



Conceptual Metaphors in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of conceptual metaphors in perfume product reviews on the TikTok platform, with a specific focus on gender-based representational differences. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the data were collected from six TikTok accounts three male and three female perfume reviewers based on their video content between May and June 2025. The findings reveal that female reviewers tend to use emotional, narrative-driven metaphors that build imaginative characterizations of perfumes, while male reviewers focus more on the functionality, projection, and strength of the fragrance. These metaphors are not merely decorative language but serve as essential cognitive tools that shape how abstract olfactory experiences are conceptualized and communicated to audiences. The study also highlights the role of *conceptual blending* in generating new meanings by merging sensory input domains with symbolic, emotional, and cultural elements. Furthermore, gender identity is reflected through linguistic choices, tone, and metaphorical expressions used by the reviewers. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of digital discourse and the cognitive-linguistic strategies employed in reviewing non-visual, sensory-based products such as perfume. It also opens new opportunities for further exploration of metaphor usage across genders in the context of digital marketing and identity construction.

Keywords: Conceptual blending, Conceptual metaphor, Cognitive linguistics, Digital discourse, Fragrance, Gender

Introduction

In the context of digital communication, social media has become a vital platform for customers to fulfill all their plans, needs, and goals. Online platforms today are extremely diverse, ranging from YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, and have created a new environment that facilitates fast, active, and participatory marketing methods. According

- to (Shaheen, 2025) in his research, social media is one of the primary communication channels in the digital age, significantly influencing human behavior and serving as a crucial marketing tool. This shift is evident through the emergence of various new trends that influence different groups and how society interacts with marketing strategies presented in the form of products and services by reviewers.

One of these new trends is the product review trend, which continues to evolve. It is widely recognized among social media users and reflects changes in digital life, no longer just exchanging information but also serving as a transaction tool. Various media, including visual, audio, text, or even a combination of all these, are used to present product reviews in an engaging and convincing manner to achieve the best results in terms of audience engagement and even purchases. Often, reviewers focus on the theme of the product being reviewed, such as food, skincare products, household items, accommodations, cosmetics, perfumes, or even all products, especially when a social media user already has a stage name. As a result, the ease of using the internet allows anyone to access any human need with just a smartphone in hand.

Through his research, (Smith, 2020) states that digital platforms, in addition to being a communication tool aimed at providing information to consumers, also serve as a marketing and online transaction tool beneficial to producers. Online marketing activities presented through reviews in an engaging manner have the power to influence consumer purchasing decisions through a persuasive process involving trust, experience, and presentation style. The findings of (McCormick, K., & Boardman, 2021) support this, showing that digital analysis can quickly and efficiently influence consumer trust, strengthen perceptions of product quality, and directly drive purchasing decisions. As a result, there are two benefits of product review content: updating marketing appeal and providing useful explanations for the audience.

In the context of digital marketing phenomena, there are unique challenges when presenting reviews for sensory and non-visual products like perfume. One of the main characteristics of perfume, its fragrance, cannot be adequately conveyed through digital media. In this context, reviewers must develop ideas and concepts to use language that captures attention, evokes emotions, and stimulates the audience's senses to imaginatively convey the olfactory experience of a content creator reviewer. Therefore, a communication strategy is needed that is not only informative but also creative and intellectually expressive, so that what is created does not bore the audience but instead generates interest and attracts more people, especially social media users.

One strategy frequently used by reviewers on TikTok is the “Top 5 Perfumes” approach. In this format, reviewers present a list of their top five perfume choices based on personal experience. This format leverages the power of rhetoric and narrative to engage the audience, while presenting information in a structured and easily understandable manner. The hierarchy or order of perfume values in this structure creates a social narrative that facilitates comparison, selection, and evaluation of scents. Additionally, this style uses a “hook,” a strategy proven to significantly increase video reach by capturing viewers' attention within the first few seconds of the video (IDwebhost, 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates that perfume reviews on TikTok are a planned, artistic, and strategic linguistic practice.

- Metaphors are often used in perfume reviews. Metaphors are not only a creative way to express oneself, but also show how individuals connect abstract concepts such as fragrances with concrete experiences. According to (Lakoff, J. & Johnson, 1980), metaphors are part of a cognitive framework that allows people to connect source and target domains to understand and interpret the world. By using metaphors, perfume reviewers may describe scents as feelings, attitudes, places, or even events, which influence the audience's affective and sensory perceptions.

