

A Multimodal Ecolinguistic Study of Soft Drink Advertising in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examines the multimodal strategies employed in Pakistani soft drink advertisements and critically evaluates whether these strategies construct beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive ecological discourses. Soft drink advertising in Pakistan draws heavily on natural imagery of water, ice, and freshness to promote a product associated with high environmental costs, including plastic waste and high water consumption, creating a discursive contradiction that remains largely unexamined in existing scholarship. Guided by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of multimodality and Arran Stubbe's (2015) ecolinguistics model, this qualitative, text-based study analyses selected soft drink advertisements including Cola Next, Pepsi, and Coca-Cola sourced from official company channels. The analysis proceeds in two stages: first identifying the multimodal strategies (representational, interactional, and compositional) used across visual, verbal, and audio-visual modes, and then interpreting these strategies through Stubbe's ecolinguistics categories of ideology, metaphor, evaluation, identity, and erasure. Findings reveal that the advertisements consistently deploy celebrity-driven gaze, symbolic colour (particularly red), high salience, and weak framing to position the beverages as inseparable from energy, celebration, and social identity. From an ecolinguistics perspective, all three advertisements construct predominantly destructive discourses, promoting a pro-consumption ideology and a recurring "Drink =Life" metaphor while systematically erasing plastic waste and health risks associated with sugar content. The study demonstrates that multimodal and ecolinguistics meaning making operate together rather than separately, with visual and linguistic resources jointly naturalising consumption and obscuring environmental and health consequences. The research contributes an integrated analytical model to the underexplored field of ecolinguistics advertising analysis in a Pakistani and South Asian context, with implications for advertisers, regulators, and media literacy initiatives.

Keywords: Multimodal Discourse Analysis; Ecolinguistics; Soft Drink Advertisements; Pakistan; Kress and van Leeuwen; Stubbe.

Introduction

Advertising discourse is one of the most pervasive and persuasive forms of contemporary communication, operating simultaneously through language, image, colour, sound, and spatial arrangement to construct meaning and influence consumer behaviour. In Pakistan, the soft drink industry represents a particularly rich site for linguistic and semiotic investigation, given its saturation of print, electronic, and digital media, and its deep entanglement with cultural values, national identity, festivity, family life, and increasingly, environmental concerns. Soft drink

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advertisements do not merely sell a beverage; they sell a lifestyle, an emotional experience, and often, implicitly or explicitly, a relationship between the consumer and the natural world. This study situates itself at the intersection of two distinct yet complementary analytical frameworks, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Ecolinguistics to examine how soft drink advertisements in Pakistan construct meaning through multiple semiotic resources and how these constructions position nature, environment, and ecological values within a predominantly consumerist narrative.

Multimodality, as developed by scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen, contends that meaning in contemporary texts is rarely carried by language alone; rather, it is distributed across a range of modes, including visual imagery, colour palettes, typography, gesture, camera angle, sound, and spatial composition that work together to produce a coherent communicative whole. Advertisements, particularly televised and digital ones, are inherently multimodal artefacts, and an analysis restricted to verbal text alone would fail to capture the full persuasive architecture of the message. Applying a multimodal approach to Pakistani soft drink commercials therefore allows for a comprehensive account of how slogans, jingles, visual settings, actors, and editing choices converge to create brand meaning and consumer appeal.

Ecolinguistics, on the other hand, is an emerging and increasingly urgent field of inquiry that examines the role language plays in either sustaining or challenging exploitative relationships between humans and the natural environment. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Arran Stibbe, ecolinguistics analysis interrogates the "stories we live by" the underlying ideologies, framings, and metaphors embedded in discourse that normalise particular ways of relating to nature. Advertising discourse, with its heavy reliance on imagery of pristine landscapes, natural ingredients, freshness, and vitality, frequently draws upon ecological and environmental references to enhance brand appeal, even when the products themselves (carbonated, sugar-laden, plastic-bottled beverages) may have limited genuine environmental credentials. This tension between the ecological imagery deployed in advertising and the actual environmental footprint of the soft drink industry makes ecolinguistics a particularly apt tool for critical inquiry.

The Pakistani context adds further significance to this study. As a developing economy with a rapidly expanding media landscape and a growing awareness of environmental issues such as water scarcity, plastic pollution, and climate change, Pakistan presents a unique cultural backdrop against which global advertising strategies are localised. Multinational and local soft drink brands operating in Pakistan often blend global marketing templates with culturally specific elements religious festivals, family gatherings, cricket, patriotism, and regional imagery to resonate with local audiences. Examining how these advertisements simultaneously mobilise cultural symbolism and environmental or natural imagery offers valuable insight into the discursive strategies employed by an industry that is both culturally embedded and ecologically consequential.

