



# Women's Empowerment in Lancôme's "It's Within You" Campaign: An Appraisal Analysis and Critical Discourse Perspective

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## ABSTRAK

**Abstrak:** Studi ini menyelidiki representasi pemberdayaan perempuan melalui bahasa evaluatif dalam kampanye Lancôme "It's Within You". Studi ini menerapkan Teori Penilaian (Martin & White, 2005) dan Analisis Wacana Kritis (Fairclough, 1995) dalam desain studi kasus kualitatif dan paradigma interpretatif. Data tersebut terdiri dari ekspresi verbal yang diambil dari empat domain video kampanye yang menampilkan duta merek wanita: Penelope Cruz, HoYeon Jung, dan Joy Sunday. Analisis ini meneliti sumber daya Sikap, Keterlibatan, dan Pencapaian untuk mengungkap bagaimana bahasa evaluatif membangun makna ideologis pemberdayaan. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa pemberdayaan terutama dibangun melalui ketahanan emosional, kepercayaan diri, keaslian, dan agensi pribadi. Dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja Kabeer, wacana mewakili pemberdayaan melalui sumber daya, agensi, pencapaian, dan ketidakberdayaan, dengan agensi muncul sebagai dimensi dominan. Namun, kampanye ini juga menyajikan representasi ambivalen di mana pemberdayaan disertai dengan rasa tidak aman, regulasi emosional, dan harapan halus terhadap feminitas. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pemberdayaan dibingkai sebagai transformasi psikologis internal daripada perubahan sosial struktural, yang mencerminkan wacana postfeminis dan depolitisasi yang mengindividualisasi perjuangan perempuan dan mengkomodifikasi pengalaman emosional. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana subsistem Appraisal beroperasi untuk membangun makna ideologis. Ini juga menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis dengan mengungkapkan bagaimana bahasa evaluatif berfungsi secara ideologis dalam membangun pemberdayaan perempuan dalam wacana iklan kecantikan kontemporer.

**Abstract:** *The study investigates the representation of women's empowerment through evaluative language in the Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign. The study applies Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) within a qualitative case study design and interpretative paradigm. The data consist of verbal expressions taken from four campaign video domains featuring female brand ambassadors: Penelope Cruz, HoYeon Jung, and Joy Sunday. The analysis examines Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources to uncover how evaluative language constructs ideological meanings of empowerment. The findings reveal that empowerment is primarily constructed through emotional resilience, self-confidence, authenticity, and personal agency. Using Kabeer's framework, the discourse represents empowerment through resources, agency, achievements, and disempowerment, with agency emerging as the dominant dimension. However, the campaign also presents ambivalent representations in which empowerment is accompanied by insecurity, emotional regulation, and subtle expectations toward femininity. The study demonstrate that empowerment is framed as internal psychological transformation rather than structural social change, reflecting a postfeminist and depoliticization discourse that individualizes women's struggles and commodifies emotional experiences. This research showing how Appraisal subsystems operate to construct ideological meanings. It also uses Critical Discourse Analysis by revealing how evaluative language functions ideologically in constructing women's empowerment within contemporary beauty advertising discourse.*



## A. INTRODUCTION

The function of global brand campaigns has shifted significantly, they now operate not only as sales tools but also as strategic communication strategy that entangled with social and cultural discourse. Advertising no longer serves only to promote products but also as a discursive space in which values, identities, and social meanings are constructed (Fairclough, 2010). In this transition, the beauty industry has adopted the discourse of women's empowerment as a communication strategy (Lazar, 2006). Contemporary beauty campaigns often portray women as confident, independent, resilient, and self-determined subjects to align with societal expectations regarding gender representation.

Whereas older beauty advertisements frequently reduced women to passive visual objects, and newer advertisement campaigns that particularly used empowerment narratives tend to construct women as self-determining agents whose identities are not dictated by external norms (Kabeer, 1999). The discourse of empowerment in advertising often remains embedded in neoliberal ideologies in which empowerment is reconstructed as an individual process centered on confidence, emotional resilience, self-improvement, and personal transformation rather than collective social change or structural gender equality (Gill, 2007).

In advertising, women empowerment is not only communicated through visual representation but also through linguistic choices that shape meaning, emotion, and the position of the subject. Advertising discourse often uses evaluative language to construct women as empowered individuals and position women along with certain social values and ideological expectations. Following Martin & White (2005), evaluative language allows speakers and texts to express attitudes, negotiate positions, and align audiences with specific perspectives. The analysis of the language of women's empowerment is important in understanding how representations of women's empowerment are linguistically constructed in the discourse of beauty advertising. The Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign of a contemporary beauty advertising campaign that shows patterns in identity-oriented motivational narratives. The campaign explicitly promotes themes of confidence, inner strength, courage, and authenticity through motivational discourses

delivered by female ambassadors. The slogan "It's Within You" itself positions empowerment as an internal quality that exists in individual women, making the campaign relevant for examining how empowerment is linguistically and ideologically constructed in contemporary beauty discourse.

