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# A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF "DOVE SELF-ESTEEM PROJECT" "DOVE ÖZGÜVEN PROJESİ" ÜZERİNE BİR ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ÇÖZÜMLEMESİ

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Dove Self-Esteem Project, Beauty Perception, Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk, Integrated Marketing Strategy

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Dove Özgüven Projesi (Dove Self-Esteem Project) 2004 yılında bir sosyal sorumluluk projesi olarak başlattığı kampanyanın, kampanya kapsamında YouTube sayfasında yayınlanan seçilen reklamlarına Van Dijk'in eleştirel söylem analizi uygulanmıştır. Araştırma da reklam filmleri analiz edilirken Van Dijk'in haber söylemi modelini reklam filmine uyarlayan Ayvaz ve Livberber (2019)'in hazırladığı tablo referans alınmıştır. İnceleme sonucunda kampanyada kullanılan dil ve söylemlerin bir pazarlama iletişimi süreci olduğu, kampanyada iddia edildiği gibi projenin temel ve tek amacının kadınların güzellik algısı üzerindeki baskıyı ve toplumsal yapıdaki sorunları ele almak olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Kampanyanın amacının satışları arttırmak, markanın imajını güçlendirmek, itibarını arttırmak olduğu belirlenmiştir. Dove Özgüven Projesi'nin uzun vadede kadınların üzerindeki güzellik baskısını kaldırmaktan ziyade markanın kendi tanımladığı ve kendi ürettiği ürünlere bağımlı yeni bir güzellik algısı inşa etmeye çalıştığı bulunmuştur. Bu kapsamda kampanya kapsamında üretilen reklam filmleri ile kadın bedeni üzerinden üretilen güzellik algısının yeni bir versiyon olarak yeniden üretildiği araştırmanın temel bulgusudur.

## ABSTRACT

In this research, Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis was applied to selected advertisements published on Dove Self-Esteem Project's YouTube page as part of the campaign that started in 2004 as a social responsibility project. During the analysis of the commercials, the table prepared by Ayvaz and Livberber (2019), who adapted Van Dijk's news discourse model to the advertisement, was used as a reference. As a result of the examination, it was found that the language and discourse used in the campaign were part of a marketing communication process and the project's sole and basic purpose was not to address the pressure on women's beauty perception and social problems, as claimed in the campaign. It was determined that the goal of the campaign was to increase sales, strengthen the brand's image, and increase its reputation. It was found that Dove Self-Esteem Project was trying to build a new beauty perception that was dependent on the products defined and produced by the brand, rather than removing the beauty pressure on women in the long term. In this context, the main finding of the research is that the beauty perception produced through the female body was reproduced as a new version with the commercials produced within the campaign.

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## INTRODUCTION

Beauty is a concept that has been defined in different ways by many disciplines. From a philosophical perspective, according to Plato, beauty is not found in the physical properties or surfaces of objects. Instead, beauty should be thought of as a universal principle or essence. Plato defines the concept of "beauty" as "the beautiful itself" and believes that this concept exists in the world of ideals in the human mind. Plato explains this concept using metaphorical terms such as the "allegory of the sun" and believes that people perceive beauty from different angles, but not all of these perceptions are correct. According to Plato, beauty elevates the human soul and helps individuals to develop spiritually. Therefore, Plato argues that beauty should not only be found in outward appearance but also in a person's inner world (Plato, 2004). Aristotle, on the other hand, opposed Plato's idea-based beauty understanding and accepted that beauty originates from the object itself (Aristotle, 1995; Özden, 2002:61). In terms of art, beauty is used to express the characteristics of works that have aesthetic concerns. According to Kant, an artwork is produced to reflect beauty. This beauty is not functional but creates a sense of pleasure in the human mind (Kant, Tarihsiz). From a psychological perspective, beauty is a concept based on individuals' subjective experiences. Individuals may perceive different objects or people as beautiful or ugly, and these perceptions are shaped by their personal characteristics and experiences (Scarry, 1999). From a sociological perspective, beauty is shaped by the standards and expectations accepted in society. "Our satisfaction with the image we present to the outside world depends on how closely it aligns with our ideal cultural values" (Solomon, 2020:279).

Beauty standards accepted by society in a certain period of time can change over time (Wolf, 1990). When societies are examined from the past to the present day, it can be observed how beauty perception has changed. Today, the media is an important factor that influences beauty perception. Through television programs, movies, series, advertisements, social media, and other communication tools, the media shapes people's beauty perceptions and creates certain beauty standards. In the world of marketing, the media actively uses beauty elements based on beauty perception and standards to increase the sales of products and services. By using beauty perception and standards, the media instills the idea that consumers should have an ideal appearance and tries to make them believe that they need certain products and services as a result.

"In capitalist consumer societies, increasing consumption is encouraged for the continuity of the existing system. Women are targeted by many sectors and the pressure of consumption imposed on them is increasing day by day. Özgen (2017) focused on this issue in his study and discussed how beauty ideals in the media are received and consumed by people by examining the impact of the media on beauty ideals. In addition, the article also addresses how the media determines beauty standards and their impact on people's self-confidence. Özgen (2017) emphasizes the need for a critical examination of the media's influence on women's beauty ideals. Okur (2020) conducted a similar study on social media.

