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Reconstructing persuasive meaning across languages: A qualitative study of English–Indonesian advertising translation

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ABSTRACT

Advertising translation is complex, requiring more than mere linguistic transfer; it must also be culturally appropriate and communicatively effective. This study explores the reconstruction of persuasive meaning in English–Indonesian advertising translation, emphasizing translation strategies, cultural adjustments, and persuasive functions. A descriptive qualitative design was utilized to analyze selected bilingual advertising materials. The study involved a comparative analysis of source and target expressions, focusing on persuasive linguistic features and translation techniques. Results indicated that advertising translation is not solely dependent on literal translations but encompasses strategies such as modulation, reduction, explicitation, established equivalence, and creative reformulation. Out of 15 translation units analyzed, 53.3% preserved the central persuasive meaning, 20.0% modified it, and 26.7% involved significant linguistic or communicative adjustments that reconstructed meaning. Notably, lexical differences between English and Indonesian did not always lead to persuasive loss; reformulation often improved the naturalness of the target language while maintaining broader persuasive values like authenticity, inclusivity, confidence, and cultural relevance. The study concludes that English–Indonesian advertising translation represents a continuum of meaning maintenance, modification, and reconstruction, highlighting the significance of persuasive equivalence beyond mere linguistic equivalence.

KEYWORDS: advertising translation, persuasive meaning, English–Indonesian translation, translation strategies, transcreation, cultural adaptation

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Introduction

Advertising is a distinctive form of communication in which language is designed not merely to convey information but also to attract attention, construct desirable representations, and influence audiences. Advertisers carefully select lexical choices, slogans, evaluative expressions, rhetorical devices, and cultural references to make products and services meaningful to particular consumers (Purba et al., 2022). Consequently, advertising discourse is inherently persuasive: its communicative success depends not only on what is said but also on how a message is framed for its intended audience. When advertisements circulate internationally, this persuasive function creates a particular challenge for translation because the target text must communicate product information while simultaneously producing an effect comparable to that intended in the source market (Herman et al., 2022; Ngongo et al.,, 2024; Sinambela et al., 2024). Advertising translation should therefore be understood as a communicative and culturally situated activity rather than a simple linguistic substitution (Fernández Rodríguez, 2019; Ho, 2021).

The difficulty becomes particularly apparent when persuasive messages move between languages with different linguistic and cultural conventions. A slogan that is concise, memorable, humorous, or emotionally appealing in English may become awkward, overly explicit, culturally distant, or less persuasive when translated literally into Indonesian. Differences in syntax, idiomatic expressions, cultural associations, forms of address, evaluative language, and audience expectations may require translators to modify the original message. Such modifications do not necessarily indicate translation failure. Rather, they may represent deliberate attempts to reproduce the communicative purpose of the advertisement for a different audience. Research on marketing translation has demonstrated that target texts may employ optional shifts precisely to reconstruct persuasive effects rather than preserve every linguistic feature of the source text (Ho, 2021).

This issue is particularly relevant to English–Indonesian advertising translation. English occupies a prominent position in global commercial communication, whereas advertisements intended for Indonesian consumers operate within a different linguistic and sociocultural environment. Translating an English advertisement into Indonesian may therefore involve decisions concerning not only semantic equivalence but also naturalness, emotional appeal, cultural appropriateness, and persuasive force. Translators may retain particular expressions, restructure sentences, explicate meanings, omit less relevant elements, or creatively reformulate a message to make it more effective for Indonesian audiences. Advertising translation consequently involves negotiation between source-text meaning and target-audience response, making it a productive area for examining how meaning changes when persuasive discourse crosses linguistic boundaries.

From a translation-studies perspective, this negotiation raises an important question concerning equivalence and communicative function. Conventional assumptions about translation may prioritize semantic correspondence between source and target texts; however, promotional discourse often requires greater flexibility. The communicative objective of an advertisement may be weakened if linguistic fidelity produces an unnatural or culturally inappropriate target text. In this context, preserving persuasive meaning may sometimes require changes in wording, emphasis, imagery, or rhetorical organization. Fernández Rodríguez (2019) argues that advertising transcreation can be understood through the reconstruction of communicative and persuasive strategies across cultural environments. Thus, advertising translation can involve a shift from asking whether individual words have been translated equivalently to examining whether the persuasive function of the original message successfully has been successfully in the target language.

This perspective is closely associated with the growing concept of transcreation. Transcreation combines linguistic transfer with cultural adaptation and creative reinterpretation to produce a target message appropriate for its intended audience (Díaz-Millón & Olvera-Lobo, 2023). Their systematic review shows that transcreation has become increasingly associated with translation, communication, and advertising, while also highlighting the continuing conceptual debate surrounding its boundaries. From a professional perspective, advertising transcreation may require target-language copy to function as though it had originally been created for the target market rather than appearing to be a direct translation (Benetello, 2018). More recent work likewise emphasizes transcreation as a creative interlinguistic practice particularly associated with promotional content (Carreira, 2024). These perspectives suggest that advertising translation exists on a continuum ranging from relatively close linguistic transfer to substantial creative reconstruction.

Therefore, persuasion is particularly useful as an analytical lens for examining translation decisions. For example, Ho (2021) demonstrated in English–Chinese marketing texts that translated versions could preserve the same persuasive purpose while modifying evaluative linguistic resources and even increasing the explicitness or emotional intensity of persuasion. Similarly, research on advertisement transcreation indicates that cultural elements and narrative structures may be reconstructed to accommodate target-language and target-culture expectations (Aksoy, 2024). These findings imply that differences between source and target advertisements should not automatically be classified as losses or inaccuracies. Some differences may instead represent strategic reconstruction, through which translators modify linguistic form to maintain, strengthen, or culturally reposition persuasive meaning.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in transcreation and advertising translation, several areas remain open for investigation. Existing studies have examined advertising and promotional translation in language pairs such as English–Chinese (Ho, 2021), corporate localization into Arabic (Kassawat, 2021), and other cross-cultural advertising environments. Research has also increasingly explored transcreation as a broader translation-related practice (Díaz-Millón & Olvera-Lobo, 2023; Carreira, 2024). However, the ways in which persuasive meaning is linguistically reconstructed between English and Indonesian advertisements remain comparatively underexplored, particularly when translation strategies, meaning modification, cultural adaptation, and persuasive function are considered together. An Indonesian study has examined meaning changes and transcreation in a specific Dove advertising context (Maulana, 2025), indicating growing interest in this language pair but also suggesting the need for broader comparative evidence across advertising texts. A qualitative investigation across multiple English–Indonesian advertisement pairs may therefore provide a more detailed understanding of how persuasive intent is maintained, modified, or recreated across languages.

