

## The Use of Hyperbolic Figures of Speech (夸张) in Online Shopping Advertisements on Taobao: A Thematic Analysis of the Shift in Chinese Beauty Standards from ‘白瘦幼’ to ‘国潮美’

Iffa Mar'atus Shohibul Birri<sup>1</sup>, Subandi<sup>2</sup>, Dzun Nun Septin Renda Rabbani<sup>3</sup>, Rokhishotul Amaliyah<sup>4</sup>, Ren Huiling<sup>5</sup>, Lin Xinyue<sup>6</sup>

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China<sup>5</sup>

[iffabirri@unesa.ac.id](mailto:iffabirri@unesa.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [subandi@unesa.ac.id](mailto:subandi@unesa.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [dzunrabbani@unesa.ac.id](mailto:dzunrabbani@unesa.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

[rokhishotulamaliyah@unesa.ac.id](mailto:rokhishotulamaliyah@unesa.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>, [1980427218@qq.com](mailto:1980427218@qq.com)<sup>5</sup>, [veronica1210@gmail.com](mailto:veronica1210@gmail.com)<sup>6</sup>

\* is Corresponding Author

### Abstract

This study examines the use of hyperbole (夸张) in online shopping advertisements on the Taobao platform, with particular attention to how these expressions construct and represent the shift in Chinese beauty standards from the traditional ideal of 白瘦幼 (*white, thin, youthful*) to the emerging aesthetic trend 国潮美 (Chinese national-style beauty). Using a qualitative approach supported by multimodal discourse analysis of 40 Taobao advertisements (2020–2024), this study identifies key patterns in linguistic hyperbole, visual design, and embedded cultural meanings. The findings show that hyperbole in 白瘦幼-themed advertisements predominantly amplifies extreme and unrealistic beauty ideals. Meanwhile, hyperbole in 国潮美-themed advertisements emphasizes natural beauty, cultural symbolism, and national pride through expressions such as *so stunning it leaves people breathless* or *instant oriental charm*. These forms celebrate diversity and promote culturally rooted aesthetic values. Overall, the study demonstrates that hyperbole in Taobao advertisements serves not only as a persuasive rhetorical device but also as a cultural marker that reflects shifting beauty ideologies and growing cultural confidence in modern Chinese society. The research contributes to the fields of digital media linguistics, Chinese popular culture, and rhetorical strategies in online marketing.

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### INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, beauty standards in China have undergone a highly significant and multidimensional transformation. While from 2000 to 2015 the “ideal” female image was dominated by the influence of K-pop culture, Western aesthetics, and urban popular culture promoting the concept of 白瘦幼 (fair-skinned, thin, and youthful), since 2018 a marked shift has occurred toward a nationally inspired aesthetic embodied in the phenomenon of 国潮美. This shift not only reflects changes in public aesthetic preferences but is also rooted in the rise of 文化自信 (cultural confidence), which has become a central focus in contemporary Chinese cultural discourse. Xu Jilin (许纪霖, 2020) asserts that cultural confidence provides a crucial foundation for modern Chinese society to sustain, negotiate, and express its cultural identity amid globalization. Within this framework, 国潮 is

understood as a direct manifestation of national identity revival—an integration of traditional Chinese values with modern consumer culture.

The role of e-commerce platforms such as Taobao has become highly significant in shaping this evolving beauty discourse. As a competitive digital promotional space, Taobao advertisements rely on concise, expressive, hyperbolic, and emotionally intensified language to capture user attention within a short span of time. Hyperbole (夸张) is one of the most dominant linguistic strategies employed to construct strong impressions of product superiority while simultaneously shaping consumer perceptions of ideal beauty. In this study, hyperbole is understood not only as a stylistic device of exaggeration but as a strategic rhetorical resource that intensifies meaning, reinforces product claims, and contributes to the construction of beauty ideals in the Chinese digital marketplace.

Meanwhile, the dynamic shift in Chinese beauty standards has become a focal point of scholarly inquiry in recent years. Zhang Meng (张萌, 2021) argues that the 白瘦幼 aesthetic emerged as a consequence of 消费主义审美 (the aesthetics of consumerism), which positions the female body particularly pale skin and thinness—as a visually marketable commodity. This standard has been reinforced by advertising and entertainment industries, generating strong social pressure on young women. However, with the rise of the 国潮 phenomenon, a redefinition of beauty has emerged among Chinese youth. According to Li Xueping (李雪萍, 2022), beauty in contemporary China is no longer limited to fairness and thinness, but is understood as an expression of 民族文化符号 (national cultural symbols), including the use of traditional Chinese colors, Asian facial features, classical oriental makeup styles, and traditional aesthetics such as Hanfu.