This study discusses the impact of beauty perceptions on social norms and values, how social media usage feeds these perceptions, and the effect of beauty standards on their determination. In addition, the article also addresses what lynching culture is, why it emerged, and how it is fueled. Okur (2020) provides examples of the lynchings that occurred on social media through the example of Armine Harutyunyan and how the lynching culture works. Dove, a personal care brand affiliated with Unilever, was launched as a soap in the United States in 1957. Today, Dove has a wide range of products. Dove's marketing strategy has gained fame with its "Real Beauty" campaign. This campaign delivers messages that challenge women's beauty standards and encourages them to accept themselves. Dove brand attracts attention with its social responsibility projects.

With an initiative called the "Dove Self-Esteem Project" launched in 2004, it aimed to provide support for young people in terms of body image and self-respect. However, this campaign has been criticized, particularly by researchers working on feminism and beauty standards. Among the criticisms are the campaign's inadequacy, Dove's promotion of beauty standards for women's bodies, and allegations that the real purpose of the campaign is to serve marketing purposes. Additionally, the campaign has been criticized for targeting mainly white, wealthy, and Western women and for the lack of global diversity. In this study, critical discourse analysis was applied to the advertisement films selected from Dove's Self-Esteem Social Responsibility campaign page. The selection process of the advertisement films is discussed in the methodology section of the research. Within the scope of the study, the advertisement films were analyzed by referring to the table prepared by Ayvaz and Livberber (2019) adapting Van Dijk's news discourse model to advertisement films.

## 4. Literature

### 4.1. Marketing Communication Campaigns and Corporate Social Responsibility

Marketing communication is the set of communication activities used in the marketing of a product or service. These activities are carried out through various methods such as advertising, sales, public relations, direct marketing, and digital marketing. Marketing communication is designed to increase awareness of a brand or product among target audiences, improve brand image, influence customers, and increase sales (Belch and Belch, 2014; Schultz, Patti, & Kitchen, 2013). As a result of the development of the marketing communication process, the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) emerged in the mid-1990s. IMC refers to the development of a consistent and comprehensive communication strategy by integrating all marketing and communication activities to influence customers' purchase decisions. The emergence of the IMC concept was focused on the integration of multiple channels instead of the use of a single marketing channel. This integration requires the coordination of different marketing and communication tools such as advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, sponsorship, event marketing, and digital marketing. IMC has become even more important with the development of digital channels and the increase in customers' interactions with brands. This concept helps to personalize customer experiences and shape their attitudes towards a particular brand. In addition, as customer interactions with brands increase, it has become clear that brands need to interact with customers effectively using multiple channels rather than a single marketing channel. Philip Kotler defines integrated marketing communication as "a process that aims to give a consistent, clear, and effective message by combining different communication tools and channels in an organization's marketing strategies and tactics" (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & Piercy, 2017). Marketing communication campaigns are typically carried out using different channels. These channels include television, radio, newspaper, magazine, digital platforms, social media, outdoor advertising, events, social responsibility projects, and sponsorships. The selection of these channels is important to reach the target audience in the most appropriate way. Marketing communication campaigns start with a strategic planning process. The campaign's objectives, target audience, marketing messages, channels, and budget are determined. Then, the creative idea and concept of the campaign are created.

Marketing communication plays a crucial role in guiding a creative idea and concept

towards reaching the target audience and influencing them. In the campaign design stage, materials, designs, and contents that will communicate the brand's message to the target audience are prepared. Creative and memorable campaigns that appeal to the target audience are important at this stage. Campaign materials generally include advertising films, advertising posters, banners, email marketing materials, social media posts, and other materials that combine visual and textual elements. Social responsibility projects are activities that companies undertake to fulfill their social responsibilities. These projects are carried out to raise awareness on issues such as the environment, human rights, education, health, to meet the needs of society or to provide solutions to environmental and social problems. Corporate social responsibility activities offer advantages in terms of developing a positive image and creating a strong corporate brand for businesses in their target audience (Elden and Çakır, 2021:15). In addition, social responsibility projects are an important opportunity to show the brand's commitment to society. Therefore, marketing communication ensures that these projects are understood and appreciated by the target audience and the general public.

Marketing communication increases the confidence of customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders that the business operates responsibly. In this sense, social responsibility projects also contribute to the marketing process of the business's products and services. From a critical perspective, corporate social responsibility projects are also included in the marketing communication process. Corporate social responsibility campaigns involve businesses taking on their social and environmental responsibilities in addition to their economic activities, engaging in activities that not only benefit their profits but also benefit society. Brands that act with a sense of social responsibility achieve a significant level of brand value (Elden, 2013: 532). Fulfilling this responsibility requires companies to act not only within the framework of legal regulations but also in line with society's expectations. Corporate social responsibility covers topics such as sustainability, business ethics, environmental protection, social awareness, labor rights, and social justice.