Accordingly, this study investigates the reconstruction of persuasive meaning in English–Indonesian advertising translation through a qualitative comparative analysis of selected bilingual advertisements. Rather than evaluating translations solely based on literal equivalence, this study examines how linguistic choices and translation strategies reshape persuasive messages for Indonesian audiences. Particular attention is given to changes in lexical choice, emphasis, rhetorical expression, cultural references, and communicative orientation between the source and target advertisements. By connecting translation strategies with persuasive function, this study seeks to demonstrate that advertising translation involves a dynamic relationship among meaning, culture, creativity, and audience orientation. In doing so, the study contributes to translation research by positioning persuasive meaning not simply as content to be transferred but as a communicative effect that may need to be strategically reconstructed across languages.

Literature Review

1. Advertising as Persuasive Discourse

Advertising represents a form of persuasive discourse in which linguistic choices are strategically organized to influence audiences' perceptions, attitudes, and potential behavior (Niswa et al., 2023; Jahrir et al., 2025). Unlike informational texts whose primary purpose is to communicate factual content, advertisements frequently combine information with evaluation, emotional appeal, memorable expressions, and audience positioning. Consequently, words such as better, new, natural, beautiful, and perfect, as well as imperatives, personal pronouns, metaphorical expressions, and concise slogans, may perform persuasive functions beyond their literal meanings.

Therefore, persuasion in advertising is constructed through the interaction between linguistic meaning and communicative effect. This distinction is particularly important in multilingual advertising. When an advertisement is transferred into another language, preserving propositional content does not automatically preserve its persuasive force (Sutikno et al., 2025). For instance, Ho (2021) found that English and Chinese marketing texts could pursue the same persuasive purpose while differing significantly in how explicitly and emotionally persuasion was expressed. The Chinese translations in that study employed more explicit evaluative expressions and stronger emotional resources than their English source texts. Advertising discourse is also culturally situated. Expressions considered attractive, humorous, intimate, prestigious, or convincing in one community may not produce an equivalent response in another. Therefore, the analysis of bilingual advertisements requires attention not only to what linguistic elements change during translation but also to why

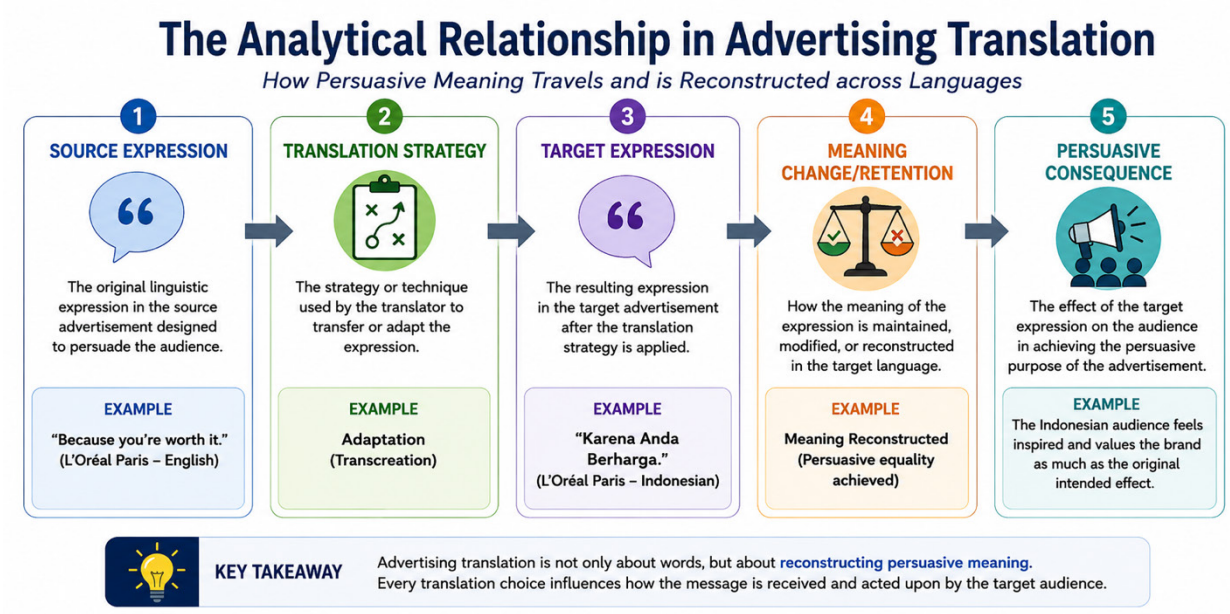
particular changes may be communicatively necessary.

2. Translation Strategies in Advertising

Translation strategies provide an analytical means of explaining how translators deal with the differences between source and target texts. In advertising, these strategies can range from a relatively close reproduction of the original wording to substantial reformulation. The choice of strategy depends partly on the relationship between linguistic form, intended meaning, communicative purpose, and target audience (Herman et al., 2024).

Advertising slogans illustrate this problem particularly clearly. Their effectiveness frequently depends on brevity, rhythm, wordplay, metaphor, repetition, or culturally recognizable expressions. Seo (2018) argues that advertising-slogan translation must consider meaning, emotion, and communicative effect in the target language, emphasizing the relevance of transcreation when conventional translation procedures cannot adequately reproduce these functions. For the purposes of the present study, translation strategies are therefore understood not merely as formal transformations between linguistic units but as choices that potentially affect persuasive meaning. A lexical substitution, omission, addition, modulation, or adaptation may alter how consumers perceive a message, even when its basic informational content remains recognizable.

The analytical relationship can be represented as:



This sequence will later allow the study to move beyond identifying what translation technique occurs toward explaining what that technique does to the persuasive message.

3. Transcreation and Cultural Adaptation

The limitations of strict linguistic equivalence have contributed to increasing attention to transcreation, particularly in advertising and marketing translations. Transcreation generally involves greater creative freedom than relatively close translation because its central concern is recreating a message that can function effectively for a new linguistic and cultural audience (Sinambela et al., 2024). Fernández Rodríguez (2019) approaches transcreation as the translation of communicative and persuasive strategies within a cultural-rhetorical framework. From this perspective, what needs to travel across languages is not necessarily every linguistic feature of the source advertisement but its broader communicative strategy. Similarly, Ho (2021) demonstrated that optional shifts in marketing translation can modify evaluative language while maintaining persuasion as the intended effect.