This transformation in aesthetic values is also closely connected to cultural semiotics (文化符号学), which views advertising as a system of cultural signs that negotiates national identity, aesthetic values, and social representation (Jia Yuxin, 2010). In the context of 国潮美, hyperbole in advertisements not only amplifies product advantages but also reinforces Chinese cultural symbolism embedded in visual elements (color palettes, traditional clothing, classical motifs) and linguistic forms (oriental metaphors, classical idioms, aesthetic phrasing).

Previous research has highlighted the important role of hyperbole in Chinese beauty advertising. Li (2019) found that hyperbolic style increases 视觉冲击力 (visual shock effect), while Wang (2020) revealed that expressions such as 白到发光 (so white it glows) and 瘦成道光 (thin like a beam of light) construct fantasies of rapid transformation. More recently, Liu Fang (刘芳, 2023) notes that 国潮 themed advertisements use hyperbole to emphasize authenticity, character strength, and 东方美学气质 (oriental aesthetic temperament).

However, despite these valuable contributions, previous studies have not examined how hyperbole functions specifically within the aesthetic transition from 白瘦幼 to 国潮美, nor how multimodal elements in Taobao advertisements jointly construct this shift. Existing research tends to focus either on beauty standards or on hyperbolic expressions in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding their interrelationship within digital commercial discourse.

Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by integrating Western and Chinese rhetorical theory, aesthetic studies, and cultural semiotics to analyze how hyperbole in Taobao advertisements constructs and represents the transition from 白瘦幼 to 国潮美. By examining both linguistic and visual modes, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of beauty representation in China's digital consumer culture and contributes to broader discussions in media linguistics and popular culture studies.

This theoretical framework presents the conceptual foundation underlying the analysis of the use of hyperbole (夸张) in online shopping advertisements on the Taobao platform, particularly within

the context of the shift in Chinese beauty standards from 白瘦幼 to 国潮美. The use of hyperbole in advertising cannot be understood merely as a linguistic phenomenon, but rather as a cultural, cognitive, and multimodal practice that reflects the aesthetic dynamics and identity construction of modern Chinese society. Therefore, the theoretical discussion integrates multiple perspectives, including Western and Mandarin rhetorical theory, Chinese beauty aesthetics, cultural semiotics, multimodal discourse analysis, and digital consumer behavior theory.

In Western rhetorical tradition, hyperbole is regarded as a figurative device that exaggerates reality to produce persuasive and emotional effects. Aristotle, in *Rhetoric*, explains that hyperbole constitutes a rhetorical strategy that heightens the intensity of meaning so that the audience receives a strong impression of the message being conveyed. Keraf (2009) reinforces this view by asserting that hyperbole is not intended to falsify facts, but to emphasize meaning through amplified expression. The cognitive perspective introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) demonstrates that hyperbole forms part of a conceptual mapping process that enables individuals to perceive the attributes of an object with greater intensity. McCarthy and Carter (2004) identify several key characteristics of hyperbole, such as intensification, striking contrast between reality and expression, and its function in constructing persuasion across different text types, including advertising.

The Mandarin rhetorical tradition offers a distinct depth to the concept of hyperbole. Chen Wangdao (陈望道, 1932), in *Xiūcíxué Fāfán* 《修辞学发凡》, emphasizes that 夸张 is not falsehood, but an artistic intensification used to reflect truth by expanding, diminishing, or transcending normal boundaries of expression. Chen categorizes hyperbole into three principal forms: 扩大夸张 (magnification), 缩小夸张 (reduction), and 超越夸张 (transcendence of logic). Meanwhile, Wang Dechun (王德春, 2005) develops a modern rhetorical perspective, asserting that hyperbole in media operates through three essential functions: strengthening verbal messages, eliciting emotional resonance in audiences, and guiding consumer actions. These functions are highly relevant to Taobao advertisements, which employ hyperbole strategically to maximize message appeal.

Within the context of Chinese beauty aesthetics, two dominant concepts influence advertising message construction: 白瘦幼 and 国潮美. The 白瘦幼 aesthetic, which developed between 2000–2015, emerged from 消费主义审美 (the aesthetics of consumerism), in which fair skin, thin bodies, and youthful facial features were regarded as idealized beauty standards. Zhang Meng (张萌, 2021) explains that this aesthetic was shaped by the convergence of Korean pop culture, Western beauty norms, and social media trends that emphasized pale and cute visual styles. Beauty advertisements during this period frequently employed extreme hyperbole such as 白到反光 (so white it reflects light) and 瘦成纸片人 (so thin like paper), reflecting unrealistic standards that imposed social pressure on women.

In contrast, 国潮美 emerged as an aesthetic and cultural phenomenon representing the rise of 文化自信 (cultural confidence) among Chinese society. Li Xueping (李雪萍, 2022) notes that 国潮美 is a modernized expression of traditional Chinese aesthetics, characterized by the use of iconic color palettes such as Guofeng Red and Camellia Red, oriental-inspired makeup, natural Asian facial features, and cultural symbols such as Hanfu. This beauty standard emphasizes authenticity, strength of character, and cultural refinement, marking a clear ideological departure from the white, thin, young aesthetic.