There are several reasons why businesses undertake corporate social responsibility campaigns. Firstly, businesses aim to establish a more reputable position in society and strengthen their brand image. Corporate social responsibility campaigns create a perception that businesses fulfill their social responsibilities and enable them to have a more reputable position in the eyes of consumers. Secondly, businesses goal to seek solutions to environmental and social problems. Corporate social responsibility campaigns aim to draw attention to the problems facing society and take a role in solving them. A third reason is that businesses seek

to have a positive impact on their employees and customers. Corporate social responsibility campaigns allow businesses to establish a more positive image and gain the trust and loyalty of their employees and customers.

#### **4.2. Culture of Consumption and Consumers' Self- Construction**

"Culture of consumption, is one of the fundamental ways in which people understand themselves, others, and the world. Consumer culture allows individuals to create and express meaning through their consumption actions. This culture encompasses a range of social, cultural, economic, and psychological processes related to the production, distribution, promotion, and consumption of goods and services" (Ritzer, 1996). Ritzer's definition addresses the individual and societal effects of consumer culture, while also emphasizing the relationships between the production, distribution, promotion, and consumption of goods and services. Thorstein Veblen (2007) is one of the pioneering thinkers on consumer culture, and his book "The Theory of the Leisure Class" examines the topic. According to Veblen (2007), consumption culture is a social structure where goods and services are evaluated based on their symbolic values rather than their utility value, and consumption becomes a form of display. In this structure, individuals express their social status through conspicuous consumption and seek the approval of others. Consumption culture should be understood as a social order that encompasses people's ways of consuming goods and services, their consumption preferences, habits, and motivations.

Jean Baudrillard argues that consumer society is based on two fundamental elements, which he calls "myths" and "structures." The "myths" refer to the meanings that consumers attach to products and brands, and the symbolic values that products possess. The "structures" point to the economic, social, and cultural foundations of consumer society. Baudrillard argues that consumers pay for products not only with money, but also with their symbolic value, which becomes part of their identities and social statuses. Baudrillard (1998) contends that consumer culture is a kind of "lie," and that consumers chase artificial needs created by consumer society instead of their genuine needs. The prevalence of consumer culture in society leads people to pursue desires rather than real needs. Barber (2007) criticizes consumer society in his book "Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole." Barber examines how consumer culture affects people's values, behaviors, and lives, how it infantilizes children, adults, and society as a whole, and how citizenship and civic engagement are swallowed by the logic of consumption.

In a consumption society, individuals construct their identities and selves through consumption, and they express themselves through consumption while also reflecting their social status. In a consumption society, individuals showcase a certain lifestyle and personality traits through the products they consume. Therefore, the products and brands they consume become symbols that determine individuals' social identity and self. In a consumption society, consumption behavior and preferences are one of the key factors shaping individuals' identities. In his article, Ersoy (2014) discusses how consumer culture affects and shapes people's identities. Ersoy notes that consumer culture leads to emphasizing differences in social structure and individuals defining themselves through these differences. In this context, Ersoy emphasizes that through the symbolic meanings of products, consumer identities are expressed as individuals adopt a certain lifestyle or image. Ersoy argues that by expressing themselves through an image or lifestyle, consumers contribute to the formation and maintenance of social distinctions in consumer culture. Therefore, Ersoy notes that consumer culture plays an important role in individuals' identity formation, and consumers attempt to express themselves through brands.

The widespread use of social media has particularly had significant effects on consumption culture and individuals' identity formation. Individuals have more opportunities to produce and share visual and written content that defines themselves through social media. Social media has become an important tool for constructing social identities, especially among young people. However, it has been found that excessive use of social media has significant negative effects on young people. Kelly, Zilanawala, Booker & Sacker (2019) conducted a study on 11,000 young people in the UK and found a stronger relationship between social media use and depressive symptoms in girls than in boys. Compared to 1-3 hours of use per day, an increase of 26% in girls and 21% in boys was observed with 3-5 hours of use, while an increase of 50% in girls and 35% in boys was observed with more than 5 hours of use. The study found that excessive social media use was associated with dissatisfaction with one's weight (especially 31% more likely with 5 or more hours of use).

#### **4.3. What is Dove “Self-Esteem Project”**

"The Dove Self-Esteem Project was first launched in the UK in 2004 and later expanded worldwide in 2006. The project, as part of the Dove brand, aims to change the beauty perceptions of women in the cosmetics industry and increase women's self-confidence. The project's goal is to help young girls in particular developing a confident and positive self-image.

According to their website page, the campaign is described as follows: "For over 15 years, we have been helping parents, mentors, teachers, and youth leaders provide confidence education to over 60 million young people. By 2030, we aim to help a quarter of a billion people build positive body image." (Dove, 2023).

The Dove Self-Esteem Project consists of a series of different programs and activities. Examples of these campaigns and activities include Dove Self-Esteem Books: These books are designed specifically for schools and young girls. The books are written to help young girls increase their self-confidence and encourage the development of a healthy body image. Dove Self-Esteem Workshops are designed to help young girls increase their self-confidence and develop a positive body image. Workshops are held in places such as schools, youth clubs, and community centers. Dove Self-Esteem TV Advertisements has aired a series of television advertisements as part of the Self-Esteem Project. These ads aim to increase women's self-confidence and encourage the development of a healthy body image. Dove Self-Esteem Online Education Programs offers online education programs as part of the Self-Esteem Project. These programs are designed to help women and young girls increase their self-confidence and develop a healthy body image. Dove Real Beauty Campaigns aims to change women's beauty perceptions and encourage the development of a healthy body image through Real Beauty campaigns. These campaigns are carried out primarily through social media and digital advertising."