Previous studies have shown the relevance of Appraisal Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis in media and advertising research. Relevant studies have addressed appraisal in advertising. For example, Krizan (2016) highlights how Judgement reinforces social values in British advertisements. Meanwhile, Wihadi et. al. (2021) demonstrate the dominance of Judgement in halal beauty ads, whereas Tiani (2017) offers a critical note which suggesting that evaluative language often perpetuates idealized femininity in print media. Despite these contributions, the intersection of Appraisal Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis is remains underexplored.

Based on these gaps, this research focuses on the Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign. This study aims to analyze how Appraisal is realized in the campaign and how evaluative meaning contributes to the representations of women's empowerment from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis. This research questions are: (1) How is Attitude realized in the verbal narratives of Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign?; (2) How is Engagement realized in the verbal narratives of Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign?; (3) How is Graduation realized in the verbal narratives of Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign?; (4) How do the Appraisal resources contributes to the representation of women's empowerment from Critical Discourse Analysis perspective?

## B. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative case study design with interpretative paradigm. The researcher chose paradigm because the study focuses on understanding how meaning is built through language in social and ideological contexts. Creswell (2013) states that qualitative research is interpretative in nature because it tries to understand how people or texts create meaning from their own experiences and backgrounds. In discourse studies, this approach lets researchers do more than just describe language; it also helps them interpret the ideological meanings behind the language.

The data for this study are spoken utterances that have evaluative expressions. These are taken from the Lancome “It’s Within You” campaign video, which was published on the Helmut Agency website. The spoken parts come from three ambassadors: Penelope Cruz, HoYeon Jung, and Joy Sunday. The researcher used four campaign video documents as the data source. The object of the data is the linguistics units like words, phrases, and clauses that carry evaluative meanings based on the Appraisal Systems (Martin & White, 2005). The study focused especially on those that contribute to representing women’s empowerment in the campaign. In preparing the data, the researcher downloaded the four videos and transcribed them manually to ensure accuracy.

For the collection phase, the researcher used a documentation technique. The campaign videos were downloaded, the texts were transcribed, and then the clauses containing evaluative expressions were identified. These clauses were then categorized using the Appraisal Framework by Martin & White (2005). This documentation process helped the researcher accurately extract the linguistic elements that are relevant to the research goals.

The analysis itself was carried out in several stages, following Spradley’s model (1979): domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. Starting with domain analysis, this stage provided an overall picture of the data across the four videos. The taxonomy analysis then helped group the data based on the Appraisal system (Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation). Following this, componential analysis brought the results from the first two steps together into a single matrix, which allowed the researcher to trace patterns between the narrative structure and how interpersonal meanings are realized. The final stage, cultural theme analysis enabled the researcher to interpret the recurring evaluative patterns and uncover the broader ideological meanings and empowerment messages in the campaign. By combining Fairclough’s CDA with Appraisal Theory in this qualitative case study, this research can examine both the linguistic patterns and the ideological content of the campaign at the same time.

**C. RESULTS**

**1) Appraisal Analysis in Lancome’s “It’s Within You” Campaign**

To provide an overview of the evaluative resources identified in the Lancôme campaign, the distribution of Appraisal resources across the four domains is presented in Table 1 below. This table summarizes the frequency of each Appraisal category: Attitude (Affect, Appreciation, Judgement), Engagement (Monogloss, Heterogloss), and Graduation (Force, Focus)—across the Opening, Penelope Cruz, HoYeon Jung, and Joy Sunday domains. The total data analyzed consist of 109 clauses containing evaluative expressions.

**Table 1 Distribution of Appraisal Resources across Domains**

Domain	Amount of data	Attitude						Engagement		Graduation	
		Aff		App		Judg		Monogloss	Heterogloss	Force	Focus
		+	-	+	-	+	-				
Opening	9	2	2	-	1	1	2	3	4	5	1
Penelope Cruz	31	11	3	2	1	11	-	16	11	13	5
HoYeon Jung	31	9	1	2	1	12	-	19	8	3	8
Joy Sunday	38	2	2	4	1	12	7	21	10	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>

As shown in **Table 1**, the most prominent Attitude category across all domains is positive Judgement, with 36 tokens, followed closely by positive Affect with 24 tokens. In terms of Engagement, Monogloss dominates with 59 tokens compared to Heterogloss (33 tokens). For Graduation, Force (28 tokens) appears more frequently than Focus (20 tokens). These distributions indicate that the campaign relies heavily on evaluating women’s internal capacities while presenting these evaluations as unquestionable truths, and amplifies them through intensification. The following sub-sections elaborate on each Appraisal system in more detail, supported by qualitative examples from the data.

**a. Attitude Analysis**

**Table 2 Distribution of Attitude Resources**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Affect (+)	24	27.0%
Affect (-)	8	9.0%
Appreciation (+)	8	9.0%

Appreciation (-)	3	3.4%
Judgement (+)	35	39.3%
Judgement (-)	11	12.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Attitude analysis reveals that Judgement: Capacity is the most dominant category across all domains, followed by Affect (particularly positive Security and Happiness). This indicates that the campaign primarily evaluates women's internal qualities such as resilience, confidence, and emotional strength rather than their physical appearance. The distribution of Attitude across domains shows that negative evaluations, particularly insecurity and self-doubt, appear in the Opening and Joy Sunday domains to establish emotional vulnerability as the starting point of empowerment.

