

Targeting Age-Related Insecurities: A Rhetorical Analysis of Anti-Aging Product Marketing by Pakistani Brands on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a rhetorical analysis of Pakistani beauty brands on Instagram that market anti-aging products. Using Aristotle's model of rhetorical analysis, the research examines advertisements from eight Pakistani skincare brands. The qualitative analysis identifies prominent emotional appeals such as fear and desire, along with rhetorical devices that reinforce age-related insecurities. Advertisers frequently use metaphor, hyperbole, and personification, with hyperbole being the most common device, often making exaggerated claims about reversing signs of aging overnight. The findings reveal that these advertisements promote anti-aging products as essential solutions to avoid aging, thereby intensifying societal pressure on women to maintain a youthful appearance. The study concludes that such rhetoric may negatively impact the mental health of middle-aged women by normalizing the belief that aging is undesirable. These findings underscore the need for ethical marketing practices and further research on the psychological effects of anti-aging advertisements.

Keywords: *Rhetorical analysis, anti-aging products, Instagram, Pakistani beauty brands, skincare.*

INTRODUCTION

Women in Pakistan are an important target for advertisers, especially in the beauty industry. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, women made up 48.76% of the population in 2017. This demographic represents a significant market, particularly vulnerable to manipulation by marketing tactics. In today's society, women are still often judged by their appearance rather than their intelligence. This constant pressure to meet beauty standards leads them to invest considerable time and money into enhancing their looks (Kumar, 2002). One key area of this pressure is the anti-aging market, where the desire to look youthful is heavily promoted.

Aging is often viewed negatively, particularly for women, and this perception is further reinforced by cultural and societal standards. In Pakistan, much like other parts of the world, the fear of aging and losing physical beauty is deeply embedded. The beauty industry, especially manufacturers of anti-aging products, capitalizes on this fear. Advertisements frequently promote the idea that youth is essential to desirability and success. This encourages women to believe that

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signs of aging must be fought. This marketing strategy reinforces a belief system where youthfulness equates to worth, pushing women to rely on anti-aging products in hopes of maintaining their social and personal value.

Researchers have looked at different aspects of how people perceive advertising. A consumer's positive or negative feelings about an ad can influence their response to it (Mehta, 2000). Advertising is a strong way to communicate. It targets viewers' psychology while also reflecting cultural values (Chaudhary, 2012). In Pakistani culture, issues like inferiority complexes and social pressure play a big role in creating a desire for flawless, youthful skin. Advertisers want to sell products, but their methods are often complex. Many ads reinforce stereotypes. They create the idea that a young and beautiful woman is a successful woman. Each year, companies spend hundreds of billions of dollars to influence public perception. Advertising is a powerful tool that can inspire consumers and affect their buying behaviour (Niazi et al., 2012).

Advertisements reach consumers through various media, including the internet, radio, television, magazines, and newspapers. To connect with their target audience, advertisers must choose the right medium. For example, if the target group is young people, the Internet is the best choice, as many young shoppers browse online for products like clothes and gadgets. Print media, such as magazines, can reach both young and old audiences, so advertisers use this medium to promote their products. Visuals and language in ads are important for attracting women.

Cook (2001) states that advertisements inform, persuade, remind, influence, and can even change people's opinions, emotions, and attitudes. He argues that ads do more than just sell products. He further adds that they can shape society and make people buy things they may not want or need. Additionally, ads can help create awareness and shape identities and attitudes.

In a society where beauty is often prioritized, the anti-aging market thrives by feeding on these insecurities. Women are encouraged to invest in products that promise to turn back time, using fear-based and emotionally charged language. This article aims to critically analyse the language and rhetorical devices used by Pakistani beauty brands to sell anti-aging products, focusing on how they manipulate women's insecurities about aging. By examining the marketing techniques of top beauty brands, the study seeks to uncover the ways in which language is used to reinforce negative stereotypes about aging and push women toward purchasing anti-aging solutions.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What kind of rhetorical devices do Pakistani brands use in Instagram posts to evoke insecurities related to aging?
2. What emotional appeals (e.g. fear and desire) do Pakistani brands commonly use in their Instagram posts to market anti-aging products?

Delimitations

The study is delimited exclusively to Instagram advertisements, excluding other platforms and types of media. The analysis is confined to the use of specific rhetorical devices and emotional appeals and does not include other potential factors influencing consumer behaviour.