## **5. Methodology**

In this study, the visual and linguistic elements used by Dove's "Self-Esteem Project" as a social responsibility campaign were analyzed to investigate how they construct an ideological discourse. For this purpose, Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method was used in the research. Within the scope of the study, critical discourse analysis was applied to the advertising films selected as part of the campaign. Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis is a communication theory that focuses on the examination of texts and discourses on social and political issues. Van Dijk argues that the language used in communication is closely linked to social structure and power relations. According to this theory, language use is not only a means of communication, but also a source of social and political power. Language is used to express the worldviews, ideologies, and values of a group or individuals. However, these forms of expression can reflect or legitimize social power relations and hierarchies.



Critical discourse analysis examines not only the content of texts, but also the social and political contexts in which texts are produced. Analysis of these contexts is important to understand the meaning and impact of texts. Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis is based on the analysis of the social, political, and ideological contexts of discourses. This theory is important to understand the social and political contexts in which media messages are produced and to understand the ideological effects of these messages (Van Dijk, 1993: 249-283). As it was not possible to conduct critical discourse analysis on all the advertisements produced during the campaign due to time constraints, purposive sampling method was used in the qualitative research method to determine the sample of the study, and it was limited to the most watched two advertisement films of the brand and the brand that were deemed suitable for the purpose of this study. The advertisement films were selected from the campaign's YouTube page. The critical discourse analysis method used in the examination of Dove brand's selected advertisement films in this study is explained in the table below (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Adaptation of van Dijk's Discourse Analysis Model to Television Commercials**

<b>A) Makro Structures</b>	<b>B) Micro Structures</b>
1. Scenario 2. Slogan 3. Location 4. Charecters 5. Social/Cultural/Class Context	1. Sentence Structures and Word Choices 2. Shooting Type 3. Music/Jingle-Sound-Sound Effects

**Resource:** Ayvaz ve Livberber (2019)

Discourse analysis can also be applied to advertising films within media texts. In the scope of this research, the advertising films were analyzed by referring to the table prepared by Ayvaz and Livberber (2019), who adapted Van Dijk's news discourse model to advertising films.

## **6. Findings**

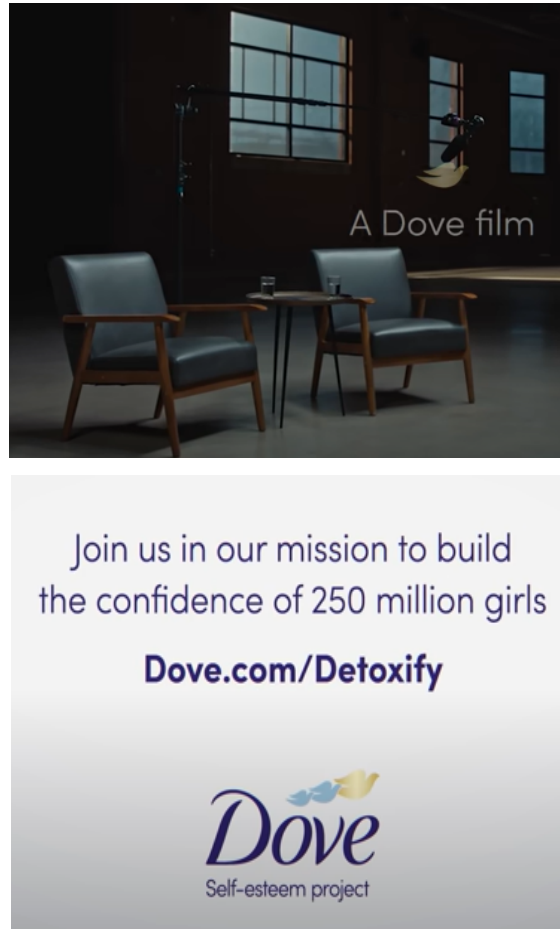
### **6.1. Toxic Influence: A Dove Film | Dove Self-Esteem Project Advertising**

#### **A) Macro Structures of Advertising**

**Scenario:** The advertisement film that lasts three minutes and forty-eight seconds starts with the Dove brand logo. In the advertisement, an empty, wide space with two chairs and a microphone is seen. First, a Black mother and daughter come to the shooting area and sit on the chairs. An external voice says "make yourself comfortable". The mother sits on the chair and knows that it is a video shoot. In the continuation of the advertisement, other mothers and daughters, including Black and Hispanic, are shown one after the other. The Hispanic mother