In the Opening domain, negative Affect: Security is realized through clauses such as "I'm so anxious right now" (OP-01) and "You look nervous" (OP-03), which construct an atmosphere of emotional vulnerability. The clause "I'm so anxious right now" inscribes negative Affect: Security through the lexical item anxious, expressing vulnerability and emotional instability. The speaker positions herself as emotionally fragile and lacking confidence at the beginning of the narrative. This representation foregrounds women's emotional struggles and creates identification with audiences who may experience similar insecurities. Within the discourse, vulnerability functions as the starting point of the empowerment journey. The clause "You really have to go there with no fear" (OP-02) inscribes positive Affect: Security, marking a transition from fear toward confidence and agency. Ideologically, the discourse frames empowerment as the ability to manage fear internally through emotional self-control and determination.

In the Penelope Cruz domain, Judgement: Capacity appears prominently. Clauses such as "I've always been able to feel things in a very strong way" (PC-03) invoke positive Judgement: Capacity, implying emotional capability and sensitivity as forms of strength. Rather than presenting emotional intensity as irrational or unstable, the discourse reconstructs emotional depth as a valuable personal quality.

Similarly, "In many ways I would consider myself strong" (PC-06) inscribes positive Judgement: Capacity, directly affirming personal ability and resilience. The modal expression "would consider" softens the assertion, making the self-evaluation appear reflective rather than arrogant. This balance constructs empowerment as confident yet emotionally grounded.

The HoYeon Jung domain demonstrates the most dynamic Attitude trajectory. The narrative begins with inscribed negative Affect: Security through "I'm so anxious right now" (HY-01), then moves toward positive emotions of enjoyment and resilience through clauses such as "I like this look" (HY-11) and "Let's enjoy this" (HY-18), and culminates in positive Judgement: Capacity through "Strength is within you" (HY-30). This pattern shows that the discourse acknowledges fragility while simultaneously reframing emotional openness and liberation as forms of feminine strength.

The Joy Sunday domain presents contrasting transitions from external negative Judgement to restoration of self-sovereignty. Clauses such as "Stop overacting" (JS-11), "You shouldn't show your feelings" (JS-12), and "You're not cool enough" (JS-14) employ negative Judgement: Propriety and Normality to construct emotional expression as inappropriate and socially inadequate. These utterances reflect restrictive norms that discipline women's emotional expression. However, the narrative shifts toward positive Judgement: Capacity through clauses such as "I've got this" (JS-25) and "I'm not holding back" (JS-34), which reconstruct women as capable subjects able to overcome insecurity and challenge previous negative emotions. The discourse ultimately negotiates femininity by resisting narratives of inadequacy and reconstructing women as resilient, capable, and self-defining subjects.

Across all domains, Judgement: Capacity emerges as the most frequent Attitude category (36 positive tokens), followed by Affect (24 positive tokens). This dominance indicates that the campaign focuses on evaluating women's behavioral capacities, internal strength, and resilience rather than expressing raw emotion states or appreciating aesthetic traits. The pattern of Attitude realization shows that negative evaluations are predominantly inscribed, while positive empowerment is primarily achieved through

invoked meanings. This suggests that true empowerment cannot simply be explicitly labeled by external commercial voice; it must be subtly triggered and self-actualized from within the subject's own behavioral determination.

**b. Engagement Analysis**

**Table 3 Distribution of Engagement Resources**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Monogloss	59	64.1%
Heterogloss	33	35.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Engagement analysis reveals a strategic pattern across all domains. Monogloss is the dominant category with 59 tokens, compared to 33 heteroglossic tokens. Monogloss is used to present vulnerability and empowerment as unquestionable truths, while Heterogloss (particularly Deny and Counter) is used to introduce external critical voices and resistance against them. The campaign opens dialogic space through Heterogloss in the middle of narratives, then closes it with Monogloss affirmations to reinforce the campaign's central message without negotiation.

In the Opening domain, Monogloss appears through clauses such as "I'm so anxious right now" (OP-01) and "What a letdown!" (OP-05), which present emotional conditions as direct personal facts without acknowledging alternative perspectives. These undialogized statements express immediate honesty and vulnerability, creating an authentic emotional atmosphere. Conversely, Heterogloss appears through clauses such as "You look nervous" (OP-03), which uses the verb "look" to indicate subjectivity and possibility, opening dialogic space for alternative interpretations. The Deny strategy appears through "Stop!" (OP-07), which directly rejects or interrupts negative discourse, signaling a turning point from negative judgement toward empowerment and self-assertion.

The Penelope Cruz domain shows a dynamic balance between Heterogloss in the middle of the discourse, which is then locked by Monogloss at the end. The Counter strategy appears through clauses such as "But in so many ways I have too many fears" (PC-07), which challenges the common assumption that strong individuals do not experience fear. Vulnerability is

reconstructed as compatible with strength, allowing empowerment to be represented as emotionally complex rather than idealized perfection. The Deny strategy appears through "I wouldn't want things to be different" (PC-09), where the speaker explicitly rejects alternative reality through negation, affirming authenticity and self-acceptance. The domain closes with Monogloss affirmations such as "Strength is within you" (PC-30), framing empowerment as an unquestionable internal truth.

