing for a meticulous examination of the visual elements, the language employed, and the makeup techniques employed. These scenes were connected to the research objectives by scrutinizing their content, context, and duration. Subsequently, it became possible to elucidate how visual components, textual content, product endorsements, makeup techniques, and intertextuality were utilized to convey specific messages and reshape viewers' perceptions of the products under investigation within this research. Fig. 2 provides a visual representation of a specific moment from

Andra Alodita's video where she discussed and reviewed Wardah Lipstick. These capture serve as a data for further examination and interpretation by using Peirce's semiotics triadic scheme. The analysis consists of three major steps: identifying the representamen (R), object (O), and interpretant (I). Each element is thoroughly investigated to determine how it interacts and creates meaning within the context of the content. In Peirce's semiotic framework, the representation stage (R1) relates to the concept of "representamen", which signifies the sign itself. The colours act as representaments in this context which serve as signs that convey meaning in the screenshot scene. After analyzing the color of visual aspects presented in the Fig. 2, the colors were classified based on their dominant presence and undertones. The first, the predominant deep red undertone seen in Andra's clothing, the lipstick she holds, and the colours used. Then, a lighter shade of brown, identified as salem or red, is depicted in graphic elements such as the chair and the wall behind. Moreover, the white colour is mostly found in the chair covers, the background of the windows, and the text. In particular, the darker colour is intentionally positioned at the centre of the composition to draw attention as the focus point. Furhermore, the text portion is balanced on the left side, complemented by an uncrowded background, thus ensuring legibility and ease of reading. By analyzing the visual elements in the screenshot using Peirce's semiotics, a deeper understanding of the scene and its communicative strategy can be gained. This analysis contributes to the overall examination of intertextuality in the context of beauty influencers, explaining how visual elements are used to convey meaning, attract attention and influence viewers' perceptions of the products reviewed.

Fig. 2. The screen capture of Wardah Lipstick review scene by Andra Alodita [32].

Then, in the object stage (O1), the analysis focused on three main objects described in the scene. The first is Wardah's lipstick product which is used as one of the main objects. The lipstick is the main focus of Andra Alodita's review in the video. Its packaging, colour, and overall appearance contribute to the visual representation and communication of the product's attributes and qualities. Secondly, Andra Alodita herself can be identified as another important object in the scene. As the main beauty influencer in the video, she played an important role in conveying information and influencing the audience's perception of Wardah lipstick. Her presence and involvement with the product adds a personal touch to the review, allowing viewers to connect with her as a trusted source of beauty advice. Lastly, the background provides support and context for the main objects in the scene. Besides, the chair that Andra is sitting on, contributes to the overall composition and aesthetics of the screenshot. The background walls and glass elements also add depth and visual interest to the scene, thus enhancing the overall visual appeal. In addition to these various objects, there are a number of other identifiable elements in the screenshot. It includes a box and text, which functions as a rectangular element positioned on the left side of the screenshot. Then the brush, located next to the text, adds a visual component that complements the overall composition and provides additional information or context related to the Wardah lipstick product being reviewed.

In the interpretation stage (I1), the analysis focused on the meaning conveyed by the screenshot image. The scene showed a woman, Andra Alodita, holding a red lipstick in a cosy room setting. This image conveys the interpretation that a woman can maintain her beauty and charm although being inside the house.The presence of Andra Alodita, a well-known beauty influencer, as the main subject in this scene implies that she acts as a role model or source of inspiration for viewers. By presenting herself holding a red lipstick in a cosy room illustrates the impression that a woman still looks beautiful even though she is only at home still looks beautiful and charming. In the first semiotic process relationship, it can be inferred that the relationship between the representamen (screenshot) and the