says, "I don't want to ruin the lipstick" to the external voice and laughs loudly. Then a white screen appears in the ad, and it says, "We invited parents and daughters to talk about social media." After this text, parents are asked to comment on the effects of social media on their children. Parents give quite positive answers, stating that social media has positive effects on their children. Similarly, young girls state that social media has positive effects on their self-confidence. Then, young girls are asked to browse their social media accounts, and their social media accounts are displayed on the screen, which the mothers and daughters can see together. After that, the Dove brand is seen again on the white screen, and the following text appears: "*Most families do not know how harmful social media can be for their children.*" Later in the advertisement, harmful beauty advice is given to daughters through facial mapping technology from the mothers' mouths. Mothers who see themselves on the screen are very surprised and laugh excitedly, saying "this is not me" to their daughters. But the expression of surprise continues on their faces. "Mothers and daughters who watch the videos find the content to be very dangerous and harmful. The main purpose of showing the videos is to show both sides that young girls are exposed to such content every day and that parents are unaware of this situation. At the end of the video display, young girls realize how harmful beauty advice presented on social media can be, and parents become aware of such content and how to protect their children from social media. The video ends with the display of Dove's logo and a text saying that Dove's Self-Esteem Project works to protect girls from such content and directs the audience to Dove's web page."

**Slogan:** At the beginning of the commercial, Dove's logo is seen and the film begins. The slogan of the commercial is shown at the end and it reads as follows: "Dove Self-Esteem Project has developed tools so parents help their girls detoxify their feeds. Join us in our mission to build the confidence of 250 million girls." "We believe that beauty should be a source of confidence, not anxiety. That's why we are here to help women around the world develop a positive relationship with their looks and realize the full potential of their confidence." (Dove, 2023).



**Fig. 1.** First Scene of the Commercial

**Resource:** Toxic Influence: A Dove Film | Dove Self-Esteem Project, Youtube  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3iRZtkyAQ&t=5s>)

**Location:** The commercial takes place indoors in a spacious and empty area with high ceilings. The environment is dimly lit. Two empty chairs are positioned facing each other for guests to sit, and a standing microphone is fixed to capture their voices. In front of the guests is a large white screen, and behind them are wide empty windows.



Fig 2. Location

**Characters:** The advertisement film includes a group of mother-daughter pairs. The advertisement shows mothers and daughters of different races, indicating that the campaign targets a wide audience. First, a black mother and daughter are shown, followed by Latin, White, and Hispanic mothers and daughters, respectively, at the beginning of the film. The characters represent a typical American population. Finally, there is an off-screen voice that directs the audience with questions about the mother and daughter.

**Social/Cultural/Class Context:** Gender roles, behaviors and physical appearances expected of individuals based on their gender, which vary depending on the time period, culture, and geography, are referred to as "gender." West and Zimmerman's (1987) article "Doing Gender" argues that gender is constructed through social structure and interactions. The study suggests that discrimination and inequalities that arise from biological differences are not an innate characteristic of gender, but rather constructed through social structures and interactions (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Media is one of the most powerful tools that affect women's beauty standards, disseminating standards, messages, and ideals on how women should look.

For example, it constantly reinforces the idea that women should be thin, have long legs, a small waist, and a beautiful face. These standards affect how women see themselves, their self-respect, and acceptance in society. Grabe, Ward & Hyde (2008) found in their study that media is a significant factor in the development of women's body image problems. Specifically, factors such as idealizing women's bodies, constantly sending messages about the ideal body type, objectifying women's bodies, and defining gender roles in a particular way contribute to women's body image problems.

Dove's "Toxic Effect" advertisement addresses the impact of gender stereotypes and social structures on women's beauty standards. The advertisement reflects the idea that women's beauty standards are determined by society and they are expected to have perfect skin, hair, and bodies. The advertisement emphasizes how women struggle to conform to the "perfect" body and beauty standards set by the media, which leads to an increase in their insecurity. Additionally, the advertisement tells the story of a woman who is transformed to be "perfect" but eventually accepts her own natural beauty. This advertisement criticizes society's role in shaping women's beauty standards and critiques social structures. Furthermore, the women depicted in the ad come in different ages, skin tones, body shapes, and hair types, demonstrating that women who are typically excluded by society's beauty standards can also be a part of it. Another notable aspect of the advertisement is the presence of characters from different races. This diversity emphasizes the American audience and highlights how women from different races are under the same pressure to conform to beauty standards, pointing out that it is a problem within society.

Dove's advertisement reflects beauty standards from a societal perspective and creates an unrealistic "reality." The campaign has also faced criticism for appearing more like a marketing campaign rather than a social responsibility campaign. Although the campaign criticizes a specific beauty standard, it still reflects a certain beauty standard. Another contradiction in the ad is that Dove is owned by the Unilever group, and the communication efforts of its other products conflict with Dove's advertising campaign (Jeffers, 2005).

## **B) Microstructures of Advertising:**

**Sentence Structures and Word Choices:** At the beginning of the advertisement, the text "A Dove Film" and the brand's logo are shown, giving the impression that this is a brand communication campaign. Before the Latin-speaking mother guest starts talking, she says " I don't want to ruin the lipstick " and laughs out loud. It is noticeable that the actors in the advertisement behave according to a script and the words are carefully chosen. This

advertisement was produced with the aim of changing the beauty perception targeted at women, especially through new media. In this context, it is remarkable that the Latin mother guest said "I don't want to ruin the lipstick" before the shooting started, it appears to be planned according to the script. Although the advertisement aims to emphasize the natural reactions of the mother and daughter, it can be easily understood from the choice of words that the process is a fiction. However, considering the cultural difference of the examined country (USA), it would be accurate to interpret this as a subjective assessment.