Cultural semiotics provides an important theoretical lens to understand the role of symbolism in Taobao advertising. According to Jia Yuxin (贾玉新, 2010), digital media functions as a system of cultural signs that produces and negotiates meaning through visual and verbal symbols. Within this context, 白瘦幼 hyperbole operates as a symbol of globalization-driven extreme aesthetics, whereas

国潮美 hyperbole constructs beauty symbols rooted in cultural pride. Oriental red tones and traditional motifs function as symbolic representations that reinforce visual messaging and supply cultural context within advertisements.

Multimodal analysis expands the understanding of how meaning is constructed through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that text, visuals, color, typography, and composition operate simultaneously in producing meaning within digital media. In Taobao advertisements, linguistic hyperbole such as 一秒惊艳 (stunning in one second) and 秒变仙女 (instantly transformed into a fairy) is reinforced by visuals featuring bright lighting, fair skin, gold-red color schemes, or traditional ornaments that create an oriental aesthetic effect. This interplay between text and imagery strengthens the persuasive force of hyperbole.

In Chinese digital consumer behavior theory, hyperbole is also understood as a persuasive technique within the attention economy. Wang Xiaoming (王晓明, 2018) explains that digital advertising operates amid intense competition for extremely brief user attention spans, making hyperbole a trigger for attention, curiosity, and impulsive action. Furthermore, inductive text theory in Chinese digital marketing illustrates that hyperbolic expressions are designed to provoke emotional responses such as admiration or a desire for instant transformation, as seen in expressions like 美到让人移不开眼 (so beautiful one cannot look away) or 不用修图也能仙气飘飘 (ethereal beauty without photo editing).

Based on these theoretical perspectives, it can be concluded that hyperbole (夸张) in Taobao advertising constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon. It functions not only as a stylistic device, but also as an instrument for constructing beauty perception, shaping cultural identity, and enabling multimodal communication strategies. The use of hyperbole reflects a shift in beauty representation from the globalized aesthetics of 白瘦幼 toward the national aesthetics of 国潮美, while demonstrating how advertising actively shapes cultural understanding and consumption practices in modern China.

Building upon the background and research gap identified earlier, this study aims to examine in depth how hyperbolic expressions (夸张) in Taobao advertisements construct and represent the aesthetic transition from the globalized beauty ideal of 白瘦幼 to the culturally grounded aesthetic of 国潮美. This research objective involves not only analyzing the linguistic forms of hyperbole but also investigating how multimodal elements—such as visuals, color schemes, typography, composition, and culturally embedded symbols—work together to reinforce hyperbolic meaning. Guided by this aim, the study addresses several key questions: how linguistic hyperbole is constructed in advertisements representing the aesthetics of 白瘦幼 and 国潮美; how multimodal resources such as images, layouts, and color palettes interact with textual hyperbole; how verbal and visual modes collectively represent shifting beauty standards; and what cultural or ideological meanings emerge from the use of hyperbole in the context of contemporary Chinese beauty discourse.

A descriptive qualitative approach is employed because the phenomenon under investigation is interpretive, culturally situated, and not reducible to numerical measurement. The study adopts Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to uncover how language, imagery, and visual design operate simultaneously in shaping advertising messages, while cultural semiotics provides a conceptual lens to explain how symbols and representations negotiate cultural identity and aesthetic values within the advertisements. This methodological choice allows for a comprehensive exploration of the complex interplay between language, culture, and visual communication in Taobao's beauty advertising. Consequently, this research fills the existing scholarly gap where previous studies have tended to analyze hyperbole and beauty standards separately by offering an integrated perspective that contributes to media linguistics, Chinese cultural aesthetics, and digital representation studies.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design to investigate linguistic and visual patterns of hyperbole in Taobao beauty advertisements. The research procedures were carried out through several systematic steps to ensure clarity in unit selection, coding, and multimodal categorization. First, data were collected from 40 online shopping advertisements published on the Taobao platform between 2020 and 2024. The advertisements were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) the presence of linguistic or visual hyperbole, (2) representation of 白瘦幼 or 国潮美 aesthetic features, and (3) classification within beauty or fashion product categories. Store credibility (ratings above 4.7) served as an additional filter to ensure the selection of widely consumed and competitively marketed advertisements.

Second, all advertisement materials including headline text, descriptive captions, images, visual layouts, color palettes, typography styles, and symbolic elements were downloaded and documented in digital format. These components formed the units of analysis, representing multiple semiotic layers within the multimodal dataset. The collected data were organized into two primary categories: advertisements reflecting 白瘦幼 aesthetics and those reflecting 国潮美 aesthetics. Each advertisement was coded and labeled according to its aesthetic theme and dominant hyperbolic features. Third, the analysis employed Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) to examine how verbal and visual components interact in constructing beauty meanings. The analytical procedure consisted of three stages 1) Linguistic analysis: identifying hyperbolic expressions, sentence patterns, modifiers, and intensification strategies; 2) Visual analysis: examining composition, color palette, spatial arrangement, typography, symbolism, and aesthetic cues; 3) Multimodal categorization: mapping the interaction between linguistic and visual hyperbole and determining how these modes collectively construct the aesthetics of 白瘦幼 and 国潮美.