object (woman holding lipstick) is iconic. The image visually resembles the object it represents, which is the act of holding lipstick. Without the accompanying text, the audience's understanding is limited to the perception that the woman is holding a lipstick, without knowing that she is reviewing or referring to the lipstick. The intertextual relationship between the elements can be interpreted as a new semiotic process. The hypotext in the scene refers to the audience's prior knowledge of the lipstick colour used by Andra, which is part of the lipstick being reviewed. The text accompanying the image serves as a reference that helps in the interpretation of the first level of semiosis. Then, we need a new object (O2) that works together with the initial interpretant (I1) to create a new representamen (R2) in the second level of semiosis. This model generates a new interpretant (I2) at the second level, which relates to R2 and O2. In this case, the new object (O2) represents Wardah, a popular makeup brand in Indonesia, known and trusted by women from all backgrounds. Some significant elements can be observed at the second level of the semiotic process. The relationship between the representamen and the object is iconic at this level, which means that there is a direct similarity between the sign of the woman holding the lipstick and the woman being represented by holding the lipstick. This representation similarity is consistent with the semiotics process, which requires an awareness of extrinsic codes beyond the immediate text, known as the hypotext. Although the information in the hypotext does not specifically mention Wardah, its inclusion of the " #01red-dicted" text shows that the specific color employed in the lipstick serves as a code for its identification. In addition, the semiotic process includes I3/R3, O3, and resulting in I3 interpretation. The hypotext referred to by O3 in this context depicts a beautiful Indonesian woman inspired by the strength of the lipstick brand used, leading to Interpretation I2. In Interpretation I3, a new symbolic connection emerges, giving the idea that Indonesian women can gain beauty using Wardah lipstick, a local brand. Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the semiotic process in Andra's YouTube scene, which aligns with Peirce's semiotic framework and provides an overview of the related levels.

Table 1. Andra Alodita's Levels of Semiotics Process.

Classification of Signs	First Level (R1/O1/I1)	Second Level (R2/O2/I2)	Third Level (R3/O3/I3)
Representation (R)	The colors were classified based on their dominant presence and undertones.	The cover motif of the chairs may vary, but they come together harmoniously, while the background creates a cozy home environment.	The elegant background showcases a suitable home environment for the female character.
Object (O)	There are three objects in the scene, starting with the Wardah lipstick product and Andra as the main objects of the scene.	The woman's gaze towards the camera, accompanied by a slight smile.	The beautiful woman with sensual red lipstick represents the beauty of Indonesian women.
Interpretation (I)	The woman is holding a red lipstick in a cozy indoor setting, depicting the impression that a woman can still look beautiful even when she's just at home.	The brand of red lipstick held by the woman looks beautiful and matches what she is wearing.	Wardah lipstick is affordable for Indonesian women.

Table 1 scrutinizes Andra Alodita's Levels of Semiotic Process in a screenshot scene from her YouTube video. The first level (R1/O1/I1) focuses on Representation, identifying colors based on their dominant presence and undertones, providing the idea that a woman could look beautiful even when she's home while holding a red lipstick. Moving on to the second level (R2/O2/I2), the Object analysis reveals three crucial objects: the Wardah lipstick product, Andra as the main subject, and the woman's gaze towards the camera, producing an iconic relationship in which the woman embodies the beauty associated with the lipstick. The interpretation extends further into the third level's (R3/O3/I3), which emphasizes the beauty of Indonesian women symbolized by the woman holding a red lipstick that perfectly matches her outfit. Wardah lipstick is also affordable for Indonesian women, making it accessible to all segments of society. Using Peirce's semiotic framework, Table 1 explains how meaning is shaped and interpreted in the scene, revealing the intricate relationship between the

object and its representation. Furthermore, the analysis includes not only Andra Alodita, but also Kornelia Meilinda, another prominent beauty influencer. Both Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda are examined in terms of their reviews and recommendations of different lipstick brands. By considering the perspectives of both influencers, a more comprehensive understanding of the semiotic aspects and implications of the lipsticks reviewed can be achieved. Kornelia Meilinda's scene analysis explores her specific approach to reviewing the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick.