**Shot Type:** The commercial uses general, close-up, medium and detail shots. Close-up shots are frequently used since the focus is on capturing the reactions of the individuals rather than showcasing a product. Especially during emotional moments between the mother and daughter, close-up shots are preferred.

**Music/Jingle-Sound-Sound Effects:** The commercial does not feature a music track with lyrics, but instead has a low volume background music. No jingle is used in the film.

## 6.2. Reverse Selfie | Dove Self-Esteem Project

### A) Macro Structures of Advertising

**Scenario:** The story focuses on a young girl's daily life. The girl constantly takes and shares photos on social media with the anxiety of being liked, but applies filters to the photos to look better. While each of her posts makes her feel better, the real emphasis of the commercial's script is her becoming estranged from herself. With the concept of "Reverse Selfie", the filters and other edits in the selfies taken by the young girl are removed to reveal her true face. This provides an opportunity for the young girl to accept her true self and become reconciled with herself. However, as she is not at peace with her true appearance, the commercial ends with her sitting on her bed with an unhappy expression, looking at herself in the mirror as the filters are removed from her photos. The commercial uses this concept to emphasize that the selfies people share on social media do not reflect their true faces, and that true beauty comes from within.

**Slogan:** There is no slogan in the commercial. However, at the end of the film, along with the Dove brand logo, the following message appears on the screen, "The pressure of social media is hurting our girls' self-esteem. More screen time during the pandemic has made things worse. Have the selfie talk today. Go to [dove.com](https://dove.com) to find out how." Finally, the commercial ends with Dove's brand slogan.

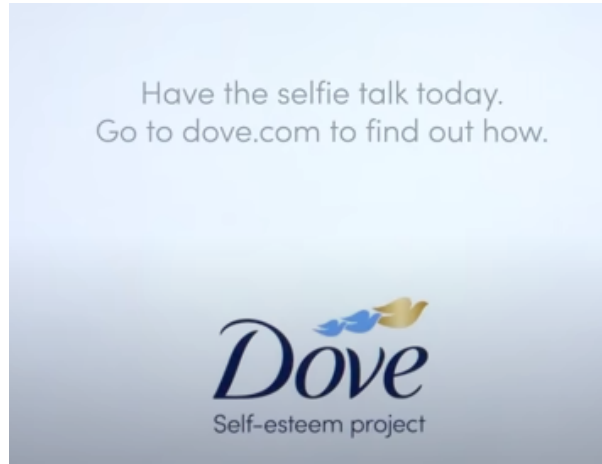


Fig 3. End of the Commercial <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF3iRZtkyAQ> (dated: 10.06.2023).

**Location:** The commercial takes place in a single location, which is a teenage girl's bedroom. In the film, a young girl is taking selfies in her room. The room features a bed and a full-length mirror opposite the bed. There are wall decorations behind the bed that reflect the room of a teenager. Overall, the room reflects a teenage girl's bedroom.

**Characters:** The commercial features only one character, which is a young girl around the age of 12. Apart from her, there are no other characters in the commercial."

**Social/Cultural/Class Context:** There are similar gender-related references in this advertisement as in the previous one. Once again, it can be seen that the media is attempting to construct a beauty perception through the female body. Dove's "Reverse Selfie" campaign launched the "The Selfie Talk" program to initiate a discussion about how young people represent themselves on social media. The program uses 180-degree rotated reverse images of selfies to emphasize the difference between the appearance in selfies and in real life.

Dove's "Reverse Selfie" campaign has been subject to various criticisms in the context of critical discourse analysis. Firstly, it can be argued that the campaign has a commercial purpose at its core and is a marketing strategy for the brand to increase sales. Therefore, the campaign may not be considered a genuine social responsibility project. While the campaign addresses the social pressures related to beauty perception, it also brings the criticism that the beauty standards themselves are determined by the brand. While emphasizing that young people face social pressures to conform to beauty standards, the campaign also reflects a certain perspective on how the beauty perception should be.

The presentation and advertising messages of the campaign can also be criticized. Van Dijk points out that many advertisements use specific genders, races or social classes to

degrade, ostracize or discriminate against them. Today, social media plays a significant role in shaping the beauty perception, especially for women. While awareness campaigns are being launched for Generation Z, these platforms still have a significant influence in determining beauty standards. In the context of critical discourse analysis by Van Dijk, social media can increase the social pressures related to beauty perception. These platforms have an important role in shaping the beauty perception in a certain way. For example, popular aesthetic images and influencers on Instagram and other social media applications have a significant impact on determining beauty standards for women. However, the criticism of beauty perception and social pressures on social media can also be seen in campaigns targeting Generation Z. For example, Dove's "Reverse Selfie" campaign draws attention to the social pressures related to beauty perception and the negative perceptions that young people have of themselves. However, a certain perspective on how beauty standards are determined is reflected in the messages or presentation of the campaign. In addition, although the Dove brand aims to change the beauty perception related to women in this project declared as a social responsibility, Unilever carries out advertisements that construct the opposite perception in Axe commercials, which is also owned by Unilever. In this sense, it questions the credibility of the campaign made by the brand group, which contributes to a process it has built under a different brand with a counter-discourse.