By combining multimodal and ecolinguistics approaches, this research aims to move beyond a purely linguistic or purely visual analysis to offer an integrated account of how meaning is constructed across modes, and how that constructed meaning positions the audience in relation to environmental values, either reinforcing exploitative "destructive" discourses or, occasionally, promoting more "beneficial" or "ambivalent" ecological framings, to borrow Stibbe's typology. In doing so, the study contributes to the relatively underexplored area of ecolinguistics

advertising analysis within a South Asian, and specifically Pakistani, context, while also extending multimodal discourse analysis to a culturally and environmentally significant genre of media text.

Statement of the Problem

Soft drink advertisements in Pakistan rely heavily on multimodal resources language, visual imagery, colour, and sound to persuade consumers, frequently drawing on natural imagery such as water, ice, fruit, and greenery to evoke freshness and vitality. This creates a discursive contradiction, as an industry associated with high environmental costs, including plastic waste and high-water usage, markets itself through the language of nature and purity. Despite this, little research has examined how such contradictions are constructed through language and multimodal design within the Pakistani context. Studies on Pakistani advertising have largely focused on persuasion, gender, and brand positioning, with minimal attention to ecological meaning-making. Likewise, multimodal discourse analysis and ecolinguistics have rarely been combined to examine a single advertising genre, particularly within South Asian media. Consequently, how Pakistani soft drink advertisements multimodally construct nature-related meanings, and what ecological ideologies they promote or obscure, remains largely unexplored an important gap given Pakistan's pressing environmental challenges such as water scarcity and plastic pollution. This study addresses this gap by investigating how linguistic and visual modes interact in these advertisements and by critically evaluating the ecological ideologies embedded within them.

Research Objectives

To identify the multimodal strategies used in Pakistani soft drink advertisements.

To critically evaluate whether the multimodal strategies used in these advertisements are beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive from an ecolinguistics perspective.

Research Questions

What multimodal strategies are used in Pakistani soft drink advertisements?

Are the multimodal strategies used in these advertisements beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive from an ecolinguistics perspective?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the limited body of research that combines Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Ecolinguistics, extending Stibbe's ecolinguistics framework to a previously underexplored genre in Pakistani and South Asian contexts. Practically, the findings can help advertisers and media practitioners recognise how environmental imagery and language are used in commercial discourse, encouraging more ecologically responsible advertising. The study may also assist policymakers concerned with environmental communication and consumer awareness. Socially, given Pakistan's growing environmental challenges such as water scarcity and plastic pollution, this research promotes critical media literacy by highlighting how everyday advertisements shape public attitudes toward nature and consumption. Overall, the study provides a foundation for

future research applying combined multimodal-ecolinguistics approaches to other advertising genres and media in Pakistan.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the analysis of three selected soft drink advertisements from Pakistan. It does not attempt to cover the entire range of soft drink commercials produced or aired in the country, nor does it extend to other categories of beverages such as juices, energy drinks, or bottled water. The analysis is limited to examining multimodal strategies (linguistic, visual, and audio-visual elements) and their ecolinguistic implications within these four selected advertisements only, and the findings are not intended to be generalised to the broader soft drink advertising industry in Pakistan. Furthermore, the study focuses solely on the content of the advertisements themselves and does not investigate audience reception, consumer behaviour, or the actual environmental impact of the products being advertised.

Literature Review

The study of multimodal discourse analysis has provided foundational tools for understanding how meaning is constructed through the interplay of various semiotic resources, including language, images, sound, and gesture (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Departing from text-centric models of communication, MDA posits that meaning emerges from the co-deployment of visual, verbal, and auditory modes. Kress and van Leeuwen's earlier seminal work, *Reading Images* (1996), established a systematic framework for visual grammar, arguing that images follow structural rules analogous to linguistic syntax. This framework has been enormously influential; however, its application often assumes a universal Western visual literacy, raising questions about its cultural specificity when applied to non-Western contexts such as Pakistan.