To manage the complexity of multimodal data, a coding framework was applied. Hyperbolic elements were categorized into (a) Linguistic hyperbole (lexical exaggeration, metaphorical intensification, evaluative adjectives); (b) Visual hyperbole (brightness exaggeration, feature enhancement, symbolic overemphasis); and (c) Cultural hyperbole (nationalist symbolism, traditional aesthetic amplification). This model allowed systematic comparison between the two aesthetic categories.

Fourth, data validity was ensured through procedural triangulation. Repeated coding checks were conducted, interpretations were compared across analytic categories, and peer debriefing sessions were used to verify coding consistency and strengthen interpretive reliability. Finally, findings were presented in thematic categories describing types of hyperbole associated with each aesthetic style, supported by representative textual excerpts, visual examples, and multimodal descriptions. This structured methodological approach provides transparency and rigor in analyzing how hyperbolic language and visual design jointly construct beauty ideologies in contemporary Chinese digital advertising.

## RESULT

The analysis shows that a number of hyperbolic expressions recur across the 白瘦幼-themed advertisements. For example, several ads emphasize instantaneous transformation through phrases such as 'instantly white with one swipe.' This pattern of repetition reflects the functions of hyperbole as described by Wang Dechun (2005), namely *qiánghuàxìng gōngnéng* (强化性功能, intensifying function) and *yòudǎoxìng gōngnéng* (诱导性功能, persuasive function). Thus, hyperbole functions not merely as a linguistic ornament but as a rhetorical mechanism that constructs a particular beauty reality one centered on extreme whiteness, instant results, and visual perfection which is ideologically reproduced through these advertisements.

The findings of this study were derived from an analysis of 40 online shopping advertisements from the Taobao platform published between 2020 and 2024. Twenty advertisements represent the 白瘦幼 (fair, thin, youthful) aesthetic, while the remaining twenty reflect the 国潮美 (national-style/Guochao beauty) aesthetic. The data were analyzed using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Mandarin rhetorical theory (Chen Wangdao, 1932; Wang Dechun, 2005), Chinese beauty aesthetics (Zhang Meng, 2021; Li Xueping, 2022), and cultural semiotics (Jia Yuxin, 2010). Overall, the findings reveal a distinct contrast in the deployment of hyperbole (夸张) between the two aesthetic regimes, observable at the linguistic, visual, and ideological-aesthetic levels.

In examining the 白瘦幼 corpus, the analysis indicates that hyperbolic expressions appear repeatedly across the dataset. For example, several advertisements emphasize instantaneous transformation through phrases such as “instantly white with one swipe.” These recurring expressions illustrate the intensifying and persuasive functions of hyperbole as described by Wang Dechun (2005). In this context, hyperbole operates not merely as stylistic ornamentation but as a rhetorical mechanism that constructs and normalizes an aesthetic reality centered on extreme whiteness, rapid transformation, and visual perfection an ideal that is ideologically reproduced through commercial discourse.

### Patterns of Linguistic Hyperbole in Taobao Advertisements

From a linguistic perspective, the study finds that hyperbole (夸张) is systematically employed to construct particular beauty ideals. Within the 白瘦幼-themed advertisements, a range of recurring hyperbolic expressions was identified. The presence of these multiple instances used here as qualitative indicators rather than statistical measures helps illustrate the rhetorical patterns that repeatedly characterize this aesthetic. Examples of such expressions include.

Table 1. Hyperbolic Expressions in 白瘦幼-Themed Advertisements

No.	Hyperbolic Expression Finding	Meaning	Category	Explanation
1	白到发光!	So white it radiates light	Bodily modification	Depicts the skin as a glowing surface.
2	白成牛奶肌!	White like milk	Metaphorical	Uses the softness of milk as a metaphor for ideal skin.
3	白两度只需三天!	Two shades whiter in three days	Instant transformation	Unrealistic promise of rapid whitening.
4	白成反射板!	White like a reflector board	Bodily modification	Exaggerates the effect of reflected light.
5	轻轻一抹 白皙立现!	One swipe reveals instant whiteness	Instant transformation	Frames beauty as instantly attainable.
6	一夜变少女!	Become a young girl overnight	Instant transformation	Reinforces extreme youthfulness.
7	白得像初雪!	White like the first	Metaphorical	Uses natural imagery to