Furthermore, metaphors are not used in isolation in perfume reviews but are typically integrated into a narrative framework and develop through a process of conceptual blending (Fauconnier, G., & Turner, 2008). This process enables the creation of new meaning by combining sensory and symbolic aspects with domains of emotion, mood, place, or personal experience.

Interestingly, the portrayal of perfume in digital culture is also linked to the development of gender identity. Scents are often associated with stereotypes of masculinity or femininity. Examples of gender representations embedded in language include terms such as “strong and bold scent” and “soft and feminine scent.” Reviewers on TikTok express their identities, including gender expressions, in addition to conveying information through word choice, tone, speaking style, and metaphors. In this context, metaphors function as cognitive tools and social symbols that support the formation of gender identity.

Linguistic research that considers gender variables when using metaphors is important because men’s and women’s communication styles often show differences in relational orientation, emotional intensity, and word choice (Tannen, 1990). By analyzing metaphor usage based on the gender of reviewers, this study not only maps conceptual patterns in aroma descriptions but also demonstrates how social and cultural meanings are expressed in video-based digital discourse.

The significance of communication techniques and figurative language styles in sensory product evaluation has been emphasized in previous studies. Research by (Nurbani, A., & Barlian, 2022) found that ontological metaphors with concrete-to-abstract meanings were the most dominant form in ILM Covid-19 headlines, indicating a creative scheme to help the public understand concrete and familiar language. (Mutia, R., & Sari, 2024) conducted research on HMNS perfume marketing tactics on Instagram and found that the use of visual narratives and metaphors enhances product image and significantly increases audience emotional engagement. (Suci Niswatussolihah et al., 2023) found that creative reviews on social media platforms like Instagram and X that use sensory metaphors have a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of the quality of local perfumes. Based on the two studies above, it is known that when reviewing a product, the

- language used can directly influence or persuade the audience and shape their perceptions in interpreting information through the narratives presented. These findings indicate that there are still gaps in the cognitive field regarding the study of the structure, patterns, and explanations of fragrances using metaphors, as well as gender differences in reviewing various product scents in perfumes. This presents an opportunity for researchers to conduct further in-depth and modern research on digital discursive practices. Based on the above description, the purpose of this study is to describe how the meaning of metaphors in perfume product reviews forms new meanings through the combination of concepts and to explore how gender representation constructs meaning.

Methods

The research design used is a qualitative research design. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The data sources in this study come from the online platform TikTok, selected based on gender. Therefore, the data participants were selected from female users, with the first account being @cringylemoncake. The second participant is a perfume reviewer with the username @meisyaontheinternet, and the third participant is @abglraisaa. Meanwhile, the participants from the male gender were selected based on their gender, with the first account user being @kent.hadi. The second perfume reviewer has the account name @riidho, and @hiskiamjesty is the third perfume reviewer.

The data in this study consists of statements made by the three informants regarding perfume reviews collected between May and June 2025. The research instrument used is the observation guideline technique of free-flowing conversation and the note-taking technique. The data collection technique used is the observation guideline by observing the statements made by the informants, which are then transcribed into written format. After that, the data is identified based on its metaphor type using linguistic evidence and its references.

The data analysis technique used in this study was the data analysis technique proposed by (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994) which involves data reduction by sorting the data obtained and categorizing it into three problem formulations: describing how metaphors emerge through the relationship between the source and target domains, forming new meanings through the combination of concepts, and exploring how gender representation constructs meaning. Then, the data presentation is done by presenting the results of the data that have been collected using several instruments based on the three problem formulations, how metaphorical meaning is conveyed in perfume reviews, how new meaning is formed through the combination of concepts, and how gender representation is explored in constructing meaning. The data presentation took the form of an analytical table using a cognitive linguistic approach, with the results of the analysis presented in

the perfume reviews. Finally, drawing conclusions/verification requires consideration of several criteria, namely the topic, research objectives, problem-solving of research data, analysis results, and theory. According to Kovesces (in Afriansyah & Zakiyah, 2022), conceptual metaphors are metaphors that seek to explain one field through another. This theory is also referred to as a metaphor developed by linguists such as (Lakoff & Johnson) (in Afriansyah & Zakiyah, 2022), through the book *Metaphor We Live By*, which argues that metaphors represent cognitive maps of a domain in a comparative manner across different genders.