Building on this, Jones (2024) expands multimodality to encompass all communication channels beyond spoken or written language, emphasising the simultaneous operation of multiple modes. While useful, Jones's broad definition risks analytical vagueness if not anchored by a concrete methodological toolkit. In advertising, this multimodal integration is particularly salient. Percy and Elliott (2020) assert that advertisements are fundamentally persuasive artefacts, carefully calibrated to target audience psychographics through the strategic combination of words, colours, layout, and imagery. However, their analysis leans heavily on Western consumer behaviour models, which may not adequately address the collectivist, family-oriented, or economically stratified realities of Pakistani consumers, where soft and energy drinks are often marketed as aspirational lifestyle products rather than functional beverages.

De Mooij (2019) contributes a critical insight into how visual presentation can distort perceived product attributes, such as making sugary drinks appear natural or healthy. This point is crucial for soft and energy drink advertising, which frequently employs motifs of extreme sports, vitality, and cognitive enhancement to mask high caffeine and sugar content. Yet, De Mooij's work, like many cross-cultural advertising studies, tends to treat culture as a static variable, potentially overlooking how global beverage brands localise their multimodal strategies in Pakistan; for instance, by using national colours, Urdu typography, or local celebrity endorsements. The absence of Pakistan-specific empirical research in much of this literature is striking, given that the country represents a unique market where youth demographics, rising soft drink consumption, and conservative socio-religious norms intersect.

Ghilzai et al. (2023) applied Stibbe's (2015) theoretical framework, with erasure as the primary analytical focus, alongside metaphor and conviction. The study found that commercial advertisements largely erase nature, either omitting it altogether or presenting it in abstract, decontextualised form, while erasure, metaphor, and conviction jointly sustain these narratives. Although the study makes a valuable ideological point about language shaping ecological thought, its near-exclusive focus on erasure limits its scope; other Stibbean categories, such as salience and identity, remain underexplored, and the analysis does not extend to how visual or multimodal elements reinforce this linguistic erasure.

Yousaf et al. (2024) examined the advantages and disadvantages of print media advertisements in transmitting ecological discourse, drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Stibbe (2015) to show how salience, metaphor, and framing lend advertisements a convincing, naturalised appearance. While the study usefully bridges multimodal and ecolinguistic concerns, its reliance on print media alone is a notable limitation, as it overlooks the more dynamic audio-visual strategies used in televised and digital soft drink advertising, where sound, motion, and narrative sequencing add further layers of ecological meaning-making.

Greenwashing has become an increasingly prevalent trend in advertising, with Pakistani advertisers deploying eco-friendly appeals to attract environmentally conscious audiences (Ishaq & Arslan, 2023). Similarly, Jabeen and Janjua (2024) identified the persuasive use of powerful metaphors that motivate purchase decisions largely independent of objective product specifications, and recommended that businesses link products with positive ecological characteristics to support informed consumer choice. While both studies effectively expose how language constructs the illusion that products such as soft drinks, energy drinks, and flavoured juices are beneficial to health and environment, neither adequately interrogates the multimodal dimension of this greenwashing—that is, how visual and auditory cues work alongside language to reinforce false ecological claims, nor do they critically engage with the disjuncture between this constructed discourse and the products' actual, often harmful, environmental and health impacts.

Alam and Ullah (2021) contributed to advertising literature by examining the role of metaphor through an ecolinguistics lens, highlighting how metaphors attract attention, strengthen brand image, simplify complex ideas, and shape consumer perception. A key strength of the study lies in its strong theoretical integration and its identification of gaps in metaphor-focused advertising research. However, its scope remains confined to metaphor as a single linguistic device, leaving other multimodal resources visual composition, colour symbolism, and sound largely unexamined, and it does not situate its findings within a specifically Pakistani soft drink advertising context.

Taken together, this body of literature demonstrates a persistent pattern: studies tend to privilege either the multimodal or the ecolinguistic dimension of advertising discourse, rarely integrating both within a single analytical framework, and even more rarely within the Pakistani soft drink advertising context specifically. This gap forms the central justification for the present study.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing a descriptive and interpretive approach to analyse multimodal texts. Given that the research aims to explore how meaning is constructed through the interplay of linguistic and visual/audio-visual modes, and to critically interpret the underlying ecological ideologies embedded within these texts, a qualitative framework is most appropriate, as it allows for in-depth, text-based analysis rather than statistical generalisation.

Theoretical Framework

The study draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks. The first is Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of Multimodality, particularly their Grammar of Visual Design, which examines how meaning is constructed through the interaction of visual elements such as representational, interactive, and compositional meanings, alongside verbal and auditory modes. This framework provides the analytical tools to identify how camera angles, colour, gaze, salience, and framing work together with language to construct persuasive meaning in the advertisements.