Creative reconstruction is especially relevant when source advertisements contain culturally dependent expressions. Aksoy (2024) argues that advertising transcreation combines linguistic transfer, cultural appropriation, and creative invention, with cultural elements potentially being recreated to function appropriately

in the target cultural environment. Benetello (2018) likewise emphasizes the importance of producing marketing copy capable of resonating with the target market rather than mechanically reproducing source-language structures. Accordingly, cultural adaptation in advertising may involve changes in lexical choice, forms of address, imagery, values, humor, rhetorical emphasis, or references that are assumed to be familiar to consumers. Such modifications may appear less linguistically equivalent while becoming more communicatively equivalent.

This relationship can be conceptualized as:

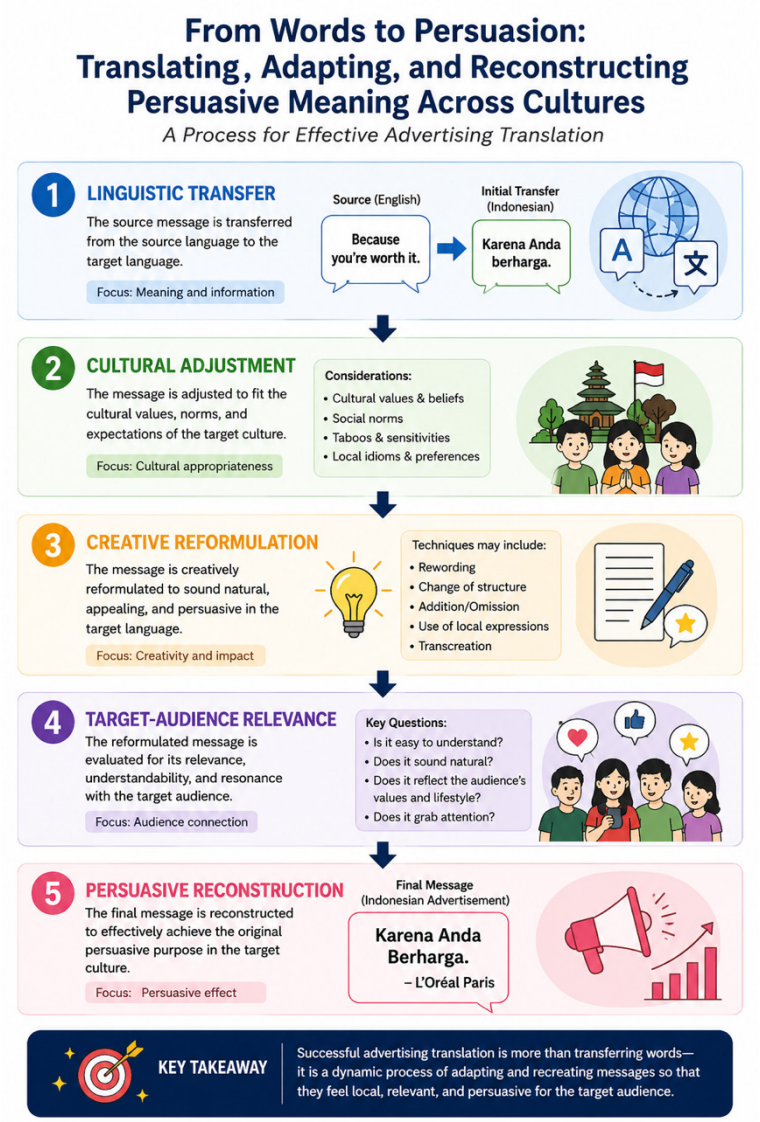


Figure 2. A process for effective advertising translation

4. Reconstructing Persuasive Meaning across Languages

The concept of persuasive meaning reconstruction provides a central analytical orientation for the present study. Reconstruction differs from simple preservation in that it recognizes that the same persuasive function may be realized differently across languages. Therefore, an English advertisement and its Indonesian counterpart may communicate comparable commercial intentions despite substantial differences in wording. Three broad outcomes can be expected when source and target advertisements are compared. Persuasive meaning may be maintained when the target expression retains both the central meaning and persuasive orientation of the source. It may be modified when lexical, rhetorical, or cultural changes alter the intensity or orientation of persuasion. Finally, persuasive meaning may be reconstructed when the target advertisement uses substantially different linguistic resources to achieve a comparable communicative effect.

Ho's (2021) findings provide empirical support for this distinction. In English–Chinese marketing translation, persuasion was not simply reproduced through equivalent linguistic forms; target texts could make persuasion more explicit, more intensified, or more emotional. Research on transcreated advertisements

similarly suggests that linguistic transfer and cultural recreation interact in producing target-oriented advertising narratives (Aksoy, 2024). Recent Indonesian evidence is particularly relevant. Maulana (2025) analyzed the English and Indonesian versions of Dove's Real Beauty advertising and reported changes in narration, slogans, language style, and cultural representation. The study interpreted these changes as transcreation designed to make the global message culturally meaningful for Indonesian audiences. This supports the premise that English–Indonesian advertising translation should be investigated not only in terms of semantic equivalence but also through the relationship among translation choice, cultural adaptation, and persuasive function.

5. Conceptual Framework and Research Gap

Previous studies have established three important foundations for the present research. First, advertising translation involves the transfer of persuasive rather than purely informational discourses. Second, translation and transcreation may legitimately modify linguistic forms to maintain the intended communicative effect. Third, cultural adaptation can influence the reconstruction of persuasive messages for target audiences. However, existing research also indicates the need for a more integrated analytical approach. Studies such as Ho (2021) have examined persuasion and optional shifts using English–Chinese marketing texts, while Aksoy (2024) focused on transcreation, narrative, and cultural recreation. In the Indonesian context, Maulana (2025) provides useful evidence from a Dove campaign, employing Skopos theory and dynamic equivalence to examine meaning changes and transcreation.

The present study extends this line of inquiry by examining multiple English–Indonesian advertising pairs and connecting three analytical levels that are often discussed separately:

Translation Strategy → Meaning Reconstruction → Persuasive Function

More specifically, the proposed analytical framework is:

English Source Advertisement
↓
Persuasive Linguistic Feature
↓
Translation Strategy
↓
English–Indonesian Linguistic/Cultural Shift
↓
Meaning Maintained / Modified / Reconstructed
↓
Persuasive Function in the Indonesian Advertisement

This framework distinguishes between translation techniques and communicative consequences. For example, identifying an expression as an adaptation does not complete the analysis. The study must subsequently determine what was adapted, why the adaptation may have occurred, what happened to the original meaning, and how the resulting Indonesian expression performs a persuasive function. Accordingly, the study conceptualizes English–Indonesian advertising translation as a process of strategic persuasive reconstruction, in which translators negotiate linguistic meaning, cultural appropriateness, creativity, and audience orientation. This framework provides the theoretical basis for selecting and analyzing the bilingual advertisement corpus in the subsequent methodology.