Findings and Discussion

Results of Conceptual Metaphor Analysis in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform

Table 1. Conceptual Metaphors in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform for Women

No	Review Sentence	Source Domain	Target Domain
1	Satu-satunya perfume Kunti <i>core</i> dari <i>Hint of You</i> yang varian <i>Noble</i>	Mystical figure (Kuntilanak) Noble perfume	Noble perfume
2	Kalau ini tuh <i>vibes</i> Kuntilanak yang siang-siang chill gitu loh.	Mystical figure (Kuntilanak) Perfume scent	Perfume scent
3	Itu wangi melatinya tuh nggak yang mistis, horror banget.	Horror/mystical impression Perfume scent	Perfume scent
4	Utopia tuh vibes Kuntilanak yang estetik gitu loh.	Mystical creature (Kuntilanak) Utopian perfume type	Utopia perfume type
5	kalau bisa dibandingin <i>Noble</i> -nya <i>Hint of You</i> tuh kayak Kuntilanak yang <i>easygoing</i> .	Mystical creature Sociable nature	Sociable nature
6	di koleksi gue ada loh parfum <i>fresh</i> yang juga <i>SPL</i> -nya dar-der dor.	Weapon sound Perfume effect	Perfume effect
7	Wanginya <i>creamy milky</i> kayak susu karamel yang dikasih biskuit.	Food type with a sweet taste like (Caramel milk and biscuits) Perfume scent	Perfume fragrance
8	dia tuh kayak agak <i>crispy</i> gitu. Nah, nanti lama-lama baru mulai manis, <i>creamy</i> .	Food texture Perfume scent	Perfume fragrance

9	ini tuh kayak mengingatkan lo dengan <i>Thai Tea</i> yang dijualnya di Thailand.	Authentic “Thai Tea” beverage type Perfume aroma	Perfume scent
10	dia manis ya, kayak manis vanilla karamel. Tapi tuh kayak rempah-rempahannya juga cukup kuat di sini.	Blend of sweet and spicy flavors Perfume aroma	Perfume scent
11	wangi utamanya raspberry yang super-duper seger ada sedikit manis, sedikit asem juga wanginya bener-bener fun, bright, ceria tapi masih ada aspek seksinya	Raspberry fruit type Perfume aroma	Perfume scent
12	parfum <i>white floral anomaly</i> karena gak ada parfum white floral yang sekencang ini tapi <i>on steroid</i>	Organic compound strength Floral perfume type	Floral perfume type

Based on the findings in Table 1 above, the meaning of metaphors in perfume product reviews on the TikTok Online Platform for females is as follows.

In data number 1, there is a review of the only Kunti core perfume from Hint of You, the Noble variant. In this review, the word *kuntilanak* is used as a linguistic marker. The reviewer analogizes one of the soft and elegant *kuntilanak* perfumes. Through this analogy, the reviewer describes certain characteristics of the perfume worn by the mystical creature *kuntilanak*. In data point 2, there is a review stating, “This is the vibe of *Kuntilanak*, chill during the day.” In this review, the word “*kuntilanak*” symbolizes a figure wearing perfume suitable for a relaxed daytime atmosphere. In data point 3, there is a review stating, “The scent of *melati* isn't mystical; it's super horror.” In this review, the phrase “not mystical” conveys the impression felt when using the perfume. In data point 4, there is a review stating, “*Utopia* has that aesthetic *Kuntilanak* vibe, you know?” In this review, the word *kuntilanak* means a mystical creature that is suitable when using the *Utopia* perfume, making it look aesthetic. In number 5, there is a review that says, “If you can compare Noble's Hint of You, it's like a laid-back *Kuntilanak*.” In this review, the word *kuntilanak* means a mystical figure that has a sociable nature when using the perfume criteria. In data number 6, there is a review stating that in my collection, there is a fresh perfume with a SPL of *dar-der dor*. In this review, the term *dar-der dor* refers to shooting activities using a firearm. In data number 7, there is a review stating that the scent is creamy and milky, like caramel milk with biscuits. In that review, the term “creamy milky” refers to a food with a sweet texture and taste. In data point 8, there is a review stating, “It's a bit crispy at first. Then, it gradually becomes sweet and creamy.” In that review, the term “crispy” refers to a crisp texture, akin to a food item. In data number 9, there is a review that says it reminds you of Thai Tea sold in Thailand. In that review,

- the term “Thai Tea” refers to a tea drink mixed with milk and has a scent similar to perfume. In data number 10, there is a review that says it's sweet, like vanilla caramel. But the spices are also quite strong here. In the review, the term “vanilla sweetness” refers to the aromatic properties of the perfume contained within it, which can be perceived through the sense of smell.