Significance of the Study

This research holds practical importance as it sheds light on how Pakistani beauty brands use rhetorical devices and emotional appeals to manipulate women by targeting their insecurities about aging. By understanding these strategies, consumers can become more aware of the persuasive techniques influencing their purchasing decisions. Additionally, this study provides insights for policymakers by encouraging the development of guidelines to regulate misleading or harmful advertising. For marketers and brands, this research can foster more ethical advertising practices, promoting positive body image and self-worth rather than exploiting insecurities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising is a widely used method of presenting products, services, and information in a persuasive manner, encouraging the audience to purchase and consume through various media channels (Arens, 1996). The primary goal of advertising is to inform and persuade the audience, using rhetorical techniques to craft effective arguments (Nichifor, 2014). Visual media plays a powerful role in enhancing the persuasive nature of advertisements (Ye et al., 2019). Rhetoric, with its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, specifically Aristotle (384-322 BC), relies on three core elements: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Ethos is based on the speaker's credibility, Pathos appeals to emotions, and Logos uses logical reasoning to form persuasive arguments. (Aristotle, 2007, trans. by Kennedy)

Unlike traditional rhetoric that focused primarily on language, modern advertising combines both visual and verbal elements to increase its persuasive impact, saving time while strengthening the message (Vu, 2017). Rhetoric in advertising includes terms like images, Ethos, Pathos, Logos, as well as figures of speech like metaphors, similes, puns, and rhetorical questions (Vu, 2017).

Existing studies have explored the rhetorical strategies and Linguistic Manipulation in advertisements across different media platforms. Vu (2017) conducted a study on rhetoric in television advertising in Vietnam. His study analysed rhetorical devices such as repetition, hyperbole, and comparison (including metaphor) in those targeted advertisements and calculated the frequencies of its usage respectively. The study also highlighted that these rhetorical figures, presented through images, words, and sounds, are employed to manipulate emotions and consumer behaviour. This aligns with the broader understanding of how advertising often uses emotional appeals to capitalize at the audience's vulnerability.

Sindano's (2014) study looked at car advertisements in The Namibian newspaper using a qualitative method. The research examined the language and rhetorical strategies used in these

ads. The findings showed that car ads often use attractive slogans, aggressive language, and comparisons to attract consumers. The research stressed on the importance of persuasive techniques in ads, aiming to create feelings of superiority and urgency among buyers. This study highlighted how language can shape what consumers think, especially for high-cost products like cars.

Van Mulken (2003) analysed rhetorical devices in print advertisements. she opted for both qualitative and quantitative research design. The study mainly focused on 1000 French and Dutch magazine advertisements. Two frameworks namely McQuarrie and Mick's Text-Interpretive Analysis and the Visual Rhetoric approach by Groupe Mu were applied by the researcher. The study concluded that neither framework was entirely flawless. However, McQuarrie and Mick's model was the most promising for analysing how advertisements construct persuasive messages. This underscores the importance of both visual and textual elements in effective advertising rhetoric.

Building on these studies, the present research focuses on the rhetorical strategies used by Pakistani beauty brands on Instagram to market anti-aging products. Unlike previous research that explored general advertising rhetoric across various media, this study specifically examines how emotional appeals and rhetorical devices are used to reinforce age-related insecurities in women. Using Aristotle's rhetorical framework, the analysis aims to highlight how these brands construct persuasive messages that contribute to societal pressure around aging and beauty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed qualitative research method to conduct a rhetorical analysis of anti-aging products' advertisements. For this purpose, a total of eight advertisements (one from each selected brand) were analysed to ensure balanced representation. The sample included both static visual posts (images) and short video advertisements (such as reels), reflecting the common advertising formats used by these brands on Instagram. The analysis focused on both the caption text and the written content appearing within the videos or on the images. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the advertisements. The rationale for this method was to deliberately choose posts that specifically promoted anti-aging products. This approach allowed the researcher to focus only on content relevant to the research objectives rather than analysing general skincare promotions.

The selected Pakistani skincare brands include Fidara Beauty, Conatural, Ayesha.o.Beauty, NurbyJuggun, Organic-Traveller, Prokitpk, Organicpromise.pk, and Lushorganix.

Table 1. Instagram profile links of the selected brands for the present study.