Methods

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to investigate how persuasive meaning is reconstructed in English–Indonesian advertising translation. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study does not primarily seek to measure the frequency or statistical distribution of translation techniques, but rather to interpret how linguistic and cultural modifications influence the persuasive function of translated advertising

messages (Herman et al., 2026; Thao & Herman, 2026). The analysis adopts a comparative source-text–target-text orientation. Each English advertising expression is examined alongside its Indonesian counterpart to identify differences in lexical choice, grammatical structure, rhetorical formulation, cultural orientation, and persuasive emphasis. Subsequently, the study interprets how these differences contribute to the maintenance, modification, or reconstruction of persuasive meaning.

The unit of analysis is the persuasive translation unit, defined in this study as a source–target pair containing a slogan, headline, tagline, call to action, evaluative expression, product claim, or short advertising statement with an identifiable persuasive function. This unit-based approach allows translation techniques to be examined at the micro-textual level while persuasive reconstruction is interpreted at the broader communicative level. Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) similarly conceptualize translation techniques as textual-analysis instruments for examining how translation equivalence operates in relation to the source text.

2. Data Source

The data for this study consist of 15 purposively selected English–Indonesian advertising text pairs obtained from official or verifiable brand communication channels. Rather than requiring each pair to represent a different brand, the corpus includes multiple persuasive units from selected campaigns when the English and Indonesian versions can be reliably matched. This decision ensures that the analysis is based on genuine bilingual advertising materials rather than researcher-produced translations. The initial corpus prioritizes global brands with identifiable Indonesian localization. For example, Dove provides English and Indonesian versions of its Real Beauty Pledge through its official regional websites. The English version states that beauty should function as a source of confidence rather than anxiety and presents commitments concerning real women and authentic representation, while the Indonesian version reconstructs the same campaign for Indonesian readers. Dove Indonesia also maintains localized campaign materials, including Real Beauty Sketches and Choose Beautiful.

Other Indonesian advertising materials were initially screened from official brand channels. For example, Rexona Indonesia presents the localized #GlowForIt campaign, which explicitly addresses Indonesian women and combines English campaign terminology with Indonesian persuasive discourse. Rexona also uses the Indonesian campaign #GerakTakTerbatas, constructed around the persuasive idea of encouraging Indonesians, including people with disabilities, to remain physically active without limitations. These campaigns are analytically valuable, although they will only be included as English–Indonesian translation pairs when a corresponding English/global campaign text can be established.

Table 1. Proposed Corpus Table

Code	Brand / Campaign	English Source Material	Indonesian Target Material	Advertising Element	Source
AD01	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Global/English Real Beauty Pledge	Indonesian Real Beauty Pledge	Campaign headline	Official Dove websites
AD02	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Beauty as confidence, not anxiety	Kecantikan as confidence rather than worry	Persuasive claim	Official Dove websites
AD03	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Beauty for everyone	*Kecantikan adalah milik semua orang*	Core campaign claim	Official Dove websites
AD04	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Real women, never models	*Wanita biasa, bukan model*	Brand commitment	Official Dove websites
AD05	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Portray women as they are	*Memotret wanita seperti apa adanya*	Authenticity claim	Official Dove websites
AD06	Dove – Real Beauty Pledge	Diversity-oriented campaign wording	Indonesian localized diversity wording	Cultural/persuasive statement	Official Dove websites
AD07	Dove – Real Beauty / Self-Esteem	Body confidence/ self-esteem message	Indonesian confidence-oriented message	Social persuasion	Official Dove websites
AD08	Dove – Campaign for Real Beauty	Global campaign discourse	Indonesian *Kampanye Dove*	Campaign positioning	Official Dove websites

Code	Brand / Campaign	English Source Material	Indonesian Target Material	Advertising Element	Source
AD09	Dove – Choose Beautiful	English campaign	Indonesian localized campaign material	Campaign title/ message	Dove campaign archive
AD10	Dove – Real Beauty Sketches	English campaign	Indonesian localized campaign material	Campaign narrative	Dove campaign archive
AD11	Rexona – movement campaign	Global movement-oriented message*	#GerakTakTerbatas	Campaign slogan	Official Rexona
AD12	Rexona – movement campaign	Global movement discourse*	*Ayo bergerak lampaui batas*	Call to action	Official Rexona
AD13	Rexona – Glow For It	#GlowForIt global/regional material*	Indonesian #GlowForIt campaign	Slogan/hashtag	Official Rexona
AD14	Rexona – Glow For It	Movement/confidence message*	*terus bergerak aktif penuh percaya diri*	Persuasive claim	Official Rexona
AD15	Rexona – Vitamin+Bright	Global/regional product message*	Indonesian Vitamin+Bright campaign	Product + persuasive claim	Official Rexona

3. Research Instrument

The primary research instrument is a qualitative advertising translation analysis sheet developed according to the conceptual framework established in the Literature Review. The sheet is designed to document the relationship between source expression, translation choice, meaning reconstruction, and persuasive consequence.

Table 2. Advertising Translation Analysis Sheet

Analytical Component	Description
Advertisement code	Identification of each advertisement pair
Source expression (ST)	English slogan, headline, claim, or persuasive expression
Target expression (TT)	Corresponding Indonesian expression
Persuasive linguistic feature	Evaluative language, imperative, pronoun, metaphor, slogan, intensification, etc.
Translation technique	Technique used in transferring/reconstructing the expression
Linguistic shift	Lexical, grammatical, semantic, or rhetorical modification
Cultural adjustment	Target-culture adaptation, where identifiable
Meaning outcome	Maintained, modified, or reconstructed
Persuasive function	Intended persuasive consequence in the Indonesian advertisement
Analytical interpretation	Explanation of the relationship among the preceding elements

Translation techniques will be identified primarily using the framework of Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002), who distinguish techniques such as adaptation, amplification, borrowing, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation, among others. Their framework treats translation techniques dynamically and functionally rather than assuming that one technique is inherently appropriate or inappropriate. However, technique identification constitutes only the first analytical level of analysis. This study subsequently examined whether the resulting target expression maintains, modifies, or reconstructs persuasive meaning. This prevents research from becoming merely a classification of translation techniques.