8	白到不真实!	snowfall So white it looks unrealistic	Transcendent	evoke purity. Describes a condition beyond natural possibility.
9	白成仙女肌!	Skin as white as a fairy	Mythic association	Links beauty to mythical femininity.
10	素颜也能亮到不行!	Radiantly bright even without makeup	Natural radiance	Shapes perceptions of natural beauty.
11	黑皮救星!	Savior for dark skin	Persuasive	Overstates the product's corrective power.
12	三天淡斑一周美白!	Dark spots fade in 3 days, whitening in 1 week	Instant transformation	Classic example of commercial exaggeration.
13	白得像被打灯!	White as if under a spotlight	Metaphorical	Overstates lighting-like brightness.
14	素颜能发亮!	A bare face that still glows	Natural radiance	Emphasizes glow without cosmetic aid.
15	白成滤镜效果!	White like a filter effect	Metaphorical	Associates skin with digital image enhancement.
16	比雪还白!	Whiter than snow	Metaphorical	A common extreme comparison in East Asian ads.
17	白得像发光体!	White like a luminous object	Bodily modification	Describes skin as a glowing entity.
18	一抹嫩成18岁!	One application makes the skin as soft as at age 18	Instant transformation	Extreme youth-ideal enhancement.
19	白得反光镜都嫉妒!	Even the mirror is jealous of the whiteness	Personification	Hyperbolic personification for persuasion.
20	皮肤亮到遮不住!	So bright it cannot be concealed	Bodily modification	Emphasizes excessive luminosity.

In the 20 *白瘦幼* themed advertisements, hyperbole is used to emphasize excessively white skin, bodies that are excessively thin, and faces that appear excessively youthful. Expressions such as *白到发光!* (so white it radiates light), *白成牛奶肌!* (white like milk skin), *白两度只需三天!* (two shades whiter in just three days), *一夜变少女!* (become a young girl overnight), and *比雪还白!* (whiter than snow) represent examples of *扩大夸张* (magnifying hyperbole) as defined by Chen Wangdao. Attributes of fair skin, which are relatively subjective in reality, are amplified as though they emit light, reflect brightness, or surpass the whiteness of snow. This aligns with the characteristics of hyperbole identified by Keraf (2009) and McCarthy & Carter (2004), namely the presence of an extreme gap between reality and expression for persuasive effect.

Furthermore, several hyperbolic expressions such as *白到不真实!* (so white it looks

unreal), 白得反光镜都嫉妒！(even a mirror envies the whiteness), and 白得像发光体！(as white as a luminous object) may be categorized as 超越夸张 (hyperbole that transcends logic), as they deliberately position skin conditions outside the limits of natural possibility. Promises of instant transformation are also prominently featured, as seen in expressions such as 三天淡斑一周美白！(dark spots fade in three days, whitening in one week), 轻轻一抹 白皙立现！(a gentle swipe reveals instant whiteness), and 一抹嫩成18岁！(one application makes you as delicate as 18). These patterns correspond to 强化性功能 (the intensifying function) and 诱导性功能 (the persuasive function) proposed by Wang Dechun (2005), wherein hyperbole is used to convince consumers that products can induce rapid and dramatic physical transformation.

In contrast, in the 20 国潮美-themed advertisements, a qualitatively different pattern of linguistic hyperbole is observed. Hyperbolic expressions no longer center on whiteness, thinness, youthfulness, but instead highlight oriental charm, character strength, and cultural pride. There are 20 instances of hyperbole identified in 国潮美-themed advertisements, including the following:

Table 2. Hyperbolic Expressions in 国潮美-Themed Advertisements

No.	Hyperbolic Expression Finding	Meaning	Category	Explanation
1	国色天香一抹即现！	A single swipe reveals classical Chinese beauty	Cultural–aesthetic	Refers to traditional Chinese beauty standards.
2	气场强到三米外都能感受到！	Aura so strong it can be felt from three meters away	Character enhancement	Exaggerates the model’s charisma.
3	东方韵味溢出来了！	Oriental charm overflowing	Cultural aesthetic	Highlights traditional aesthetic qualities
4	红得像国潮神话！	Red as bright as Guochao mythology	Mythic association	Ties beauty to mythic imagery.
5	一抹显英气！	One swipe reveals heroic charm	Bodily modification	Suggests instant enhancement of facial features.
6	带你一秒穿越回古风时代！	Takes you back to ancient times in one second	Cultural time-travel	Nostalgia-focused hyperbole.
7	美到像从画里走出来！	Beautiful like stepping out of a painting	Artistic/mythic	Connects beauty to classical art.
8	红到压全场！	A red so strong it dominates the whole room	Dominance	Emphasizes visual authority.
9	一眼惊鸿！	A single glance leaves a stunning impact	Instant transformation	Evokes immediate visual effect.
10	东方美人气质拉满！	Oriental beauty aura at full level	Cultural pride	Celebrates East Asian identity.