### **B) Micro Structures of Advertising:**

**Sentence Structures and Word Choices:** There is no spoken dialogue in the advertisement. The entire film progresses without dialogue. However, comments on the young girl's social media photos are seen in the commercial. In these comments, messages of admiration are sent to the attractive photos that the young girl shares on social media by applying modifications. These messages increase the young girl's confidence. However, in real life, the girl looks very different from the photos she shares.



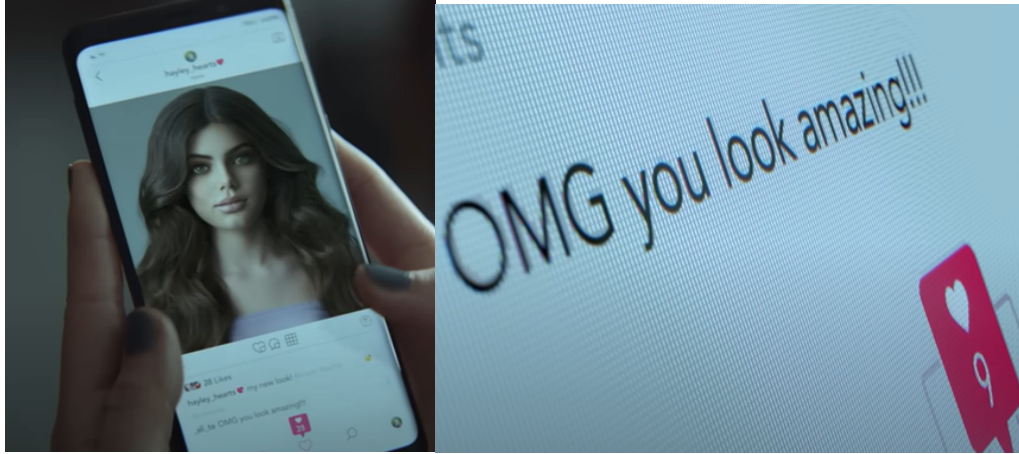


Fig 4. Word Choices in Advertising <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2T-Rh838GA> (dated 10.06.2023)

**Shot Types:** The commercial film used wide shots, close-ups, medium shots, and detail shots. However, close-up shots are frequently used to draw attention. This way, the details in the photos shared by the young girl are shown up close to the audience.

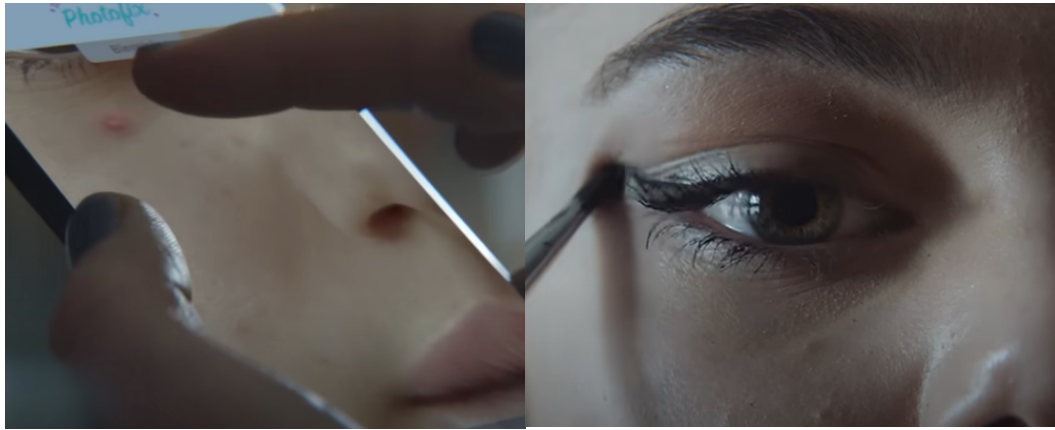


Fig 5. Shooting Techniques in Advertising <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2T-Rh838GA> (dated 10.06.2023)

**Music/Jingle - Sound - Sound Effects:** In the commercial, a classical music background composed of the combination of violin and piano is playing.

## CONCLUSION

Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an approach that examines the relationship between language, power dynamics, and ideology. In this context, it is important to focus on the language use, power dynamics, and ideological aims of the Dove Self-Esteem Project in order to evaluate it. The Dove Self-Esteem Project presents itself as a social responsibility project aimed at increasing the confidence of young people and reducing body image concerns.

The Dove Self-Esteem Project is a great example of consumer culture. Consumer culture encourages the consumption of goods that help individuals define themselves. The Dove Self-Esteem Project can be viewed as a marketing strategy that emphasizes natural beauty to promote self-confidence and self-respect among consumers. However, the Dove Self-Esteem Project has faced some criticism. At its core, the Dove's Self-Esteem Campaign implies that buying Dove's products will increase one's self-confidence. This leads to criticisms that people's self-esteem is being manipulated in order to increase product sales, which is a result of consumer culture. One critical study of this campaign is McCleary's "A Not-So-Beautiful Campaign: A Feminist Analysis of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty." In this article, McCleary presents a feminist analysis of Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty."