The HoYeon Jung domain shows a balanced pattern between Monogloss and Heterogloss. All inscribed claims regarding strength, happiness, and life principles are conveyed in Monogloss, while the process of identity search is facilitated by Heterogloss: Entertain. The Entertain strategy appears through "Can it be powerful?" (HY-08) and "I can be whatever I want to be" (HY-16), which open dialogic space for alternative identities and future possibilities. The Counter strategy appears through "But you know what?" (HY-03), which signals a shift from anxiety toward confidence and possibility. The domain closes with Monogloss repetitions of "It's within you," "Strength is within you," and "Happiness is within you" (HY-29, HY-30, HY-31), reinforcing the campaign's central ideology that empowerment originates internally.

The Joy Sunday domain shows the sharpest contrast between Heterogloss Deny and Counter from external oppressive voices against Monogloss clauses used by the subject to claim internal truth. External disciplinary voices appear through "Stop overacting" (JS-11), "You shouldn't show your feelings" (JS-12), and "You're not right for this" (JS-13), utilizing Deny and Counter to regulate women's emotions. However, the subject exercises discursive resistance through denial: "I'm not holding back" (JS-34), rejecting restraint and hesitation. The domain closes with definitive Monogloss strings: "It's within you," "Strength is within you," and "Confidence is within you" (JS-35, JS-36, JS-37), locking the entire negotiation space and constructing the ideology that women's emotional authority should not be negotiated or dictated by external standards.

The strategic use of Engagement resources demonstrates that the campaign does not present a one-way narrative but deliberately brings up a clash of voices: pressure from outside and the response

from within the woman herself. This pattern shows how women's agency is formed through discursive resistance against negative voices, ultimately leading to the ideology that psychological independence is a valid solution for modern women.

### c. Graduation Analysis

**Table 4 Distribution of Graduation Resources**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Force	28	58.3%
Focus	20	41.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Graduation analysis reveals that Force (particularly Intensification) dominates the campaign with 28 tokens, compared to 20 tokens of Focus. Force is used to amplify both negative emotions (anxiety, fear, insecurity) and positive affirmations (strength, confidence). Focus: Sharpen is consistently used in the closing affirmations such as "within you" to locate empowerment internally. This pattern shows that the campaign relies heavily on emotional intensification to create persuasive impact, while ultimately sharpening the message that empowerment originates from within the self.

In the Opening domain, Force markers such as "so" in "I'm so anxious right now" (OP-01) amplify the degree of anxiety, while "really" in "You really have to go there with no fear" (OP-02) strengthens the sense of obligation. The phrase "no fear" quantifies the total absence of fear, maximizing the quantity of courage by eliminating fear from the proposition. Focus: Sharpen appears in "It's within you" (OP-09), where the word "within" specifies and sharpens the location of strength as internal. This sharpening effect strengthens the campaign's central ideology that confidence and power exist within every woman.

The Penelope Cruz domain shows Force markers such as "very strong" in "I've always been able to feel things in a very strong way" (PC-03), amplifying the degree of emotional experience. "So many ways" and "too many fears" (PC-07) quantify the extent of fear, amplifying emotional burden. "Major challenges" (PC-23) enlarges the scale of difficulties, making resilience appear more meaningful. Focus: Sharpen appears in "Strength is within you" (PC-30) and "Confidence is within you" (PC-31), emphasizing the internal source of empowerment.

The HoYeon Jung domain shows Force markers such as "so" in "I'm so anxious right now" (HY-01), "big" in "It's a big challenge" (HY-02), and "whatever" in "I can be whatever I want to be" (HY-16), maximizing the range of possible identities. "As many mistakes as you can" (HY-26) maximizes the quantity of mistakes allowed, reframing failure as productive and empowering. Focus: Sharpen appears in "I'm here, as me" (HY-13), specifying authentic identity, and in the repeated "within you" affirmations (HY-29, HY-30, HY-31), locking the location of emotional power.

The Joy Sunday domain shows Force markers such as "a little" in "a little nervous" (JS-05) scaling down emotional intensity, "over-" in "Stop overacting" (JS-11) amplifying negative behavior as excessive, and "so" in "My head's so busy" (JS-22) increasing mental pressure. Focus: Sharpen appears in "This is me" (JS-32) and "This is now" (JS-33), reinforcing identity and immediacy, while Focus: Soften appears in "It just shows you care" (JS-07), reducing the negative impact of nervousness by reframing it positively.

The consistent shift from Force to Focus across all domains is the main indicator of the depoliticization of women's empowerment. When texts use Focus: Sharpening through the word "within you," the entire focus of empowerment is narrowed to the psychological realm. Because the limits of power are emphasized on the internal self rather than social movements or structural changes, the text subtly isolates the issue of empowerment. This pattern constructs the meaning that women's empowerment is not measured by social changes from the outside but by the ability of individuals to manage their own emotions.