The second framework is Stibbe's (2015) Ecolinguistics model, particularly his concept of the "stories we live by," which includes analytical categories such as framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, conviction, salience, and erasure. Stibbe's classification of discourse as beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive is employed to critically evaluate whether the multimodal strategies identified in the advertisements promote ecologically responsible values or normalise environmentally harmful consumption patterns. The integration of these two frameworks allows the study to move beyond a purely descriptive multimodal analysis by embedding it within a critical ecological perspective, thereby addressing both research questions of the study.

Data and Sampling

The data for this study consist of three purposively selected soft drink advertisements from Pakistan. Purposive sampling was employed to select advertisements that prominently feature natural imagery, environmental references, or ecological themes, as these are most relevant to the research objectives. The advertisements were sourced from official websites of selected companies.

Data Presentation and Analysis

COLA NEXT Soft Drink by Mezan Beverages Private Limited

Figure 1



An Analysis of the Cola Next Advertisement Using the Multimodal Framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Table 1

Main Category	Code & Sub Category	Application in Ad
Representational Meaning	Narrative	Esra Bilgiç looks directly at the viewer. Creates a personal link between the persona and the drink.
	Reactional	
	NR-R	
	Conceptual	The splash of liquid from the bottle on the right serves as a symbol of vitality and the "pleasure" of consumption.
Interactional Meaning	Symbolism	
	CR-S	
	Conceptual	The dominant red background is used to convey "passion" and energy.
	Colour	
Compositional Meaning	CR-C	
	Gaze Demand	The subject looks directly at the camera, creating a "direct address" that invites the viewer to engage with the brand.
	GAZ-D	
	Angle Low	The camera angle makes the product on the right appear "heroic or imposing."
Compositional Meaning	ANG-L	
	Salience	The large white "NEXT" typography and the high-contrast splash grab immediately attention.
	SAL	
	Framing	Weak framing is utilised; the elements are integrated rather than isolated to suggest a connected lifestyle message.
Compositional Meaning	FRA	

Cola-NEXT is a famous soft drink in Pakistan. In the advertisement, Turkish actress Esra Bilgiç presents it as energetic and refreshing. According to Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal framework, at the level of representational meaning, the actress holding the bottle is a participant who represents confidence, energy, and a modern lifestyle. In terms of representational meaning, the ad focuses on the actress, the product, and the action taking place. Esra Bilgiç looks directly at the viewer; her gaze meets the audience. Further, the way she holds the bottle connects her reaction to the product Cola- Next. The dominant red colour throughout the advertisement symbolises passion and energy. Showing a well-known celebrity, the ad associates the product with qualities such as youth, strength, and stamina. Further, the splashing liquid from the bottle symbolises vitality and pleasure, reinforcing the brand's energetic message to the audience.

Furthermore, in terms of interactional meaning, the direct gaze creates a sense of engagement. The beautiful actress personally addresses the viewer and invites them to connect with the brand and consume it. The medium close-up shot creates an intimate and personal feeling. It makes the audience feel closer to both the celebrity and the product at the same time. The slightly low camera angle makes the product appear powerful and impressive. It gives a strong and dominant presence in the eyes of viewers.

Finally, compositional meaning is created through the arrangement of elements in the advertisement. The celebrity is placed on the left side. It represents familiar or “given” information. The product and splashing action appear on the right, presenting new information. Moreover, the slogan is positioned at the top, representing the brand’s ideal or aspiration. The large “NEXT” text and the bright red background immediately attract the attention of the viewers and make them feel that they need the drink. All elements are blended into one unified red setting. The celebrity, the product, and the brand message are closely connected as part of the same energetic and modern lifestyle.

An Analysis of the Cola Next Soft Drink Advertisement Using the Ecolinguistics Framework of Arran Stubbe (2015)

Table 2

Main Category	Sub Category & Code	Application in Ad
Ideology	CONS Pro-Consumption	The ad promotes the belief that consuming the drink is inherently positive and beneficial
Metaphor	DLF Drink = Life	The splash and ice emphasise energy and vitality, suggesting the beverage is a fuel for an energetic life
Evaluation	NHR No Negatives	The ad focuses on energy and coolness. It omits any mention of health risks or ecological impacts.
Identity	YID Youthful	The styling of the celebrity and the vibrant aesthetics target people to feel vibrant and energetic.
Erasure	PLE Plastic Erasure	The ad focuses on the clean liquid splash and cold condensation. It ignores the long-term waste of the plastic bottle.