In data point 11, the expression “the main fragrance is raspberry, super-duper fresh, with a hint of sweetness and a touch of tartness, the scent is truly fun, bright, and cheerful, yet still has a sensual aspect” is used. In this description, the word “raspberry” refers to the characteristic of the perfume's aroma, which is fresh and sweet like raspberries. In data point 16, the phrase “white floral anomaly” is used because there is no other white floral perfume as strong as this one, but it's on steroids. In this description, the word “steroids” refers to the strength of the perfume's ingredients, which are similar to organic compounds.

Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform

Table 2. Conceptual Metaphors in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform for Males

No	Kalimat Ulasan	Ranah Sumber	Ranah Target
1	Ini rosenya yang pekat gitu dan bersampur dengan segernya lychee gitu ya	Lychee fruit aroma Fresh and intense perfume characteristics	Fresh and intense fragrance characteristics
2	Ini wanginya beneran kenceng dan nyebar kayak it's almost impossible that you pass by someone and they don't smell you	Aroma strength Perfume intensity	Fragrance intensity
3	SPL-nya wanginya dar-dar-dar banget. Nyebar, mampus.	Shooting sound Aroma diffusion	Aroma diffusion
4	Ini tuh adalah variannya The Bodytell yang paling dar-der-dar SPL-nya di kulit gue.	Perfume variant Strong perfume quality on the skin	Strong fragrance quality on the skin
5	Typical wangi yang tebal, bulet. Emang buat parfum malam sih.	Thick fragrance Suitability for nighttime	Suitability for evening wear
6	Gue berasa wanginya tuh fresh banget sama bikin kayak mood lo tuh excited gitu ya.	Mood Aroma effect	Aroma effect

7	Ini kecil-kecil cabai rawit guys. Wanginya tuh unik banget.	Chili pepper vegetable type Aroma uniqueness	Uniqueness of the aroma
8	Wanginya woody, powdery, tapi tidak mencolok di hidung gitu.	Woody and powdery aroma Characteristic softness of the aroma	Distinctive softness of the aroma
9	ini tuh wanginya bener-bener lemony banget, fresh banget. Ada sedikit manisnya.	Lemon-type fruits Freshness of the aroma	Freshness of the aroma
10	wanginya juga universal banget masuk ke dalam acara-acara gue seperti kantor dan juga after work event.	Event Universal aroma	Universal aroma
11	Wanginya tuh floral sedikit <i>citrus</i> , tapi nggak kecut.	Floral and citrus Balance of the aroma	Balance of the aroma
12	memakai white floral membawa scent yang cukup light untuk everyday perfume.	White floral Light for activities	Lightweight for activities

In data number 1, there is a review that says the scent is strong and mixed with the freshness of lychee. In this review, the word lychee refers to the characteristic of the fruit contained in the perfume fragrance. In data number 2, there is a review that says the scent is really strong and spreads so much that it's almost impossible to pass by someone without them smelling you. In this review, the word “strong” refers to the intensity of the fragrance, which is powerful and has a high intensity when inhaled. In data number 3, there is a review that says the fragrance is “dar-der-dor” (spreading everywhere). In this review, the word “dar-der-dor” refers to the sound of gunfire spreading everywhere, like the scent of perfume. In data point 4, there is a review stating, “This is the variant of The Bodytell with the strongest SPL on my skin.” In this review, the term “The Bodytell” refers to a variant contained in the perfume that has good benefits for the skin. In data point 5, there is a review stating, “Typical thick, round scent. It's meant for nighttime use.” In the review, the word “thick” means the scent lasts long when worn at night. In data point 6, there is a review that says, “I feel the scent is super fresh and makes you feel excited.” In the review, the word ‘mood’ describes the enthusiastic mood when inhaling the fragrance. In data point 7, there is a review that says, “These are tiny chili peppers, guys.” The scent is really unique. In this review, the word chili peppers describes the perfume's small size but unique scent, which cannot be underestimated despite its small packaging. In data number 8, there is a review that says, “The scent is woody and powdery, but not too strong.” In this review, the words “woody” and ‘powdery’ describe the perfume's very distinctive and strong scent. In data number 9, there is a review that says, “The scent is really lemony and very fresh.” There is a slight sweetness to it. In this review, the word

- “lemony” describes the freshness of lemons, giving the fragrance a distinctive lemon aroma. In data number 10, there is a review that says, “The scent is also very universal and fits into my activities, such as the office and after-work events.” In this review, the word “work event” describes activities that are suitable for someone to wear to an event.