## 2) Synthesis of Appraisal Resources

A cross-domain analysis of the Opening, Penelope Cruz, HoYeon Jung, and Joy Sunday segments reveals a structural pattern across the Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign. The narrative consistently follows a transformation: exposure to social pressure, recognition of personal vulnerability, and finally a claim to identity sovereignty. Within the Attitude system, Positive Judgement: Capacity emerges as the dominant category, focusing on women's self-evaluation of their own abilities. Affect also plays a significant role, particularly the shift from negative security (anxiety and fear) toward positive happiness

and security. In contrast, Appreciation serves a supporting function; it reframes situational values, transforming negative reactions into positive valuations of internal qualities and body capital. What is notable is how the campaign alternates between inscribed and invoked language. Negative emotions such as anxiety (HoYeon Jung) and performative criticism (Joy Sunday's "overacting" and "not cool") are presented explicitly at the outset. However, as the narrative moves toward recovery, invoked strategies, metaphors of action take over to return to inscribed positive affirmation in the final campaign slogan.

A similar dynamic appears within the Engagement system. Early in the discourse, Heterogloss opens up substantial dialogic space, presenting external social expectations and internal doubts. But as the narrative approaches ideological resolution, that space gradually narrows. Monogloss takes full control, using denial strategies to resist embedded social restrictions, and locking the entire message of independence, authenticity, and power into rigid, modality-free definitive statements. This movement from openness to closure appears to be a deliberate rhetorical design. Graduation operates alongside this process. Force markers both intensification and quantification amplify emotional weight, increasing the perceived burden of internal struggles while also maximizing the volume of external criticism. Focus: Sharpen is then used to draw clear boundaries around contemporary identity, as seen in phrases like "This is me" and "This is now," and to fix the absolute location of power in a single abstract point through the repeated phrase "within you."

Taken together, these appraisal resources do not just evaluate women; they work interactively to construct empowerment as an internalized, emotionally regulated, and individually attainable identity. Positive Judgement defines the desirable qualities of empowered women, Monogloss legitimizes those qualities as unquestionable truths, and Force amplifies their emotional intensity. Through this interaction, empowerment is discursively reconstructed as psychological self-governance rather than collective social transformation.

These systematic and structured evaluative patterns cannot be separated from the institutional context in which they were produced. The Lancôme "It's Within You" campaign is a product of the global beauty

industry, shaped by specific branding strategies. Lancôme is not just promoting cosmetic products; rather, it is designing an empowerment message to the values of confidence, self-esteem, and emotional resilience. The institutional context further reinforces this interpretation. The campaign was launched on March 8, 2024 on International Women's Day that making it a strategically timed media distributed across global digital platforms. Featuring three internationally recognized ambassadors, the campaign is discursively designed to celebrate personal journeys of empowerment and self-discovery (L'Oreal Group, 2024). By aligning its release with this significant moment in global feminism, Lancôme engages in what is now recognized as femvertising, the commercialization of feminist discourse within advertising. This strategy enables the brand to move away from traditional marketing patterns that historically reinforced physical beauty standards, and instead commodify mental health, emotional resilience, and self-worth. Through this mechanism, personal challenges and emotional upheavals are reframed as universal consumer experiences, urging women to change their narratives and embrace self-empowerment but always within the framework of luxury beauty consumption.

This discourse blends several narrative types simultaneously: feminist discourse on women's strength, self-help motivational narratives emphasizing personal growth, and commercial advertising designed to attract consumers. The integration of personal stories and motivational appeals serves to build emotional connection with female audiences. Distribution through digital and social media platforms allows the campaign to reach a global audience, demonstrating how feminist and self-improvement values have become fully integrated into modern commercial communication practices.

The campaign may appear similar to conventional commercial advertisements that utilize ideological values for audience engagement. However, the analysis demonstrates that the empowerment message is reinforced through specific interpersonal evaluation patterns and motivational language structures grounded in the three pillars of Appraisal. Through this linguistic bridge, the meaning of

women's empowerment is reconstructed across four continuous discursive stages: Disempowerment, Resources, Agency, and Achievement (Kabeer, 1999).

### 3) Women Empowerment Analysis in Lancôme's "It's Within You" Campaign

The empowerment analysis in this study is categorized based on Kabeer's (1999) framework, which consists of four interrelated dimensions: disempowerment, resources, agency, and achievement. Each category is analyzed through its realization in the Appraisal system.

**Table 5 Distribution of Women's Empowerment Categories (Kabeer, 1999)**

Women Empowerment Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agency	38	42.2%
Resources	21	23.3%
Achievement	17	18.9%
Disempowerment	14	15.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### a. Disempowerment

The disempowerment category was found in 14 data points. This category generally appears with negative Appraisal resources, especially negative Affect and negative Judgement. For example, OP-01 ("I'm so anxious right now"), OP-03 ("You look nervous"), PC-07 ("I have too many fears"), HY-01 ("I'm so anxious right now"), and JS-05 ("a little nervous") are classified as disempowerment while showing negative Affect. These data represent experiences related to the difficulties, discomforts, or obstacles that women face. Additionally, OP-04 ("You're not cool enough"), OP-07 ("Stop!"), and JS-11 to JS-16 ("Stop overacting," "You shouldn't show your feelings," "You're not right for this," "You're not cool enough," "You'll forget your lines," "You're not what they hoped for") show negative Judgement because they contain assessments of unfair social treatment or restrictions on women. These findings show that disempowerment in the data is more realized through negative evaluations of conditions that hinder women from obtaining opportunities and making their life choices.