The marketing strategy behind Dove's claim to represent real women's bodies is discussed. Additionally, the article criticizes the campaign for reproducing sexist stereotypes and reinforcing gender norms by focusing on women's physical appearance. McCleary notes that the Dove "Campaign for Real Beauty" is an example of combining corporate social responsibility efforts with marketing goals. (McCleary, 2014).

The article titled "The Effectiveness of Dove Campaign For Real Beauty In Affecting Customers' Purchase Decision Toward Dove Products" investigates the effectiveness of Dove's Real Beauty campaign in influencing customers' purchasing decisions towards Dove products. Using data obtained through online surveys, the study examines how participants' perception of Dove's Real Beauty campaign affected their attitudes towards Dove products. The results of the research show that Dove's Real Beauty campaign helped participants develop a more positive attitude towards Dove products and therefore influenced their purchasing decisions (Syaharani, 2021). In this sense, the project carried out under the name of social responsibility stands out as a marketing communication study.

Dove's Self Esteem Project is a marketing communication campaign that criticizes beauty standards created in consumer culture and strives to help people accept their bodies and develop self-confidence. This campaign displays a sensitive approach to issues such as gender, race, and body type. Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis focuses on identifying the ideological structures within the discourse. In this context, the ideology of Dove's Self Esteem Project can also be examined. For example, the project aims to create awareness among consumers about the negative effects of beauty standards on their relationship with the beauty industry. However,

Dove's Self Esteem Project has also been criticized for being used to increase product sales instead of boosting consumers' self-confidence.

Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis also looks at the social and cultural context in which the discourse is produced. In this context, Dove's Self Esteem Project can be seen as a marketing strategy to compete with the beauty industry in consumer culture. Dove's Self-Esteem Project is an initiative financed by the Unilever group, which aims to increase awareness on women's beauty standards, body positivity, self-confidence, and gender-related issues. However, this project has been criticized due to Unilever's use of the female body as an object in Axe's advertisements. Axe's commercials generally display an approach that objectifies and degrades women, and suggest that men can become "attractive" by using Axe products.

In conclusion, Dove's Self Esteem Project is a marketing communication campaign that criticizes beauty standards in consumer culture and strives to help people accept their bodies. However, the main finding of the research is that this campaign is used to increase product sales instead of boosting consumers' self-confidence. Dove's advertisements will be met with skepticism by consumers as long as they continue to add their logo at the end of their campaigns, indicating that they should prioritize conducting social responsibility initiatives without prominently featuring their brand. Additionally, if Unilever is genuine in Dove's stance, they should also reflect this stance in their other subsidiary brands; otherwise, their sincerity will always be questioned.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

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Beauty standards accepted by society can change over time (Wolf, 1990). When societies are examined from the past to the present, it can be observed how the perception of beauty has changed. Nowadays, media is an important factor that affects the perception of beauty. Media shapes people's understanding of beauty and creates certain beauty standards through television programs, movies, series, advertisements, social media, and other communication channels. Dove brand has a wide range of products today. Dove's marketing strategy gained fame with the "Real Beauty" campaign. This campaign challenges women's beauty standards and encourages women to accept themselves. The Dove brand attracts attention with its social responsibility projects. In 2004, it launched an initiative called the "Dove Self-Esteem Project" to provide support for young people's body image and self-respect. However, this campaign has been criticized, especially by researchers working on feminism and beauty standards. Among the criticisms are inadequacy of the campaign, Dove still promoting beauty standards for women's bodies, and the claim that the real purpose of the campaign is to serve marketing goals.

Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis focuses on identifying the ideological structures within discourse. In this context, the ideology of Dove's Self-Esteem Project can also be examined. For example, the project aims to create awareness in consumers' relationships with the beauty industry by highlighting the negative effects of beauty perception. However, Dove's Self-Esteem Project is also subject to criticisms that it is used to increase product sales instead of increasing consumers' self-confidence. Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis also considers the social and cultural context in which the discourse is produced. In this context, Dove's Self-Esteem Project is thought to have emerged as a marketing strategy to compete with the beauty industry in consumer culture.

In this study, critical discourse analysis of Van Dijk was applied to selected advertisements published on Dove's YouTube page as part of the Dove Self-Esteem Project, which was launched as a social responsibility project in 2004. The table prepared by Ayvaz and Livberber (2019), which adapted Van Dijk's news discourse model to advertising, was used as a reference in the analysis of the commercials. As a result of the examination, it was determined that the language and discourse used in the campaign were part of a marketing communication

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process and that the basic and only aim of the project was not to address the pressure on women's beauty perception and societal issues, as claimed in the campaign. The aim of the campaign was found to be to increase sales, strengthen the brand's image, and increase its reputation. It was found that the Dove Self-Esteem Project was trying to build a new beauty perception dependent on the brand's own defined and produced products, rather than removing the pressure on women's beauty in the long term. In this context, the main finding of the research is that the beauty perception produced through the female body was reproduced as a new version through the commercials produced within the scope of the campaign.