Fig. 3 presents a visual depiction that captures a particular moment from Kornelia Meilinda's video, which focuses on her review of the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick. This screenshot is used as data for in-depth analysis and interpretation using Peirce's semiotic triadic scheme, which consists of representamen, object, and interpretant components. In the representational stage (R1), the analysis focused on the screenshot scene. The elements in the screenshot were analyzed, the background appeared with the use of a white background. However, the use of lighting techniques resulted in a visual effect where the background appeared grey with gold-colored lights. This visual presentation is enhanced by positioning a woman with slightly blonde hair at the center, capturing attention and serving as the focal point. In the object stage (O1), Kornelia Meilinda is depicted wearing the lipstick being reviewed, with the accompanying text strategically placed to achieve a balanced layout in the screenshot. The text is positioned at the bottom, top center, and above the left corner of the frame, which contributes to the overall visual composition. While the main object of focus is Kornelia Meilinda herself, it is important to note that the text in the scene also functions as an object. Although textual in nature, the placement and presence of the text within the frame make it an important component of the overall scene and its semiotic interpretation

**Fig. 3.** The screen capture of Kornelia Meilinda scene [33].

In the interpretation stage (I1), analysis of the scene from Kornelia Meilinda's video revealed several key elements. The primary interpretation is a woman applying lipstick to her lips, conveying the act of enhancing her appearance and beauty. This interpretation is reinforced by the visual focus on Kornelia Meilinda and the application of lipstick. Furthermore, the background of the scene plays an important role in shaping the interpretation. The background, with its glamorous atmosphere, conveys a sense of luxury and elegance. This background reflects the context in which the lipstick is displayed, suggesting that this product is associated with an upper-class or high-class aesthetic. The luxurious background enhances the lipstick's overall attractiveness, positioning it as a desirable and glamorous choice for its viewers. By bringing all these elements together, the interpretation of the scene depicts a woman using lipstick to enhance her beauty, with the luxurious background highlighting the aspirational and glamorous aspects of the product. Based on the semiotic analysis of Kornelia Meilinda's screen capture scene, the scene shows a multilevel iconic relationship, where the audience's knowledge from YouTube influences the interpretation of her review of the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick. The text in the scene acts as a reference for the initial interpretation at the first level of semiosis. Following Peirce's triadic scheme of semiosis, a new semiotic process occurs when a new object (O2) interacts with the initial interpretant (I1), giving rise to a new representamen (R2) at the second level. This schematic model facilitates the production of an interpretant (I2), which refers to R2 and O2, representing Wardah, a well-known cosmetic brand in Indonesia that is trusted and favored by women in various social circles. The semiotic process used in Kornelia Meilinda's scene is quite similar to the semiotic process used by Andra Alodita, which involves the interaction between I3/R3 and O3 and results in Interpretation I3. The contextual

information that serves as the hypertext referred to by O3 depicts a beautiful woman wearing lipstick, which contributes to the formulation of Interpretation I2. This process gives rise to a new symbolic relationship in Interpretation I3, which suggests that women can enhance their beauty with Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick. The analysis of the semiotic process of the scene on YouTube by Kornelia Meilinda is summarised in Table 2 using Peirce's semiotic framework.

Table 2. Kornelia Meilinda's Levels of Semiosis Process.

Classification of Signs	First Level (R1/O1/I1)	Second Level (R2/O2/I2)	Third Level (R3/O3/I3)
Representation (R)	Description of the setting as a unity with a white background, but with lighting effects to create a grayish tone and golden-colored lights.	The background motif combines a plain background with flickering golden lights, forming a pattern.	Elegant and glamorous background setting, similar to the appearance of a woman wearing lipstick.
Object (O)	The objects in the scene include the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick product and Kornelia as the main subject of the scene.	The woman's gaze is directed downwards while using lipstick.	A beautiful woman with lipstick depicting feminine beauty.
Interpretation (I)	A woman is using red lipstick indoors and still appears beautiful while wearing lipstick.	A pink lipstick brand is being used, resulting in a beautiful appearance.	Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick brand is a new and convincing brand that looks beautiful.