Brand Names	Instagram Profile Links
FidaraBeauty	https://www.instagram.com/fidara.beauty/
Conatural	https://www.instagram.com/conatural/

Ayesha.o.Beauty	https://www.instagram.com/ayesha.o.beauty/
NurbyJuggun	https://www.instagram.com/nurbyjuggun/
Organic-Traveller	https://www.instagram.com/organic_traveller/
Prokitpk	https://www.instagram.com/prokitpk/
Organicpromise.pk	https://www.instagram.com/organicpromise.pk/
Lushorganix	https://www.instagram.com/lushorganix/

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Aristotle's model of rhetorical analysis, as translated by Kennedy (Aristotle, 2007; original work published ca. 4th century BCE), which categorizes persuasion into three main appeals: Ethos (credibility), Pathos (emotion), and Logos (logic). These elements serve as the foundation for analysing how language and visuals in advertisements influence consumer perception and behaviour. By applying this classical framework, the study investigates how Pakistani beauty brands on Instagram use emotional and logical appeals, along with credibility markers, to promote anti-aging products and shape societal attitudes toward aging.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study examines eight anti-aging products from eight different Pakistani skincare brands to understand the rhetorical strategies employed in their Instagram captions promoting anti-aging products. Each brand's approach and its distinct ways of appealing to the insecurities of women regarding aging has taken into account. The products for the analysis include the Butterfly Effect Retinol Anti-Aging Serum from Lushorganix, the Super Activs Anti-Aging Serum from Conatural, the Night Mode Night Serum from Ayesha.o.Beauty, and others from brands including Fidara Beauty, NurbyJuggun, Organic-Traveller, Prokitpk, and Organicpromise.pk



Advertisement 1: *“Your skin called- it wants to stay forever young. Embrace the power of youth with our anti-aging serum!” (Brand: conatural, Product: super actives anti-aging skin serum)*

The caption for conatural’s “*super actives anti-aging skin serum*” personifies the skin, suggesting it has a voice that desires to “*stay forever young.*” This playful tone masks the reality that aging is a natural process that cannot be avoided. This rhetorical strategy directly targets women’s insecurities about aging. It suggests that women must actively fight aging, presenting the anti-aging serum as the solution as mentioned: “*Embrace the power of youth with our anti-aging serum!*”



Advertisement 2: “AGE GRACEFULLY! Anti-aging cream- Made with fish collagen, improves Skin's Elasticity and reduce aging signs.” (Brand: nurbyjuggun, Product: ANTI AGING CREAM)

The caption by the brand, created by famous Pakistani actress Juggun Kazim, uses the phrase “AGE GRACEFULLY” as a rhetorical strategy. It implies if one does not use the product, they cannot age gracefully. This creates an implicit comparison, suggesting that fine lines and wrinkles detract from a woman's grace and beauty as she ages.

By stating that the cream is “made with fish collagen,” the advertisement attempts to establish credibility and a scientific basis for its claims. This appeal to logos implies that the product has special properties that can improve skin elasticity and reduce signs of aging. However, the underlying message is one of insecurity that women must view aging as a flaw that must be corrected.



Advertisement 3: *"can't believe we are actually this old"* (brand: organic traveller. product: Mighty + Retinol serum)

The line *"if you remember this tune, you need to start using retinol"* combines humor and urgency, targeting an audience aware of their aging. By referencing a nostalgic tune, it targets a shared experience among viewers who enjoyed it in their youth.

The phrase *"can't believe we are actually this old"* directly makes women anxious by suggesting that time has not been kind. It cleverly creates a connection between their memories and their current appearance.



Advertisement 4: *"if you are in your 20's you should start using Retinol"* (Brand: Fidara Beauty, Product Retinol repair Night cream)

Fidara Beauty in its advertisement promotes the misleading idea that individuals in their 20s should start using anti-aging products. Many dermatologists caution against using retinol at such a young age because excessive use of retinol can lead to irritation and sensitivity in younger skin. (Zasada & Budzisz, 2019)

This statement from Fidara Beauty can create unnecessary anxiety among young women, pressuring them to address aging concerns prematurely, even when their skin does not yet show significant signs of aging.