4. Data Collection Method

Data collection will be conducted through documentary collection and purposive corpus construction. English advertising materials and their corresponding Indonesian versions will be identified from verifiable advertising sources. Wherever possible, priority will be given to official brand websites, official Indonesian brand pages, verified corporate social-media accounts, official campaign videos, and archived promotional materials. Each potential advertisement will first undergo a source–target verification procedure. The researchers will

determine whether the English and Indonesian materials represent the same campaign, product, or sufficiently corresponding advertising message. Only verified pairs that meet the inclusion criteria will be entered into the corpus.

The verbal content of each advertisement was subsequently transcribed manually. English expressions were recorded as the source text (ST), while the corresponding Indonesian expressions were recorded as the target text (TT). Relevant contextual information, including product category, campaign context, advertising medium, and source location, will also be documented to support interpretation.

5. Data Analysis Method

Data analysis will proceed through a multi-level comparative qualitative procedure that combines translation-technique identification with interpretive analysis of persuasive meaning. First, each English source expression will be compared with its Indonesian counterpart to identify lexical, grammatical, semantic, and rhetorical similarities and differences. Second, the translation technique used in each source–target unit will be classified using Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) functional framework. Their approach is particularly suitable because translation techniques are conceived as analytical categories operating on textual micro-units and are explicitly distinguished from broader translation methods and strategies.

Third, each source–target comparison will be examined for meaning outcome. The analysis will classify the persuasive meaning as:

1) Maintained means that the principal semantic and persuasive orientation remains substantially comparable;
2) Modified means some semantic, evaluative, rhetorical, or cultural element changes the persuasive orientation or intensity; or
3) Reconstructed means that the target advertisement employs substantially different linguistic or cultural resources to recreate a comparable persuasive purpose.

Fourth, cultural and audience-oriented changes will be interpreted to determine whether the target expression involves linguistic transfer, cultural adjustment, creative reformulation, or a combination of these processes. The analysis will then examine the potential persuasive consequences of these choices, focusing on functions such as attracting attention, establishing emotional connection, emphasizing product value, constructing desirability, creating cultural relevance, and encouraging consumer action.

Finally, patterns across the complete corpus were compared thematically. The objective at this stage is not merely to count techniques but to identify recurring relationships between translation choices and persuasive reconstruction. Qualitative coding was therefore move iteratively from individual source–target pairs toward broader interpretive patterns. A thematic approach is suitable for identifying patterned meanings across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

The comparative analysis of the English and Indonesian versions of the Dove Real Beauty Pledge revealed that persuasive meaning was not transferred through a single translation pattern. Instead, the Indonesian version employed combinations of relatively close translation, modulation, reduction, amplification, and creative reformulation. These choices produced three broad outcomes: persuasive meaning was maintained, modified, or reconstructed. The English campaign emphasizes confidence, authenticity, diversity, and self-esteem; the Indonesian version retains these central persuasive values while frequently reformulating their linguistic realization for Indonesian readers.

1. Translation Strategies in English–Indonesian Advertising

Table 3 presents 15 representative translation units identified from the corresponding English and Indonesian campaign materials.

Table 3. Translation Strategies in the English–Indonesian Advertising Corpus

Code	English Source Expression	Indonesian Target Expression	Dominant Strategy	Meaning Outcome
AD01	Beauty is for everyone	Kecantikan adalah milik semua orang	Modulation	Maintained
AD02	source of confidence and not anxiety	sumber kepercayaan diri, bukan kekhawatiran	Established equivalent	Maintained
AD03	realise their personal potential for beauty	menyadari potensi kecantikan mereka	Reduction/modulation	Modified
AD04	the best version of themselves	menjadi yang terbaik	Reduction	Modified
AD05	three vows	tiga janji	Established equivalent	Maintained
AD06	real women	wanita biasa	Modulation	Reconstructed
AD07	never models	bukan model	Reduction	Maintained
AD08	beauty is for everyone	kecantikan milik semua orang	Modulation	Maintained
AD09	different ages, sizes, ethnicities	usia, ukuran tubuh, etnis ... yang berbeda	Amplification	Maintained
AD10	Zero models in our campaigns	Tidak ada model dalam kampanye kami	Established equivalent	Maintained
AD11	Real women introduced by their names	wanita biasa yang diperkenalkan dengan nama mereka	Modulation	Reconstructed
AD12	population's diversity	keragaman masyarakat	Modulation	Maintained
AD13	women as they are in real life	wanita seperti apa adanya	Modulation	Reconstructed
AD14	flawless images of "perfect" beauty	gambaran kecantikan "sempurna"	Reduction	Modified
AD15	Zero digital distortion of women	Tidak ada manipulasi foto secara digital	Modulation/explicitation	Reconstructed

The English wording is documented on Dove's official English-language campaign page, which includes expressions such as Beauty is for everyone, real women, never models, and women as they are in real life. The corresponding Indonesian campaign uses expressions including Kecantikan adalah milik semua orang, wanita biasa, bukan model, and wanita seperti apa adanya.

The table demonstrates that the Indonesian version generally preserves the ideological and persuasive direction of the campaign but does not consistently reproduce English lexical forms. This is particularly apparent where real is translated as biasa and in real life is reconstructed as seperti apa adanya. These changes provide important evidence that persuasive advertising translation operates beyond literal lexical correspondence.

2. Maintenance of Persuasive Meaning

The first pattern involved source expressions whose central persuasive meaning remained substantially intact in Indonesian. Examples include AD01, AD02, AD05, AD08, AD09, AD10, and AD12.

One of the clearest examples is:

ST: Beauty is for everyone.

TT: Kecantikan adalah milik semua orang.

The source and target expressions construct beauty as inclusive rather than exclusive. The English expression uses the relational construction is for everyone, whereas Indonesian employs the possessive-oriented expression milik semua orang. The grammatical realization therefore changes slightly, but the core persuasive proposition remains: beauty should not be restricted to particular types of women. Both versions explicitly establish this inclusivity as a central campaign value.

A similar pattern appears in:
ST: source of confidence and not anxiety
TT: sumber kepercayaan diri, bukan kekhawatiran

Here, the contrast between positive and negative emotional states is closely maintained. The persuasive function depends on positioning beauty positively, as confidence rather than anxiety. Both versions establish this contrast early in the campaign discourse.

These cases suggest that when the persuasive proposition can be naturally expressed in Indonesian without extensive restructuring, relatively close semantic transfer is sufficient.