Then, in data number 11, there is a review that says the scent is slightly floral and citrusy, but not sour. In this review, the word “floral” describes a fragrance that resembles flowers. In data number 12, there is a review that says wearing white floral brings a scent that is light enough for everyday perfume. In this review, the word “light” describes a bright or light aroma suitable for daily activities.

Table 3. Results of Conceptual Blending in Perfume Product Reviews on the TikTok Online Platform for Females and Males

No	Data Ulasan	Input Space 1	Input Space 2	Blending Space
1	Satu-satunya perfume Kunti core dari Hint of You yang varian Noble	Kuntilanak as a mystical figure	Classy perfume scents	It has elegant characteristics like a kuntilanak, yet it retains its essence and has a unique perfume image where the mystical side becomes an unexpected elegance.
2	Di koleksi gue ada loh parfum fresh yang juga SPL-nya dard-dor	Technical aspects of perfume	Gunshots and shooting activities	A perfume with extremely strong performance and a scent that spreads as if exploding with its fragrance, embodying a technical concept with a dynamic image to emphasize strength.
3	Wanginya creamy milky kayak susu caramel yang dikasih biskuit	The scent and fragrance of perfume	Sweet foods and certain textures	The fragrance has a sweet character and a soft texture

				reminiscent of biscuit-like confectionery.
4	Parfum white floral anomaly karena gak ada parfum white floral yang sekencang ini tapi on steroid	Types of perfume with white scents	Unnatural performance concepts	A white floral perfume with strength and intensity surpassing normal expectations for this type of fragrance.
5	SPL-nya wanginya dar-der-dor banget. Nyebar, mampus.	Sillage, projection	Gunshots	Emphasizing the extremely intense spread of the fragrance.
6	Ini kecil-kecil cabai rawit guys. Wanginya tuh unik banget	Physical size of perfume packaging	Spicy small vegetables	Despite its small size, the perfume has a very strong, unique, and undeniable aroma.

Table 4. Gender Results from Perfume Reviews

No	Gender Female	Gender Male
1	Perfume reviews tend to be more emotional, narrative, and focused on character or experience. The metaphors used often alter and expand the original meaning of the source domain to create unique and interesting images.	Perfume reviews tend to focus more on the function, performance, and effectiveness of the perfume. Metaphors are often used to emphasize the projection, strength, and suitability of the perfume for specific situations.

Discussion

This study analyzes how conceptual metaphors are used in perfume product reviews on the online platform TikTok, focusing on how reviewers of different genders construct the meaning of scent. The results of the analysis clearly show that metaphors do not merely function as simple descriptive tools, but as complex and essential cognitive schemas for conveying non-visual sensory experiences such as the scent of perfume. Reviewers consistently project concepts from concrete and familiar domains, such as figures or

▪ mystical creatures, sounds, fruits, and foods, into the abstract domain of perfume scents. This process enables the concretization of abstract olfactory experiences, for example, by analogizing scents that “spread” or “sound like gunfire,” thereby providing a clear picture of the intensity and projection of the perfume. Additionally, metaphors are used to create “vibes” and “character,” as well as evoke feelings of “sweetness,” “softness,” and “elegance.” Furthermore, the conceptual blending process proves to be key in understanding how metaphors in perfume reviews can generate innovative meanings. Reviewers do not merely compare but actively combine elements from two input domains to create fresh new meanings. The most notable data is “Kunti Core perfume” or “the easygoing Kuntilanak,” where the concept of a mystical figure is combined with the fragrance characteristics of the perfume to produce new meanings.

Conclusion

This study confirms that perfume reviews on the TikTok online platform are a highly strategic and artistic linguistic practice, where conceptual metaphors and conceptual blending serve as vital tools to overcome the limitations of digital media in conveying complex sensory experiences. Creatively, reviewers utilize diverse sources to concretize abstract scents and create fresh, rich new meanings through conceptual blending. Gender analysis reveals that female reviewers tend to use metaphors to build emotional narratives and characters. Meanwhile, men are more focused on performance and functionality reviews. These findings not only enrich our understanding of how language can shape sensory perception in a digital context, but also highlight the role of gender identity in communicating meaning in a review and may open up opportunities for further research in digital discourse.

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