In the Cola Next soft drink advertisement, according to Stubbe’s (2025) ecolinguistics framework, the dominant ideology is used to promote pro-consumption. The ad suggests that drinking the beverage is naturally positive and desirable. The advertisement uses a metaphor by presenting the drink as equal to life or energy, leading to joy and social bonds. The dramatic splash and ice imagery suggest that the beverage fuels vitality and supports an active lifestyle. In evaluation, consuming soft drinks is framed as a high-value activity that elevates one’s experience and provides happiness, energy and joy. However, negative aspects are completely omitted and removed from the ad. There is no mention of possible health risks, such as sugar or environmental consequences like plastic waste and its impact on agriculture. The ad creates a one-sided narrative.

Moreover, the advertisement of Cola Next soft drink also constructs a youthful identity, vibrant colours, and stylish celebrity imagery appeal to people who see themselves as energetic, youthful, and stylish. Strong persuasive techniques are evident through bold typography, bright red tones, and dynamic splash visuals that create a powerful sensory impact on the viewers. At the same time, the beverage ad engages in erasure techniques by focusing on the clean, refreshing liquid and cold condensation. It ignores the environmental issue of plastic waste from the bottle. It downplays potential health impacts related to sugar or chemical additives. The advertisement for Cola Next soft drink tells a story in that consumption is exciting, harmless, and

life-enhancing. In contrast, environmental and health concerns remain invisible completely. In reality, regular consumption of soft drinks like Cola Next this is harmful for both human health and the environment.

Integrated Analysis

The Cola Next advertisement by combining Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) *Grammar of Visual Design* with Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics, effectively naturalizes a culture of consumption. Several multimodal techniques are used to make a product desirable and healthy for people. The ad is carefully designed to guide how we see and understand it. First, we see the familiar celebrity. It makes us feel trust in the product. Then our attention moves to the product at the top of the image. It is presented as something exciting. The low-angle shot and the celebrity's direct gaze make them look powerful and confident and invites to join the scene. Moreover, the slogan "Level Barha" suggests that drinking the beverage will help us improve ourselves to the next level of joy and happiness. The drink becomes a symbol of energy, progress and success in every way. Likewise, the bright red colours and sharp focus make the drink look refreshing and valuable, but the ad leaves out other important realities. It doesn't show the plastic waste it creates or the health effects of sugar. So, what is highlighted is vitality and self-improvement.

PEPSI Soft Drink by PepsiCo

Figure 2



An Analysis of Pepsi Advertisement Using the Multimodal Framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Table 3

Main Category	Sub Category/ Code	Application in Ad
Representational Meaning	Conceptual: Symbolism CR-S	Modern cans symbolise the traditional pleasure of the brand over time.
	Conceptual Colour CR-C	The dominant blue represents the brand's identity, contrasting with red/white to signal energy.
	Conceptual:	Celebrities and athletes embody national pride,

	Association CR-A	performance, and youth.
Interactional	Gaze: Demand	Multiple subjects look directly at the lens, creating a direct address to "demand" viewer engagement.
Meaning	GAZ-D	
Compositional	Information Value	Slogans at the top represent the ideal, aspirational desire, while the cans represent the real.
	IV	
	Saliency	Large white typography and the bright blue background grab attention of the views.
	SAL	

According to Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal framework of the *Grammar of Visual Design*, various multimodal strategies are used in the advertisement of soft drink Pepsi. In representational meaning, the ad features a narrative bidirectional approach. The multiple famous actors like Babar Azam, Naseem Shah, Waseem Akhter and Shaheed Afridi are shown. The inclusion of numerous celebrity acts is a conceptual association strategy. The brand embodies the collective strength and stamina of national heroes as cricketers. Further, the various Pepsi cans, ranging from vintage to modern designs, use conceptual symbolism to represent tradition and pleasure associated with the Pepsi brand. The celebrities and various Pepsi cans connect viewers with the product and make them feel part of the scene.

Moreover, in interactional meaning, most subjects utilise a gaze demand strategy. They are looking directly at the camera to create a direct address that invites the viewer to join the generation. Further, the framing uses a mix of Intimate Distance for the foreground figures to create a social bond between sports personalities and viewers. Overall, the angle is eye-level to maintain a sense of shared community rather than pure dominance.

Furthermore, the composition is highly dense in the advertisement. The information value places the slogan "Yeh Dil Mangay More" (This heart wants more) in the ideal position, framing the desire for the product as an aspirational one. The saliency is distributed across the blue background and the high-contrast white text. It ensures the brand name and the "More" message grab the immediate attention of the viewers and connect them with the product. Additionally, weak framing is used to integrate the different generations of cricketers and celebrities into one unified "Pepsi world," suggesting that the brand bridges the past and the present and connects both celebrities and viewers, ensuring joy and happiness.