Table 4. Persuasive Meaning Maintained

Persuasive Element	English Orientation	Indonesian Orientation	Persuasive Effect
Inclusivity	Beauty for everyone	Kecantikan milik semua orang	Inclusive beauty
Confidence	Confidence, not anxiety	Kepercayaan diri, bukan kekhawatiran	Positive emotional positioning
Commitment	Three vows	Tiga janji	Brand commitment
Diversity	Population's diversity	Keragaman masyarakat	Inclusive representation
Anti-model positioning	Zero models	Tidak ada model	Authenticity

The maintained translations therefore preserve the campaign's central persuasive identity: inclusive beauty + authenticity + confidence + diversity.

3. Modification of Persuasive Meaning

The second pattern involved expressions in which the central message remained recognizable but part of the semantic or rhetorical detail was reduced or altered.
A representative case occurs in AD04:
ST: the best version of themselves
TT: menjadi yang terbaik

The English expression emphasizes becoming the best version of oneself, thereby foregrounding individuality and self-development. The Indonesian expression is more concise. Although menjadi yang terbaik retains the positive motivational orientation, the explicit reflexive concept of version of themselves is reduced. The result can therefore be categorized as modified persuasive meaning, rather than complete semantic equivalence. The broader English and Indonesian passages nevertheless maintain the campaign›s emphasis on feeling and looking one›s best. Another example is AD14. The English campaign describes manipulated representations using a more elaborate cluster of negative evaluations around unattainable and flawless "perfect" beauty, whereas the Indonesian version condenses this into a more economical expression concerning gambaran kecantikan "sempurna" hasil manipulasi foto.

This finding indicates that reduction does not necessarily eliminate persuasion. Instead, Indonesian advertising discourse may condense source-language rhetorical elaboration while preserving the evaluative opposition between authentic and artificially constructed beauty.

4. Reconstruction of Persuasive Meaning

The most analytically significant finding concerns expressions whose persuasive meaning was reconstructed rather than literally reproduced.
The clearest example is AD06:
ST: real women
TT: wanita biasa

Lexically, real and biasa are not direct equivalents. A literal rendering might foreground "realness,"

whereas wanita biasa foregrounds ordinariness or everyday identity. Yet within the campaign context, the translation remains persuasive because the contrast is not simply between real and unreal women. It is between ordinary women and professional models.

The English campaign explicitly states "We always feature real women, never models," while the Indonesian page states "Kami selalu menampilkan wanita biasa, bukan model."
The shift can be represented as:

real women
→ wanita biasa
→ lexical modulation
→ everyday/non-model identity
→ authenticity reconstructed for Indonesian readers
Thus, lexical equivalence is sacrificed to make the intended contrast immediately accessible in the target language.

An equally important case is AD13:
ST: We portray women as they are in real life.
TT: Kami memotret wanita seperti apa adanya.

The English expression foregrounds women's appearance in real life, whereas the Indonesian seperti apa adanyaemphasizes representing women as they actually are, without artificial alteration. The target formulation therefore reconstructs the authenticity claim rather than mechanically reproducing the source syntax. Both expressions introduce the campaign's rejection of manipulated representations of beauty.

AD15 demonstrates a similar process:
ST: Zero digital distortion of women
TT: Tidak ada manipulasi foto secara digital

The Indonesian expression makes foto explicit. This increases contextual specificity: rather than referring abstractly to the digital distortion "of women," the target text identifies digital photo manipulation as the practice being rejected. This represents a form of explicitation/modulation that strengthens accessibility without abandoning the campaign's authenticity message.

Table 5. Major Cases of Persuasive Reconstruction

Source Concept	Target Reconstruction	Linguistic Change	Reconstructed Persuasive Value
real women	*wanita biasa*	Real → ordinary/everyday	Authenticity
as they are in real life	*seperti apa adanya*	Reality → natural/authentic state	Natural beauty
digital distortion of women	*manipulasi foto secara digital*	Abstract distortion → explicit photo manipulation	Visual authenticity
personal potential for beauty	*potensi kecantikan mereka*	Personal emphasis reduced	Self-potential
best version of themselves	*menjadi yang terbaik*	Reflexive individuality reduced	Positive self-development

The important finding is therefore that linguistic distance does not automatically produce persuasive loss. In several instances, lexical modification appears to enable the Indonesian message to communicate the broader campaign value more naturally.

5. Linguistic and Cultural Adaptation of the Campaign
The analysis further revealed that localization operates at several interconnected levels. At the lexical level, words are replaced by expressions that are more immediately interpretable in Indonesian. At the semantic level, some meanings are condensed or reformulated. At the rhetorical level, lengthy English evaluative constructions may become more economical Indonesian statements. At the persuasive level, however, the campaign consistently

maintains its broader positioning around authentic and inclusive beauty.

Table 6. Levels of Adaptation and Their Persuasive Functions

Adaptation Level	Observed Pattern	Example	Function
Lexical	Non-literal lexical substitution	*real women → wanita biasa*	Increase target-language accessibility
Grammatical	Structural reformulation	*beauty is for everyone → kecantikan milik semua orang*	Naturalize expression
Semantic	Reduction/condensation	*best version of themselves → menjadi yang terbaik*	Increase concision
Explicitation	Making implicit context explicit	*digital distortion → manipulasi foto secara digital*	Clarify meaning
Rhetorical	Reframing authenticity	*as they are in real life → seperti apa adanya*	Strengthen naturalness/authenticity
Persuasive	Preservation of campaign values	English and Indonesian Real Beauty discourse	Maintain brand positioning

These findings suggest that localization does not operate through one-to-one substitution. Instead, the Indonesian text negotiates linguistic naturalness and persuasive continuity. This observation supports the distinction made in the analytical framework between translation strategy and persuasive consequence.

6. Overall Patterns of Persuasive Reconstruction

Based on the qualitative coding of the 15 selected units, the three meaning outcomes can be summarized descriptively.

Table 7. Distribution of Meaning Outcomes

Meaning Outcome	Translation Units	Number	Percentage
Maintained	AD01, AD02, AD05, AD07, AD08, AD09, AD10, AD12	8	53.3%
Modified	AD03, AD04, AD14	3	20.0%
Reconstructed	AD06, AD11, AD13, AD15	4	26.7%
Total	AD01–AD15	15	100%

Although the study is qualitative and these frequencies are descriptive rather than inferential, the pattern is useful for illustrating the corpus. More than half of the selected units maintain the central persuasive meaning relatively closely, while 46.7% involve either modification or more substantial reconstruction. This combination is particularly important. The Indonesian campaign is therefore neither a consistently literal translation nor a completely independent rewriting of the English campaign.