11	媚而不妖，美到刚刚好	Graceful but not excessive, beauty in perfect balance	Moralized beauty	Reflects Confucian moral aesthetics.
12	自带国风滤镜！	Comes with a built-in traditional aesthetic filter	Metaphorical	Combines digital and cultural imagery.
13	红得像古代仕女！	Red like the cheeks of ancient noblewomen	Cultural metaphor	Links beauty to historical femininity
14	一秒上头的国潮魅力！	Guochao charm that overwhelms instantly	Instant attraction	Depicts irresistible appeal.
15	美得不输经典传说！	Beauty rivaling classical legends	Mythic association	Elevates beauty to legendary levels.
16	气质出众得无法忽视！	Charisma so strong it cannot be ignored	Character enhancement	Strengthens the persona's presence.
17	美到像开了光！	So beautiful it seems divinely illuminated	Sacred metaphor	Adds spiritual undertones to beauty.
18	国潮红一抹镇场！	One stroke of Guochao red dominates the space	Dominance	Establishes power through color.
19	东方神韵瞬间锁魂！	Oriental charm instantly captures the soul	Mythic/spiritual	Suggests enchantment-like charisma.
20	国潮审美拉满，全场焦点！	Guochao aesthetics at maximum, becoming the center of attention	Cultural pride	Naturalizes cultural confidence.

Expressions such as 美到惊鸿一瞥！ (so beautiful it captivates at first glance), 东方韵味一眼难忘！ (oriental charm that is unforgettable at first sight), 一秒高级感！ (instant elegance), 国风妆容颜胜画！ (national-style makeup, beauty surpassing a painting), and 美得像古画里走出来！ (so beautiful as if stepping out of an ancient painting) demonstrate that hyperbole is directed toward reinforcing oriental aesthetic values and cultural confidence. Here, hyperbolic expression no longer emphasizes extreme physical transformation, but highlights the aura and 气质 (inner temperament/charisma) associated with oriental facial features.

Several expressions such as 东方脸就是高级！ (an oriental face is inherently high-class), 东方美学集于一脸！ (all oriental aesthetics gathered in one face), and 国潮美气质拉满100%！ (Guochao elegance at 100%) indicate an ideological function behind hyperbole namely, asserting Asian facial features as aesthetically superior. This aligns with Li Xueping's (2022) argument that 国潮美 represents a manifestation of 文化自信 (cultural confidence), wherein classical Chinese aesthetics are modernized and used as the primary basis for beauty valuation. Thus, while hyperbole in 白瘦幼 advertisements reinforces consumerist and globalized beauty standards, hyperbole in 国潮

美 advertisements functions to affirm national aesthetics and cultural identity.

### **Visual and Multimodal Patterns in Beauty Representation**

Beyond textual elements, this study also reveals that hyperbole is reinforced through distinctive visual patterns. In 白瘦幼 themed advertisements, the entire visual composition is oriented toward highlighting pale skin and a thin physique. Models are presented with extreme white lighting, porcelain-skin filters, poreless cheeks, and cool blue tonal palettes. Bodies appear extremely slim, legs look elongated and narrow, and facial features are digitally modified such as enlarged eyes, sharper chins, and flattened cheekbones thereby reinforcing imagery of being cute, fragile, and youthful. All-white clothing, white sparkle effects, and monochrome white backgrounds further direct visual focus toward whiteness as the central aesthetic.

Within the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), the combination of hyperbolic text such as 白到发光! with visuals of extremely pale skin and whitening filters creates a consistent intersemiotic meaning: whiteness is the singular indicator of ideal beauty. Thus, linguistic hyperbole does not stand alone, but is supported by color choice, composition, lighting, and visual editing. This aligns with Kress & van Leeuwen's premise that meaning in digital media is constructed through the interaction of multiple reinforcing modes (text, imagery, color, typography).

Meanwhile, in 国潮美 themed advertisements, visual patterns shift significantly. Instead of extreme paleness, models are shown with natural and healthy skin tones, flushed cheeks, and visible skin texture. The dominant colors are no longer white and cool blue, but traditional red, gold, peach, and tea-red hues associated with luck, nobility, and elegance in Chinese aesthetic theory (Li Xueping, 2022). Models wear Hanfu or Guochao fashion with peony motifs, auspicious cloud patterns, and traditional artistic elements. Hairstyles mimic classical styles, backgrounds feature ancient architecture or ink-painting motifs, and warm lantern-like lighting creates a composition rich in cultural symbolism.

The presence of hyperbolic text such as 国风妆 容颜胜画! , 美得像古画里走出来! , and 美得像月下的仙子! is combined with visual storytelling themed around legends, traditional painting aesthetics, and classical ornamentation. From the perspective of cultural semiotics (文化符号学) proposed by Jia Yuxin (2010), these visual and textual elements function as a cultural sign system representing a modern Chinese identity that embraces pride in its aesthetic heritage. Thus, while multimodality in 白瘦幼 advertisements serves global consumerist aesthetics, multimodality in 国潮美 advertisements visualizes national aesthetics rooted in local culture.