An Analysis of the Pepsi Soft Drink Advertisement Using the Ecolinguistics Framework of Arran Stibbe (2015)

Table 4

Main Category	Code Name	Analysis of the Pepsi Advertisement
Ideology	Pro-Consumption CONS	The slogan "YEH DIL MANGAY MORE" (This heart wants more) reinforces consumption beneficial.
Metaphor	Drink = Life DLF	By featuring stars and athletes, the beverage is metaphorically framed as energy and youth.
Metaphor	HWT Hidden waste	The various cans and bottles are displayed trash or landfill is ignored and removed.

Evaluation	No Negatives NHR	The ad omits any mention of health risks like high sugar content.
Identity	Social Identity SID	The ad uses a group of popular figures to suggest the drink is a ticket to an energetic and youthful lifestyle.
Erasure	Plastic Erasure PLE	The ad erases the lifecycle of the PET bottles and their environmental impact

According to Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics framework, the Pepsi advertisement employs various strategies to promote consumption. Central to the ad is the pro-consumption ideology, summarised by the slogan "Yeh Dil Mangay More,". It frames the desire for more as an inherently beneficial trait and essential for joy. The slogan is created in Urdu to grab the attention of the people. Further, drinking the product is presented as a high-value peak experience shared by famous cricketers who are national heroes. To strengthen this appeal, the ad utilises a social and youthful identity, positioning the brand as a ticket into an elite, vibrant, and famous circle of society.

By featuring legendary athletes, Pepsi's advertisement creates a Drink Life metaphor, suggesting the soda is a literal source of energy and vitality. Most importantly, the advertisement of soft effectively erases the post-consumer reality of plastic waste and pollution. This is a form of No Negatives evaluation, where the excitement of the "Why Not" spirit masks potential health risks or environmental footprints. Finally, the Pepsi soft logos are massive and centred, and the beaming, confident faces of stars like Shahid Afridi and Babar Azam create an immediate emotional bond with the viewer. It removes the potential risk of the Pepsi soft drink for human health and the environment.

Integrated Analysis

Through the inclusion of both multimodality and ecolinguistics, it becomes clear how the use of specific techniques in this Pepsi advertisement highlights the Pro-Consumption ideology. The technique used to create a social relationship and reinforce the young nature of the consumer is through the use of eye contact and close-up shots in the advertisement. It portrays the endless thirst for the product as something desirable. Additionally, the clean and multi-generational nature of the cans represents a metaphor of hidden waste. The use of magic and tradition enables the consumer to forget about plastic waste when buying the soft drink. Finally, the prominent usage of actors and branding helps hide environmental and health issues related to chemicals, turning the product into a symbol of life, joy and energy.

Coca-Cola Soft Drink by The Coca-Cola Company

Figure 3



An Analysis of the Coca Cola Advertisement Using the Multimodal Framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Table 5

Main Category	Sub-Code	Application in Ad
Representational Meaning	Narrative	The couple maintains mutual eye contact and a shared gaze, emphasising their personal bond.
	Bidirectional NR-B	
Representational Meaning	Conceptual Colour CR-C	The dominant red hue of the woman's dress and the logo symbolize passion and brand identity.
	Conceptual Identity CR-I	The wedding setting and traditional attire define a lifestyle of celebration and cultural tradition.
Interactional Meaning	Gaze Offer GAZ-O	The subjects look at each other rather than the camera, making the viewer an observer of their private moment.
	Distance: Intimate DIS-I	The medium close-up shot creates a sense of social and personal connection with the couple.
Compositional Meaning	Salience SAL	The bottle is placed centrally and stands out through contrast and focus, grabbing immediate attention.
	Framing FRA	Weak framing is used; the characters and product are tightly integrated into one space to show the brand as part of the moment.

Coca-Cola is one of the most prominent and famous soft drinks in Pakistan. In the advertisement, two famous Pakistani actors are shown. According to Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal framework of the *Grammar of Visual Design*, multiple strategies are used to make the product desirable for the customers. In terms of the representational meaning, the image presents a bidirectional process in which the bride and groom share a mutual gaze, locking eyes with each other. This mutual gaze signals a shared emotional moment and emphasises intimacy and closeness. Further, there is a transactional action in which the groom functions as the actor, handing a bottle as a goal for the bride. Conceptually, colour plays a significant role in the advertisement.