The overall findings can finally be synthesized according to the analytical framework developed for this study.

Table 8. Integrated Interpretation of the Findings

Analytical Dimension	Main Finding	Interpretation
Source expression	English employs authenticity, confidence, diversity, and inclusivity discourse	Persuasion is value-oriented
Translation strategy	Multiple strategies occur rather than literal translation alone	Translation responds to linguistic context
Target expression	Indonesian frequently uses more natural or explicit formulations	Target-language accessibility is prioritized
Meaning relationship	Maintained, modified, and reconstructed meanings coexist	Equivalence operates at different levels

Analytical Dimension	Main Finding	Interpretation
Cultural/linguistic adaptation	Especially visible in *real women* → *wanita biasa*	Persuasive concept is reformulated
Persuasive consequence	Core Real Beauty values remain recognizable	Persuasive continuity can survive linguistic change

The central finding can therefore be represented as:

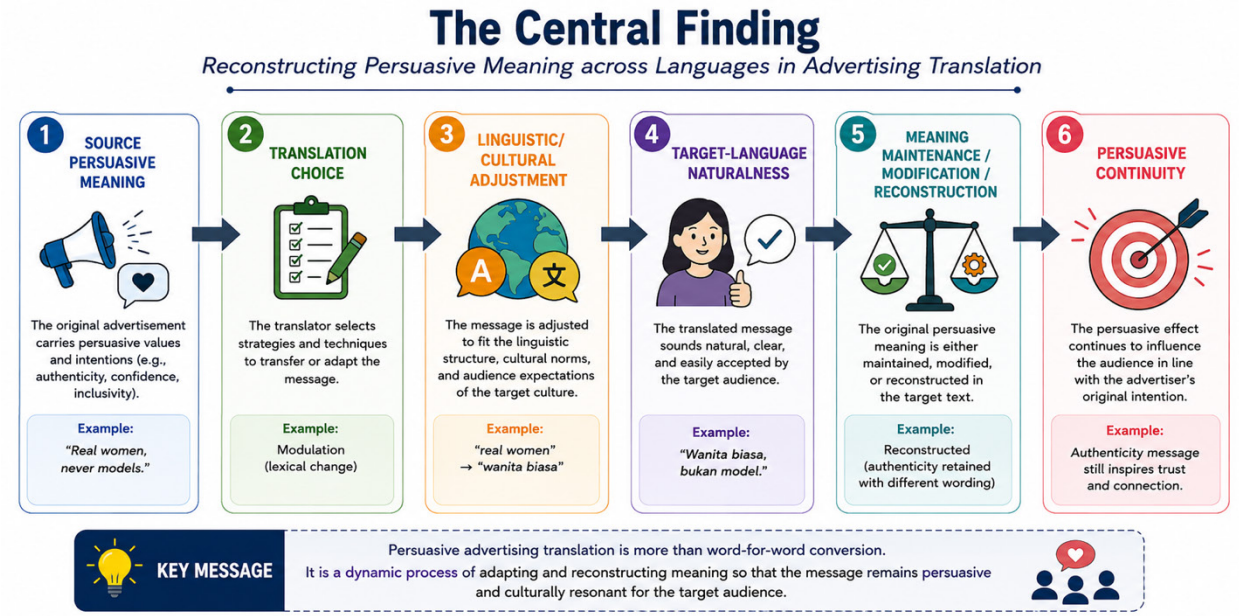


Figure 3. The central findings of the advertising translation

The analysis indicates that persuasive equivalence does not necessarily depend on lexical equivalence. The Indonesian campaign frequently preserves the broader persuasive purpose by modifying the linguistic form through which that purpose is communicated. Particularly revealing are expressions such as real women → wanita biasa and as they are in real life → seperti apa adanya, where lexical restructuring allows authenticity to remain central to the target message. Therefore, the findings support the central premise of this study: English–Indonesian advertising translation can be understood as a process of reconstructing persuasive meaning across languages, in which translation choices negotiate semantic content, linguistic naturalness, audience accessibility, and persuasive function.

Discussion

1. Persuasive Meaning beyond Literal Equivalence

The findings demonstrate that English–Indonesian advertising translation cannot be adequately explained by lexical equivalence alone. Across the analyzed advertising units, persuasive meaning was realized through a continuum of maintenance, modifications, and reconstructions. Although more than half of the selected units maintained a relatively close central persuasive orientation, the remaining units involved semantic modification or more substantial reformulation. This pattern indicates that linguistic differences between source and target advertisements do not necessarily represent translation losses. Instead, some differences function as strategic choices that make persuasive meaning more accessible and natural for the target audience.

The translation of real women as wanita biasa provides a particularly illustrative example of this. The Indonesian adjective biasa does not reproduce the lexical meaning of real directly. However, within the campaign discourse, it reinforces the intended contrast between everyday women and professional models. Similarly, women as they are in real life become wanita seperti apa adanya, shifting from an explicit reference to real life toward a culturally and linguistically natural expression of authenticity. Such cases support Fernández Rodríguez's (2019) argument that advertising transcreation should be understood in terms of transferring communicative and persuasive strategies rather than merely reproducing linguistic structures. These findings suggest a distinction between linguistic and persuasive equivalence. Target expression may move away from

the lexical form of the source while remaining functionally close to its persuasive intention. This is particularly relevant to advertising, where communicative effectiveness depends on whether an expression sounds convincing, memorable, and appropriate for its audience.

2. Translation Strategies as Resources for Persuasive Reconstruction

The results also demonstrate that translation techniques perform different communicative functions depending on the advertising context. Modulation, reduction, explicitation, and established equivalents were not simply formal transformations; they contributed differently to the construction of target-language persuasion. This reinforces the importance of examining translation techniques together with their communicative consequences. Modulation was especially important in cases where literal lexical correspondence would have produced less natural Indonesian expressions. The transformation of digital distortion of women into manipulasi foto secara digital, for example, makes the object of manipulation more explicit. Similarly, the rendering of beauty is for everyone as kecantikan milik semua orang restructures the grammatical relationship while maintaining the campaign›s inclusive orientation. These examples indicate that translation choices can simultaneously accommodate target-language naturalness and preserve broader advertising values.

This finding corresponds with studies of advertising translation in other linguistic contexts. Research on Russian–Kazakh advertisements similarly identified direct translation, semantic modulation, transposition, borrowing, and equivalence as strategies shaped by linguistic and sociocultural conditions (Orazbekova et al., 2022). More recent research on bilingual beauty-product advertisements has likewise demonstrated the continuing importance of translation techniques in transferring advertising messages across languages (Primayani et al., 2025). However, the present findings extend technique-based analysis by demonstrating that identifying a technique is only the first analytical stage. A classification such as modulation or reduction does not by itself explain what happens to persuasion. The more important question is whether the resulting target expression maintains, modifies, or reconstructs the persuasive meaning.