#### b. Resources

The resource category was found in 21 data points. Within Kabeer's framework, resources include access to education, opportunities, social networks, family support, and access to industry or the world of work. The results show that this category is most often realized through positive Appreciation. This can be seen in PC-13 ("Don't lose this"), PC-17 ("my search for answers"), HY-02 ("It's a big challenge"), HY-08 ("Can it be powerful?"), JS-24 ("Look how stunning!"), JS-28 ("I've got my family"), and JS-30 ("I've got hugs, kisses, my body") which evaluate resources as something valuable and beneficial for women. Some data such as PC-21 ("Some of the characters that I have been very lucky to play"), PC-23 ("major challenges"), HY-24 ("It's okay to make mistakes"), JS-26 ("I've got me"), and JS-27 ("I've got kindness, connection") also show positive Judgement because access to resources is associated with women's ability to develop their capacity. Thus, resources in the data tend to be represented through positive evaluation of opportunities, support, and access that enable women to improve their quality of life.

#### c. Agency

Agency is the most dominant category with 38 data points. In Kabeer's theory, agency refers to a woman's ability to act, make decisions, make choices, and control her own life. The results show that agency is most often realized through positive Judgement. This can be seen in PC-06 ("I would consider myself strong"), PC-08 ("I wouldn't change the way I feel things"), PC-09 ("I wouldn't want things to be different"), PC-19 ("give them a voice"), PC-22 ("They show the power they have and the strength"), PC-27 ("hopefully I will be able to portray that essence"), HY-10 ("I can do this!"), HY-13 ("I'm here, as me"), HY-14 ("I can be strong"), HY-15 ("I can be funny"), HY-26 ("Make as many mistakes as you can"), JS-25 ("I've got this"), and JS-34 ("I'm not holding back"). These data show positive assessment of women's ability, resilience, courage, and independence. In addition, agency also emerges through positive Affect in PC-01 ("Let's do this"), PC-08 ("I wouldn't change the way I feel things"), HY-11 ("I like this look"), HY-12 ("It makes me feel strong"), HY-17 ("Let's just let it happen"), HY-18 ("Let's enjoy this"), and JS-03 ("Are you excited?"), which illustrate women's confidence or satisfaction in carrying out their life choices. These

findings indicate that the representation of women's empowerment in the data is more built through the recognition of women's capacity as social actors who are able to act independently. The predominance of Agency indicates that empowerment is primarily represented through women's capacity to make autonomous decisions and exercise self-determination rather than through access to institutional or structural support.

#### **d. Achievement**

The achievement category was found in 17 data points and represents the results obtained by women after having resources and exercising their agency. Data such as OP-09 ("It's within you"), PC-24 ("those are the ones I feel the most proud of"), PC-29 ("It's within you"), PC-30 ("Strength is within you"), PC-31 ("Confidence is within you"), HY-18 ("Let's enjoy this"), HY-20 ("You can be free"), HY-27 ("It's my own time to shine"), HY-29 ("It's within you"), HY-30 ("Strength is within you"), HY-31 ("Happiness is within you"), JS-32 ("This is me"), JS-35 ("It's within you"), JS-36 ("Strength is within you"), JS-37 ("Confidence is within you"), and JS-38 ("Embrace the beauty of strength") show various forms of women's achievement. In the Appraisal system, achievement is most often realized through positive Appreciation and positive Judgement. Positive Appreciation can be seen in PC-29, PC-30, PC-31, and JS-38 which evaluate success as something valuable and appreciative. Meanwhile, positive Judgement appears in HY-27, HY-29, HY-30, HY-31, JS-32, JS-35, JS-36, and JS-37 which assess women's achievements as proof of their competence and capacity. In addition, achievement is also often strengthened through the Graduation system, both Force and Focus, to affirm the magnitude of the achievement obtained. Thus, achievement is represented as a concrete result of women's ability to utilize resources and exercise their agency.

Engagement analysis shows that most data is realized through Monogloss. In the Penelope Cruz domain, 16 monogloss data were found; in HoYeon Jung, 19 data; and in Joy Sunday, 21 data. The dominance of Monogloss suggests that the texts tend to convey the issue of women's empowerment as information that is considered valid and acceptable without much negotiation. Meanwhile, Heterogloss is used when a text presents another voice through quotes,

statements from sources, or women's direct experiences. The presence of Heterogloss is important because it provides space for women to voice their own experiences and agency, thus reinforcing the representation of empowerment built into the text.

The Graduation system also plays a role in building the meaning of women's empowerment. Through Force, it strengthens the evaluation of women's struggles, obstacles, and successes. This intensification makes the issue of empowerment seem more significant and prominent. Meanwhile, Focus is used to affirm women's identity, position, or achievements so that the boundaries of the category become clearer. Thus, Graduation not only strengthens the evaluation that has been built through Attitude but also increases the persuasiveness of the narrative of women's empowerment in texts.