The red colour of Brid's clothes symbolises excitement and passion. The warm, gold and yellow tones in the background convey freshness and vitality. Ideality is established through which liberty of stress and modernity. The glass Coca-Cola symbolically represents pleasure and shared happiness within the ritual context of the wedding.

In terms of interactional meaning, in this advertisement, the gaze functions as an offer, since the couple looks at each other rather than directly at the camera. The viewer is positioned as an observer witnessing a private moment of romantic joy and happiness. The distance is intimate, presented through a medium close-up shot that suggests personal and social closeness.

In the compositional meaning of the Coca-Cola soft drink advertisement, the bride is positioned on the left. The groom's action and accompanying text appear toward the centre and right, representing the "New," highlighting the product's role within the moment. Through the central placement of Coca-Cola, the salience technique is achieved. Framing is also achieved as a couple is closely integrated within the same visual space. All the elements work together to make the product heroic

An Analysis of the Coca-Cola Soft Drink Advertisement Using the Ecolinguistics Framework of Arran Stibbe (2015)

Table 6

Category	Sub-Category & Code	Application in Ad
Ideology	Pro-Consumption CONS	The ad suggests that consuming the drink during a wedding is a source of joy
Metaphor	Hidden Waste HWT	The bottle is shown as beautiful. The reality of trash is ignored.
Evaluation	Positive Consumption POS-CONS	Drinking the product is framed as a high-value activity.
Identity	Social Identity SID	The product is positioned for popular people seeking to suggest social belonging.
Erasure	Health Erasure HLT	The ad highlights joy and refreshment, omitting the health risks of sugar content.

According to Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics framework, the advertisement of the Coca-Cola soft drink constructs a clear consumption ideology in which happiness, youth, and social status are closely tied to the consumption of the beverage. It promotes a pro-consumption worldview by presenting the soft drink as inherently positive and as a direct source of joy, evident in the couple's happy expressions in the advertisement. Furthermore, drinking the soft drink is framed as a high-value activity, positioned as the peak moment within a major life event such as a wedding. The presence of a young, vibrant couple reinforces the idea of youthfulness and happiness through consuming the Coca-Cola soft drink.

The beverage functions as a metaphor for energy and youth within the wedding celebration. At the same time, the advertisement conceals negative consequences like waste and plastic pollution. The glass bottle is presented as a beautiful, iconic object, treated almost like a piece of art and iconic. Further, the ad also appeals strongly to the identity and emotions of the viewers and remove impacts on the environment. A wedding party targets a socially admired group and implies that the drink serves as a ticket to belonging and celebration and ensures youth, joy, bonding, and happiness.

However, these ads do not show the environmental costs behind the scenes. Producing soft drinks on a large scale requires a lot of water, generates significant plastic waste, depends on

fossil fuels, and contributes to carbon emissions. The negative environmental impacts are left out of the message, so the act of consuming the product appears harmless and without consequences.

Integrated Analysis

In summary, the advertisement uses multimodal strategies like colour, picture and written phrases in Urdu to make the product an essential for a happy life. The advertisement adopts an anthropocentric view-- nature's resources are presented solely to serve human desires and the "perfect" celebration. Furthermore, red, a colour deeply linked with weddings, symbolises love and connection, qualities that make Coca-Cola's advertisements feel warm, joyful, and emotionally engaging. All these multimodal strategies are used wisely to hide the environmental impacts of soft drinks, such as plastic waste, water use, fossil fuels and carbon emissions. Most importantly, how the soft drink is dangerous to human health is completely silenced and erased.

Results and Discussion

Results

The multimodal and ecolinguistics analysis of the four selected soft drink advertisements including Cola Next, Pepsi and Coca-Cola reveal consistent patterns across both research questions. In response to RQ1, the findings show that all three brands rely on a remarkably similar set of multimodal strategies, despite differences in narrative content and cultural framing. At the representational level, each advertisement employs celebrity figures—whether a Turkish actress, national cricketers, or a bride and groom—as central participants whose gaze, either directly demanding viewer engagement (Cola Next, Pepsi) or offered intimately between characters (Coca-Cola), positions the audience as either an invited participant or an emotionally involved observer. Conceptual colour symbolism is used consistently: red dominates across all three ads, associated with passion, energy, and celebration, while Pepsi supplements this with blue to construct brand-specific identity. Compositional strategies such as salience (bold typography, high-contrast colour, centrally placed products) and weak framing (integrating celebrities, product, and setting into a single unified visual space) recur across all texts, working to naturalise the product as an inseparable part of lifestyle, celebration, and national or social identity.