3. Cultural Adaptation, Naturalness, and Target-Audience Orientation

Another important finding concerns the relationship between cultural-linguistic adjustment and target-language naturalness. Indonesian advertisements frequently favor expressions that sound idiomatic and immediately comprehensible rather than reproducing English structures closely. This tendency suggests that advertising translation is strongly target-oriented. Cultural adaptation in the analyzed corpus does not always involve obvious replacement of culture-specific objects. Instead, it frequently operates at a subtler level through lexical selection, semantic reframing, explicitness, and rhetorical naturalization. The translation real women → wanita biasa, for example, can be understood as both a linguistic and audience-oriented adjustment. The expression helps establish an accessible opposition between ordinary women and models without requiring a literal rendering of real.

This interpretation corresponds with transcreation research, which emphasizes that promotional texts often require creative adaptation because persuasive and commercial appeal must remain relevant to the receiving audience (Soto-Almela, 2024). It also aligns with recent English–Indonesian research indicating that cultural adaptation can increase the naturalness and appeal of translated advertising discourse, while simultaneously creating a need to balance adaptation with fidelity to source meaning.

The relationship identified in the present study can therefore be expressed as:
Linguistic Difference ≠ Persuasive Loss
Instead:
Linguistic/Cultural Adjustment → Target-Language Naturalness → Audience Accessibility → Persuasive Continuity

This distinction is important because an advertisement that is semantically accurate but pragmatically unnatural may communicate information successfully while failing to reproduce the persuasive quality of the original message.

4. From Translation to Persuasive Reconstruction

The central theoretical contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing advertising translation as a process of persuasive reconstruction. The findings show that translation does not operate through a binary opposition between literal translation and free adaptation. Instead, English–Indonesian advertising messages appear along a continuum: Maintenance → Modification → Reconstruction. At one end, expressions such as source of confidence and not anxiety → sumber kepercayaan diri, bukan kekhawatiran retain close semantic and persuasive correspondence. At the other end, expressions such as real women → wanita biasa involve greater lexical restructuring while continuing to communicate the campaign's broader value of authenticity.

This interpretation is consistent with Maulana's (2025) study of Dove Real Beauty, which found that transcreation and meaning shifts play important roles in adapting the campaign from English to Indonesian. However, the present study develops the analysis further by distinguishing three outcomes: maintained, modified, and reconstructed meaning—and connecting each outcome to its persuasive consequence.

5. Pedagogical and Translation-Practice Implications

The findings have implications for both translation education and professional advertising translation. For translation students, advertising texts provide useful material for learning that translation decisions should not be evaluated solely at the word or sentence level. Students need to consider the relationship among source meaning, target-language naturalness, cultural appropriateness, audience expectations, and communicative purpose. For professional translators and localization practitioners, the findings similarly suggest that literal accuracy should be balanced against communicative effectiveness. Advertising messages may require reformulation when direct equivalence produces awkward, ambiguous, or culturally distant expressions. This does not mean that creativity should permit unrestricted rewriting. Rather, adaptation should remain anchored to the campaign's central persuasive values and brand positioning.

This is particularly important in the contemporary translation environment. Recent research comparing AI-generated advertising translation with human-mediated localization and transcreation reports that grammatically acceptable translation does not necessarily preserve rhetorical, cultural, and persuasive functions, reinforcing the continuing importance of intercultural mediation in advertising translation (Duscovich & Nava, 2026). Thus, the ability to evaluate persuasive consequences, rather than linguistic accuracy alone, is increasingly relevant to translation competence.

6. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted within the boundaries of the study. The analysis concentrates on a relatively small purposively selected corpus and gives particular attention to Dove's Real Beauty campaign. Consequently, the patterns identified here should not be automatically generalized to all English–Indonesian advertising translations. Beauty advertising also possesses distinctive discursive characteristics—including authenticity, self-confidence, physical representation, and identity—that may encourage different translation choices from those found in technology, food, tourism, automotive, or financial advertising.

Moreover, the study interprets the persuasive function from textual evidence rather than measuring actual audience responses. The finding that a translation maintains or reconstructs persuasion therefore concerns its linguistic and communicative organization, not experimentally demonstrated consumer behavior. Future research could combine translation analysis with interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, or experimental audience-reception methods to determine whether Indonesian consumers actually perceive reconstructed messages as equally or more persuasive. Future studies could also expand the corpus across multiple brands and advertising sectors and investigate whether particular translation techniques systematically correspond with particular persuasive outcomes. Such work would help determine whether the proposed maintenance–modification–reconstruction continuum can function as a broader analytical model for advertising translation beyond the campaign examined in the present study.

Conclusion

This study investigated how persuasive meaning is reconstructed in English–Indonesian advertising translation by examining the relationship between source expressions, translation choices, linguistic and cultural adjustments,

and persuasive function. The findings demonstrate that advertising translation extends beyond the transfer of literal or propositional meanings. Across the analyzed advertising units, persuasive meaning followed three principal outcomes: maintenance, modification, and re-construction. While several target expressions retained the source message relatively closely, others involved lexical, semantic, or rhetorical reformulations to produce expressions that were more natural and communicatively appropriate in Indonesian.

The findings further indicate that differences between source and target expressions should not be automatically interpreted as translation loss. Strategies such as modulation, reduction, explicitation, and reformulation can help preserve broader persuasive values even when lexical equivalence changes. Expressions such as real women → wanita biasa and women as they are in real life → wanita seperti apa adanya illustrate how linguistic restructuring can maintain the broader values of authenticity and natural beauty in the target advertisement. Therefore, the study conceptualizes advertising translation as a continuum of Meaning Maintenance → Meaning Modification → Persuasive Reconstruction, in which translation choices mediate between source meaning, target-language naturalness, cultural appropriateness, and persuasive continuity.

This study contributes to advertising translation research by emphasizing persuasive equivalence over linguistic equivalence alone. Nevertheless, its findings are limited by the relatively small and purposively selected corpus and the textual nature of the analysis; persuasive effects on actual Indonesian consumers were not empirically measured. Future research should therefore examine larger and more diverse advertising corpora across product categories and combine translation analysis with audience-reception methods. Such research could further determine how linguistic and cultural reconstruction influences the ways target audiences interpret and respond to translated advertising messages.

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