Advertisement 5: *“Do you dream to have youthful, wrinkle-free appearance without getting into the hassle of surgery and invasive procedures? Our invisible face and neck lift tape is a temporary but quick fix for your problems. It is a miraculous tool used by expert makeup artists to create youthful looks by lifting the eye area and smoothening the jawline and neck area. You can even curate creative, dramatic looks for magazines and runaways. If you want to look extra "pulled together" for portraits and special event then this should be your go-to pick.” (Brand: prokitpk, product: Face and neck lift invisible tape)*

The caption for the face and neck lift tape employs several rhetorical strategies that manipulate women into considering a product that is essentially unnecessary. By starting with the rhetorical question, *“Do you dream to have a youthful, wrinkle-free appearance without getting into the hassle of surgery and invasive procedures?”* the brand taps into common insecurities about aging among women.

Describing the product as a *“miraculous tool”* used by *“expert makeup artists”*, the brand establishes its credibility. The mention of looking *“pulled together”* for portraits and special events creates societal pressure on middle-aged women to conform to beauty standards. It directly reinforces the idea that youthfulness is essential for social acceptance. On the other hand, the mention of *“creative, dramatic looks for magazines and runways”* glamorizes the product. It aims at making women feel that they need it to appear trendy. Overall, this advertisement cleverly combines emotional appeals and credibility to manipulate women into believing they require this superficial, temporary solution.



Advertisement 6: “Get your hands on our NIGHT MODE NIGHT SERUM. smoothes out fine lines and wrinkles overnight., with our youth-replenishing, collagen-boosting face serum. The botanicals active serum with gleaming softness and uplifting firming. Night mode transforms lacklustre texture to luminous skin, overnight.” (Brand: Ayesha.o.beauty, Product: Night mode night serum)

Another brand, created by Ayesha Omar, a famous Pakistani artist, producer, singer, and entrepreneur, uses many rhetorical strategies to create appealing but potentially misleading claims about the product's effectiveness. The claim that the serum “*smoothes out fine lines and wrinkles overnight*” is an exaggerated assertion that plays into the desire for quick fixes. This hyperbolic phrase “*overnight*” is repeated multiple times in the caption. It reinforces the idea that the serum provides immediate results in a single night which is unlikely from a dermatological perspective. This repetition not only emphasizes the speed of effectiveness but also creates a sense of urgency for potential buyers.

The use of “night mode” personifies the concept of nighttime as a transformative period for the skin. It directly suggests that while one sleeps, the serum works magic. The rhetorical strategies used in the advertisement encourage consumers to imagine waking up with visibly improved skin. This tactic not only heightens the appeal of the product but also exploits the insecurities associated with aging.



Advertisement 7: *"Serum week is coming to an end and we saved the best for last. Say hi to our butterfly effect (retinol anti-aging serum). This serum is effective for all skin types. It helps reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines so that you can look as youthful on the outside as you feel inside! Don't let the wrinkles get you down."* (Brand: lushorganix, Product: THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT RETINOL ANTI-AGING SERUM)

The caption for Lushorganix's "The Butterfly Effect Retinol Anti-Aging Serum" employs several rhetorical devices, emotional appeals, and linguistic manipulations aimed at triggering insecurities in women regarding aging. The phrase *"butterfly effect"* acts as a metaphor for transformation, suggesting that using the serum can lead to positive changes in appearance and evoke hope. The exclamation *"Say hi to our butterfly effect"* creates an inviting tone that encourages engagement with the product. The phrase *"coming to an end"* builds urgency, motivating consumers to act quickly.

The caption effectively uses emotional appeals, particularly the desire for youthfulness and the fear of aging. The line *"look as youthful on the outside as you feel inside"* connects appearance with feelings, highlighting the pressure on women to maintain a youthful look. The phrase *"Don't let the wrinkles get you down"* evokes insecurity by suggesting that wrinkles are undesirable. While it offers reassurance, it reinforces the negative perception of aging, encouraging women to seek solutions for these insecurities. This approach heightens women's anxiety around aging while promoting the product as a remedy.