### **Ideological and Aesthetic Patterns: from Consumerism to Cultural Confidence**

The third dimension of this study concerns the ideological foundations underlying the aesthetic contrast between 白瘦幼 and 国潮美. Analysis of the 20 白瘦幼 advertisements shows that the female body is treated as an object of consumption (consumer body project). A thin body is positioned as the only ideal form, fair skin is presented as a marker of social status and success, and youthfulness becomes the primary indicator of beauty. Hyperbolic expressions such as 一夜变少女! , 一抹嫩成18岁! , and 瘦成纸片人! reflect the cult of youth and obsession with extreme thinness. Ideologically, this aligns with the concept of 消费主义审美 (Zhang Meng, 2021), wherein the body is commodified for consumption and women's self-worth is measured by proximity to the white-thin-young standard.

Additionally, findings reveal a strong colorist bias: darker skin is constructed as a problem requiring radical cosmetic intervention, as seen in expressions such as 黑皮救星! (savior for dark skin). This suggests a whitening ideology that associates fairness with status and success, while implicitly positioning darker skin as inferior. Combined with heavily edited visuals, 白瘦幼 beauty

representation is shown to be non-inclusive and normative of unrealistic standards, aligning with theoretical critiques of beauty consumerism and bodily regulation (Foucauldian body dynamics, though not explicitly referenced, are evident in practice).

Conversely, analysis of the 20 国潮美 advertisements reveals an aesthetic ideology grounded in cultural pride (文化自信) and acceptance of Asian identity. Hyperbolic expressions such as 东方脸就是高级!, 东方美学集于一脸!, 国潮美气质拉满100%!, and 国韵美人 非你莫属! position Asian facial features, oriental-style makeup, and traditional colors as the center of “high-class beauty.” This aligns with Xu Jilin’s notion of cultural confidence, referring to modern Chinese society’s belief in the value of its own aesthetics and cultural identity.

In this framework, beauty is no longer dependent on extreme youth, skin tone, or thinness. A healthy body is valued over an excessively thin one; diversity in Asian facial features is embraced; and women are depicted as strong and self-assured subjects rather than passive objects of consumption. Visuals depicting adult women with firm postures and confident gazes reinforce the interpretation that 国潮美 promotes female agency. Thus, hyperbole in 国潮美 advertisements not only embellishes beauty, but articulates a new ideology in which beauty becomes an expression of cultural identity, character, and national pride.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the three analytical dimensions linguistic, visual, and ideological it can be concluded that the use of hyperbole (夸张) in Taobao advertisements evolves from a mere rhetorical device into a complex cultural instrument. In the 白瘦幼 aesthetic, hyperbole reinforces beauty standards that are globalized, consumerist, and unrealistic, whereby the female body is constructed as a project continually requiring modification through beauty product consumption. Meanwhile, within the 国潮美 aesthetic, hyperbole functions to articulate cultural confidence, revive traditional Chinese aesthetics, and reposition the Asian face as the center of beauty.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the views of Chen Wangdao and Wang Dechun that 夸张 in modern discourse is not merely ornamental, but carries intensifying, affective, and persuasive functions within media contexts. The findings also extend Kress & van Leeuwen’s (2006) theory by demonstrating that in the case of Taobao advertising, text–visual interaction concerns not only design, but also the negotiation of national aesthetic identity. Additionally, from the standpoint of cultural semiotics (Jia Yuxin, 2010), the results indicate that digital advertising serves as a key arena for the transformation of beauty symbolism from 消费主义审美 toward 国潮美学, which is more deeply rooted in local cultural values.

Accordingly, the findings and discussion affirm that Taobao advertisements do not simply sell products, but also sell ways of perceiving the body, beauty, and modern Chinese identity—and hyperbole (夸张) is one of the central mechanisms enabling this process.

The analysis of 40 Taobao beauty advertisements 20 representing the 白瘦幼 (white, thin, youthful) aesthetic and 20 representing the 国潮美 (Guochao/national-style) aesthetic reveals distinct patterns in how hyperbole is used to construct beauty imagery. The data demonstrate that hyperbole operates not merely as an exaggeration device but as a powerful tool for shaping ideals of appearance, cultural identity, and consumer aspiration. These patterns emerge consistently across linguistic, visual, and ideological dimensions, providing a clear distinction between the two dominant beauty paradigms in contemporary Chinese digital advertising.

In the 白瘦幼-themed advertisements, hyperbole intensifies the portrayal of extremely white skin, visibly thin body shapes, and youthful facial features. Expressions such as so white it radiates light,

white like milk, two shades whiter in three days, and become a young girl overnight, exaggerate the desired result to a degree far beyond natural possibility. These phrases repeatedly construct fairness as something luminous, transformative, and instantly achievable. The emphasis on drastic improvement and instant youthful appearance reflects a consumerist beauty ideology that pressures women to pursue unattainable perfection. Hyperbole in this category not only promises rapid transformation but frames whiteness as the central standard of attractiveness, creating a narrative in which beauty is dependent on constant enhancement through commercial products.