Table 2 provides a brief summary of the levels of Kornelia Meilinda's semiotic process. In the first level (R1/O1/I1), the scene is represented as a single entity with a white background, accompanied by lighting effects that create a greyish tone and golden lights. The objects in the scene include the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick product and Kornelia herself as the main subject. The interpretation obtained from this level is a woman who uses red lipstick indoors and still looks beautiful while wearing it. Moving on to the second level (R2/O2/I2), the background motif evolves by combining a plain background with flickering golden lights, forming an aesthetically pleasing pattern. The woman's gaze is directed downwards as she applies lipstick. The resulting interpretation at this level is that a pink lipstick brand is being used, resulting in a beautiful appearance. Lastly, the third level (R3/O3/I3) presents an elegant and glamorous background that enhances the appearance of the woman wearing the lipstick. The interpretation at this level highlights the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick brand as a new and convincing choice that enhances beauty. After Analyzing the levels of the semiotic process using Peirce's semiotic theory, the three aspects are necessary for the semiotic process, which entails the presence of a sign that may be understood. First, the representamen denotes the sign's form or format. Second, the item relates to something other than the sign it points to. Finally, the interpretant denotes the meaning generated by the sign. Fig. 4 is Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda's Semiotics Process Level.
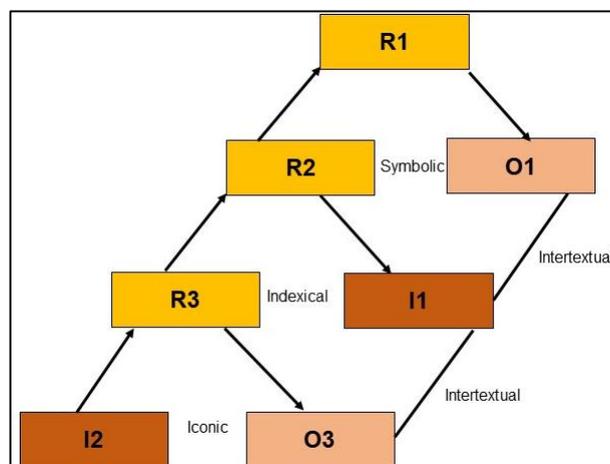
Fig. 4. Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda's Semiotics Process Level

Fig. 4 shows the level of the semiotic process used by Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda in their screenshot scenes, demonstrating the analysis and interpretation of signs to convey meanings and messages relating to beauty products and personal appearance. The analysis of Andra Alodita's intertextuality semiosis process in a YouTube beauty influencer review scene highlights the presence of intertextual understanding that enriches the interpretation of signs, resulting in layered meanings. The screen capture scene provides a platform for the placement of texts that can be filled with hypertext, adding depth to the analysis. In short, the selected screen capture scene from Kornelia Meilinda focuses on the review of the Swatch Lume Colors Velvet Lip Coat lipstick. The analysis is conducted using Peirce's triadic theory, revealing interconnected levels of the semiotic process that contribute to the formation of intertextuality within the selected screen capture scene featuring beauty influencers.

4. Conclusion

The study investigated the communication strategies employed by beauty influencers Andra Alodita and Kornelia Meilinda in their YouTube videos using Peirce's semiotics. The study determined how visual elements, colors, composition, and object placement were used to convey meaning and draw viewers' attention. It was discovered through the investigation of the two problems that semiotic relationships might alter depending on the audience's experiences and knowledge, resulting in various readings of the same signs. The findings present insight into the importance of intertextuality as well as how beauty influencers modify opinions of beauty products. While the study revealed useful insights, the small sample size and the need for additional research to create a full model framework for beauty influencers were mentioned. Future research will contribute to a better understanding of semiotic features in beauty influencer material on YouTube by evaluating diverse influencer views and exploring various ways of delivery and symbolic connections. The study is a first step toward understanding the complexities of beauty influencer communications strategies, which impact the beauty business and customer perceptions. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the realm of technology's effect by adopting the theoretical base of Peirce's semiotics.

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