Advertisement 8: "FIRST MUSHROOM SERUM IN PAKISTAN, FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH" *"if you are in your 20s and you are not using retinol serum is worst thing you can do to your skin. Acne marks/Scars, open pores and skin tone can be regular reminders of breakouts, even when your acne is under control. Retinol is an essential ingredient in any anti-aging and acne treatment skincare routine. Retinol serums are effective products for improving fine lines, wrinkles, skin textures and radiance. Ingredients like niacinamide and hyaluronic acid helps restore and protect your skin's barrier. Our hyaluronic acid retinol mushroom serum is gentle yet effective day retinol serum that provides your skin with multiple anti-aging benefits. Our Retinol Facial Serum is formulated with ingredients like hyaluronic acid for extra hydration, niacinamide for soothing. Cherry on top mushroom extract boosts antioxidant, antiaging, anti-wrinkle, skin brightening and moisturizing effects of retinol. (Brand: organicpromise.pk, product: Retinol Mushroom serum)*

The caption for OrganicPromise.pk's Retinol Mushroom Serum uses several rhetoric strategies and manipulative techniques to heighten the sense of necessity for the product. The highly misleading phrase *"if you are in your 20s and you are not using retinol serum is the worst thing you can do to your skin"* triggers anxiety among young women who may feel pressured to maintain young-looking skin and prevent aging early. The use of terms like *"niacinamide," "hyaluronic acid,"* and *"mushroom extract"* gives the product credibility, as these ingredients are associated with skincare benefits.

The focus on these ingredients implies that the product has been scientifically validated, though no direct evidence or studies are cited to support these bold claims. Additionally, Calling the serum the *"Fountain of Youth"* and claiming it as the *"FIRST MUSHROOM SERUM IN PAKISTAN"* is a clear exaggeration. While appealing to the uniqueness of the product, the hyperbolic statement overstates the capabilities of the serum in reversing the process of aging.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing Instagram advertisements for anti-aging products from Pakistani skincare brands, the study revealed the use of several persuasive techniques aimed at middle-aged women. The findings address the first research question, "What kind of rhetorical devices do Pakistani brands employ in Instagram posts to evoke insecurities related to aging?" Advertisers frequently used rhetorical devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, and personification. Hyperbole was the most commonly used device, making exaggerated claims about the product's ability to reverse signs of aging overnight. For instance, phrases such as "miraculous tool" (Ad 5), "smoothes out fine lines and wrinkles overnight" (Ad 6), "transforms lacklustre texture to luminous skin, overnight" (Ad 6), and "fountain of youth" (Ad 8) make unrealistic claims about the product's ability to reverse signs of aging quickly or completely, which aligns with the defining characteristics of hyperbole.

The second research question, "What emotional appeals (e.g. fear and desire) do Pakistani brands commonly use in their Instagram posts to market anti-aging products?" was also examined. The results showed that fear of aging was a dominant emotional appeal. Advertisements heightened insecurities by portraying aging as something to be avoided at any cost. As a result, they offered their products as solutions to reverse these effects. Phrases like "Don't let wrinkles get you down" or "If you're in your 20s and not using retinol, this is the worst thing you are doing to your skin" were used to create anxiety around aging. This constant focus on fear and insecurity could negatively impact the mental health of middle-aged women, making them more vulnerable to marketing messages. Brands capitalized on this vulnerability and encourage consumers to buy products to feel youthful and accepted.

Additionally, some of the brands analyzed were created by famous Pakistani celebrities. This added credibility and trust to the products they promote. The association with these public figures makes the advertisements more persuasive. Phrases like "*AGE GRACEFULLY*" have been noticed in this research, used by these brands to suggest that having signs of aging is something disgraceful. The use of such terminology pushes women to believe they need to hide their natural aging process. Consumers may also be influenced by the success and physical appearance of these celebrities. This adds to the societal pressure on women to maintain a youthful appearance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the rhetorical strategies employed in Instagram advertisements for anti-aging products by Pakistani skincare brands. It also highlighted how these techniques manipulate middle-aged women by targeting their insecurities about aging. The use of emotionally charged language, unrealistic promises of youth, and phrases like "age gracefully" intensify societal pressure. By capitalizing on vulnerabilities, these brands encourage women to believe that aging naturally is undesirable, promoting their products as necessary solutions.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that Skincare brands adopt more responsible advertising practices by avoiding fear-based or age-shaming language. Regulatory bodies should introduce guidelines for ethical advertising, particularly for products that target appearance and

age-related concerns. Furthermore, Brands need to focus on empowering messages that promote healthy skin at any age rather than equating youth with beauty.

Future research could explore a broader range of advertisements beyond Instagram. This could include television and print media. It would be valuable to examine how different cultures approach anti-aging products. Additionally, researchers could investigate the impact of these advertisements on mental health. Understanding consumer behaviour is also essential. Studies could focus on how these ads affect women's self-esteem. Lastly, exploring the effects of celebrity endorsements could also provide further insights.

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