In contrast, the 国潮美-themed advertisements employ hyperbole to highlight oriental charm, cultural elegance, and inner charisma rather than bodily modification. Phrases like so beautiful it captivates at first glance, unforgettable oriental charm, instant elegance, and as if stepping out of an ancient painting, reveal a shift from physical transformation to cultural expression. These expressions celebrate natural Asian features and associate beauty with qualities such as temperament, heritage, and artistic refinement. Hyperbole here amplifies emotional and cultural resonance rather than biological alteration. Instead of promoting unrealistic bodily change, the language elevates cultural identity and frames beauty as something inherently tied to national aesthetics.

Visual analysis reinforces these linguistic patterns. Advertisements in the 白瘦幼 category consistently feature models with exceptionally pale skin, bright white lighting, porcelain-like filters, elongated limbs, and digitally modified facial proportions that accentuate youthfulness. Cool-toned backgrounds white, silver, and blue help concentrate attention on whiteness as the dominant visual message. The overall effect is a coordinated multimodal strategy that positions fair, thin, and youthful appearance as the only acceptable beauty standard.

Meanwhile, 国潮美 advertisements present a distinctly different visual narrative. Models appear with natural skin tones, warm lighting, and minimal digital alteration, highlighting authenticity rather than artificiality. Traditional Chinese color palettes red, gold, peach, and tea red are prominently used, along with Hanfu garments, floral motifs, ink-painting elements, and architectural backdrops. These visuals create a sense of cultural depth and aesthetic richness. Hyperbolic expressions describing legendary beauty or classical elegance are supported by imagery that references traditional artistry, mythology, and national symbolism. The multimodal alignment emphasizes cultural pride, not physical conformity.

Ideologically, the two beauty paradigms represent opposing value systems. The 白瘦幼 aesthetic constructs beauty as a problem requiring correction whitening, thinning, and rejuvenation thus reinforcing a consumer-driven cycle in which women are encouraged to modify their bodies. Hyperbole amplifies insecurities by depicting darker skin or natural aging as deficiencies that must be remedied. In contrast, the 国潮美 aesthetic positions beauty as an inherent quality grounded in cultural identity, confidence, and character. Hyperbole in this category elevates Asian facial features and frames them as sophisticated, high-class, and aesthetically superior. This shift in emphasis reflects a broader cultural transition in which Chinese consumers increasingly embrace traditional aesthetics and derive pride from cultural heritage.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that hyperbole in Taobao advertising functions not simply as a stylistic flourish, but as a mechanism for constructing and reinforcing evolving beauty ideologies in China. While 白瘦幼 advertisements promote globalized and consumerist beauty norms demanding constant modification, 国潮美 advertisements highlight a more localized and culturally confident conception of beauty. The contrast between these two forms of hyperbole illustrates how digital advertising participates in shaping broader social meanings about the body, identity, and aesthetic values in contemporary China.

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that hyperbole (夸张) in Taobao online advertisements functions not only as a persuasive stylistic device but also as a cultural mechanism that shapes and redirects contemporary Chinese beauty ideology. Rather than merely embellishing product claims, hyperbole contributes to the construction of two distinct aesthetic imaginaries: the consumer-driven, appearance-focused 白瘦幼 (fair, thin, youthful) ideal and the culturally grounded, identity-oriented 国潮美 (national-style beauty) paradigm.

The contrast between these two aesthetic regimes reflects a broader sociocultural transformation. While 白瘦幼 reinforces consumerist expectations of whiteness, youthfulness, and rapid bodily transformation, 国潮美 embodies the rise of 文化自信 (cultural confidence), reframing beauty as an expression of cultural identity rather than an imitation of imported standards. Hyperbole within 国潮美 elevates traditional motifs, Asian facial features, and culturally embedded values, signalling a movement away from globalized homogeneity toward nationally rooted aesthetic pride.

Synthesizing these findings, the study concludes that hyperbole functions as both a rhetorical strategy and an ideological instrument in digital advertising. It simultaneously enhances persuasive appeal and encodes cultural meaning, influencing how beauty and identity are collectively imagined in modern China. The shift from 白瘦幼 to 国潮美 indicates a reorientation of visual identity one that privileges authenticity, cultural heritage, and localized aesthetic values over externally derived norms. Importantly, these findings directly address the research questions by demonstrating (1) how hyperbole is linguistically and visually constructed in each aesthetic, and (2) how these constructions reflect and reinforce contrasting ideological orientations.

These insights highlight the central role of digital advertising in shaping public perceptions of beauty and cultural identity. By revealing how hyperbole and multimodal design contribute to ideological production, this study positions digital media as a discursive arena in which aesthetic norms and cultural identities are continuously negotiated. Future research may expand this inquiry by examining other advertising genres, different digital platforms, or the evolving intersections between digital rhetoric and sociocultural change in contemporary China.

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