#### **4) Summary of Findings**

Overall, the results show that disempowerment is most often realized through negative Affect and negative Judgement, while resources are mostly represented through positive Appreciation. The agency category has the strongest association with positive Judgement because the ability to make decisions and act is the core of women's empowerment. Meanwhile, achievement is mainly realized through positive Judgement and positive Appreciation which evaluate women's success as proof of their competence and social value. On the other hand, Engagement functions to give legitimacy to the empowerment narrative, while Graduation strengthens the intensity of the meaning that is built. The most prominent finding is the dominance of the agency category (37 data) which is mostly realized through positive Judgement. This shows that women's representation in the campaign emphasizes capacity, competence, independence, and the ability to act rather than simply access to resources or outcomes achieved. In other words, women in the data are more constructed as active subjects and have agency than as passive recipients of opportunity.

#### **5) Ambivalence of Empowerment**

Although the campaign consistently promotes women's empowerment through confidence, resilience, authenticity, and self-belief, the discourse

simultaneously reveals ideological contradictions. Across all domains, empowerment is represented as both liberating and disciplinary. Women are encouraged to become confident, expressive, and emotionally strong subjects, yet they are also repeatedly required to regulate fear, control emotional expression, and align themselves with socially acceptable forms of femininity. Empowerment frequently emerges only after women successfully manage anxiety, insecurity, vulnerability, or emotional instability. Consequently, the discourse constructs empowerment not as freedom from pressure but as the successful management of that pressure.

One major ambivalence appears through the contradiction between empowerment and emotional regulation. Clauses such as "Stop overacting" (JS-11), "You shouldn't show your feelings" (JS-12), and "You really have to go there with no fear" (OP-02; PC-20) demonstrate that women are encouraged to become powerful only after controlling emotional vulnerability. At the same time, the campaign celebrates emotional authenticity through clauses such as "I wouldn't change the way I feel things" (PC-08) and "It just shows you care" (JS-07). This creates an ambivalent representation in which women are allowed to feel vulnerable, but only when vulnerability can be reframed into productive confidence, resilience, or emotional growth. In this sense, empowerment becomes conditional upon successful emotional self-management. This pattern reflects what Gill (2007) identifies as postfeminist sensibility, where empowerment is framed through individual self-regulation rather than structural change.

Another contradiction emerges between freedom of identity and normative femininity. The discourse repeatedly promotes self-definition through clauses such as "I can be whatever I want to be" (HY-16), "This is me" (JS-32), and "I'm here, as me" (HY-13). However, the campaign reinforces idealized feminine values through evaluative language associated with confidence, beauty, composure, attractiveness, and emotional control. Expressions such as "You're not cool enough" (OP-04; JS-14), "Look how stunning!" (JS-24), and "It's my own time to shine" (HY-27) indicate that empowerment still operates within socially desirable standards of femininity. As a result,

women are represented as "free" to become themselves, but this freedom is still implicitly shaped by normative expectations.

The campaign also demonstrates ambivalence through its strong emphasis on internal empowerment while excluding structural dimensions of gender inequality. Repeated affirmations such as "Strength is within you," "Confidence is within you," and "Happiness is within you" position empowerment entirely as an internal psychological condition. Resources, agency, and achievements are consistently constructed through emotional resilience, self-confidence, authenticity, and emotional awareness rather than through economic access, institutional support, political participation, or collective struggle. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this representation individualizes empowerment by relocating responsibility for overcoming insecurity and limitation onto women themselves.

## **D. DISCUSSION**

### **1) Constructing Evaluative Language**

The analysis of the Attitude system shows the dominance of Judgement: Capacity, as well as Affect which focuses on confidence. This dominance discursively builds the representation of brand ambassadors as women who are resilient, independent, and able to overcome their own inner conflicts. The dominance of capacity also indicates an ideological shift compared to traditional beauty advertising. Tiani (2017) found that evaluative language in beauty advertising is commonly used to normalize physical beauty standards and reinforce gender stereotypes. In contrast, the Lancôme campaign shifts the focus of evaluation from the physical aspect to the personal qualities and internal character of women. Theoretically, the linguistic pattern represents the concept of agency in Kabear's (1999) framework, namely the ability of individuals to make choices and act on their own choices. These findings are also in line with Rowlands' (1997) concept of Power Within, which emphasizes that empowerment comes from an individual's self-awareness, self-esteem, and internal strength.

### **2) Postfeminism and the Commodification of Emotions in Femvertising**

The Lancôme campaign can be understood as a form of postfeminist discourse packaged through a femvertising strategy. Launched on International Women's Day, the campaign leverages women's empowerment as part of the brand's communication strategy. The campaign uses Heterogloss resources by presenting experiences of self-doubt, fear, and personal failure to create an inclusive and emotional impression. However, this dialogue space is then closed through Engagement patterns and strengthened through Graduation, especially through the slogan "Strength is within you." This strategy implicitly directs the audience to one main meaning: that the solution to women's vulnerability lies in the management of individual emotions and self-affirmation. The campaign builds a narrative that women's power comes from within, but this narrative remains connected to the consumption of luxury beauty products. Commodification occurs when emotional experiences such as fear, insecurity, and self-doubt are transformed into sellable narratives that enhance the brand's market value. This process reflects Gill's (2007) commodification of feminist discourse, where ideas of liberation are repackaged into market forms that benefit the company by strengthening its brand image, while the benefit to women remains individual and psychological rather than structural or collective.

### **3) Depoliticization of Women's Empowerment**

One of the important findings is the tendency to depoliticize women's empowerment in the discourse of the global beauty industry. The campaign consistently frames women's barriers as personal psychological issues that must be overcome through individual mental resilience. This focus on internal transformation is in line with Banet-Weiser's (2018) critique of neoliberal empowerment culture and Batliwala's (2007) observation that the concept of empowerment has been systematically stripped of its political content. Structural problems such as economic inequality, institutional discrimination, and patriarchal systems are no longer positioned as the root of the main problem. Women's problems are reduced to individual emotional problems that seem to be solved through consumption and self-development. These limitations are evident when compared to women's empowerment in real social contexts, where substantive empowerment requires

collective support, negotiation of social power, and changes in access to economic structures and social institutions (Githaiga, 2022; Dewasuri, 2022; Miskiyah et al., 2021). The Lancôme campaign represents a form of empowerment that is more symbolic and individual than a real social transformation.

### **4) Theoretical Contribution**

This research provides several theoretical and methodological contributions. First, it integrates Appraisal Theory, CDA, and empowerment theory in one analysis. If previous sociological research tends to focus on quantitative indicators of women's empowerment, while linguistic research only stops at language structure, this study shows that ideology can be identified through evaluative language choices. Second, this study uses three sub-systems of Appraisal: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation allowing the research not only to identify forms of evaluation but also to reveal how the text opens and closes ideological space as well as strengthens persuasion. Third, this study offers novelty through the analysis of contemporary global luxury cosmetics campaigns, showing how postfeminist ideology works subtly through empowerment narratives in the premium beauty industry.

### **E. CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine how women's empowerment is discursively constructed in Lancôme's "It's Within You" campaign, drawing on Appraisal Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. The Appraisal analysis reveals that Attitude is heavily concentrated in the domains of Judgement: Capacity and positive Affect, which together portray women as emotionally resilient and internally robust. In terms of Engagement, the campaign deploys a deliberate strategy: Heterogloss is used to introduce external doubts and conflicting perspectives, but these are consistently closed down by Monogloss, which presents empowerment as an unquestionable, non-negotiable truth. Meanwhile, Graduation amplifies the emotional weight of these evaluations through Force, while Focus: Sharpen repeatedly pinpoints the source of power as internal, most visibly through the recurring slogan "within you."

When mapped onto Kabeer's (1999) empowerment framework, the campaign's discourse unfolds across four interconnected dimensions. Disempowerment is largely realized through negative Affect and negative Judgement, establishing emotional vulnerability as the necessary starting point for the empowerment journey. Resources, by contrast, are predominantly represented through positive Appreciation, emphasizing internal and symbolic capital rather than material or structural support. Agency emerges as the most dominant category, realized primarily through positive Judgement that constructs women as capable, independent, and self-determining subjects. Achievement then appears as the culmination of this process, articulated through positive Judgement and positive Appreciation, where confidence and self-recognition are internalized as the ultimate markers of success.

Throughout the campaign, empowerment is simultaneously liberating and disciplinary. Women are urged to be confident, expressive, and authentic, but they must also regulate their fears, manage their emotions, and ultimately align with socially acceptable forms of femininity. This tension points to a broader postfeminist and depoliticized logic, where structural inequalities are sidelined in favor of individual psychological solutions. At the same time, the campaign repackages women's emotional struggles, fear, insecurity, and self-doubt into compelling narratives that ultimately serve to enhance brand value, illustrating how empowerment discourse can be commodified within the beauty industry.

This study has several limitations. First, the research focuses only on one beauty campaign, namely Lancôme's "It's Within You", so the findings cannot be generalized to all empowerment-oriented beauty advertisements. Second, the study mainly analyzes verbal discourse and evaluative language, while visual elements such as gesture, facial expression, cinematography, and multimodal interaction are not examined in detail. Third, the analysis is limited to textual representation and excludes the discursive practice dimension, such as audience interpretation or reception toward the campaign. In addition, the study emphasizes

empowerment discourse from linguistic and ideological perspectives rather than measuring the actual social impact or effectiveness of empowerment representation in media.

For future research, several suggestions can be proposed. It is recommended to investigate empowerment discourse in a wider range of media texts, brands, or cultural contexts to compare different representations of femininity and empowerment. Future studies may also integrate multimodal discourse analysis to examine how verbal and visual elements interact in constructing empowerment meanings. Audience reception studies, through interviews or focus group discussions, could provide deeper understanding regarding how women interpret, negotiate, or resist empowerment discourse in beauty advertising. Additionally, interviews with the production side, such as brand managers or copywriters, could uncover market strategies and ideological motives behind the campaigns. Researchers may also explore how empowerment discourse intersects with other social dimensions such as class, race, culture, or consumerism, and consider broader structural dimensions of gender equality and social transformation.

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