In response to RQ2, the ecolinguistic analysis demonstrates that all three advertisements construct overwhelmingly destructive ecological stories, according to Stibbe's (2015) typology. A shared pro-consumption ideology underlies each text, framing consumption not merely as acceptable but as desirable and identity-affirming. Each advertisement deploys a "Drink = Life" metaphor, associating the beverage with vitality, energy, or emotional fulfilment. Most significantly, all three advertisements engage in systematic erasure: plastic packaging is aestheticised rather than problematised (Cola Next, Pepsi), and health risks associated with high sugar content are entirely omitted across all texts (evident in the recurring "No Negatives" and "Health Impact Erasure" codes). Social and youthful identity construction is used to align the product with aspirational belonging, whether through celebrity glamour, national sporting pride, or wedding-based cultural tradition. No advertisement offers a beneficial or ambivalent ecological framing; nature, where present at all, appears only as a decorative or symbolic resource (splashes, condensation, freshness) rather than as an entity with independent value.

Discussion

The results indicate a striking convergence between the multimodal architecture of these advertisements and the ecological ideologies they encode, supporting the core premise of this study that multimodal strategies and ecolinguistics meaning making are inseparable rather than parallel processes. Across all three brands, salience and framing do not merely serve aesthetic or persuasive functions; they actively perform erasure. The visual concentration on splashing liquid, condensation, and radiant colour draws the viewer's attention toward sensory pleasure precisely at the point where ecological cost, plastic waste, water consumption, sugar content—would otherwise be visible. This confirms Ghilzai et al.'s (2023) finding that commercial advertising erasure operates through the abstraction or complete omission of nature and its resources and extends it by demonstrating that this erasure is achieved multimodally, not solely through linguistic choices such as slogans or voice-over. Where Ghilzai et al. focused primarily on linguistic erasure, the present findings show that visual composition—centrality, colour salience, and camera angle—works in tandem with language to accomplish the same ideological work, a dimension their study did not fully address.

The findings also resonate strongly with Yousaf et al.'s (2024) observation that salience, metaphor, and framing lend advertising discourse a "convincing and natural" appearance. In the present data, this naturalisation is achieved specifically through the integration of celebrity bodies with product imagery via weak framing, such that the product appears as an organic extension of a desirable lifestyle rather than a manufactured commodity with material consequences. However, unlike Yousaf et al., whose data was limited to print advertisements, the inclusion of audio-visual and celebrity-driven texts in this study reveals that gaze—whether demanding direct engagement (Pepsi, Cola Next) or inviting vicarious intimacy (Coca-Cola)—functions as an additional, powerful erasure mechanism largely unavailable to static print media, since it fosters an emotional identification with the persona that discourages critical scrutiny of the product itself.

The pervasiveness of the "Drink = Life" metaphor across all three brands corroborates Alam and Ullah's (2021) argument that metaphor plays a central role in simplifying complex ideas and shaping consumer perception. Yet the present findings extend this insight by showing that the metaphor is not carried by language alone; it is co-constructed multimodally through the pairing of dynamic visual motion (splashes, condensation, celebratory gestures) with brief verbal slogans ("Yeh Dil Mangay More," "Level Barha"), producing a compounded persuasive effect that neither mode could achieve independently. This supports the study's broader theoretical claim that isolating linguistic analysis from multimodal analysis, as much of the existing literature (e.g., Percy & Elliott, 2020; De Mooij, 2019) tends to do, risks underestimating the full ideological force of advertising discourse.

Notably, the Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements localise these global persuasive templates through distinctly Pakistani cultural markers—wedding tradition, Urdu slogans, and national cricketing icons—lending support to the concern raised regarding De Mooij's (2019) treatment of culture as a static variable. Rather than simply adopting Western advertising conventions wholesale, these texts demonstrate active cultural localisation, embedding the pro-consumption ideology within culturally resonant and emotionally significant contexts (marriage, national pride), which arguably intensifies rather than dilutes the erasure of ecological and health

consequences, since consumption becomes fused with cherished cultural values rather than presented as a neutral commercial transaction.

Taken together, these findings substantiate Ishaq and Arslan's (2023) observation regarding the prevalence of greenwashing-adjacent strategies in Pakistani advertising, though notably, none of the three advertisements analysed here engage in overt greenwashing through explicit environmental claims; instead, they practise a more insidious form of ecological erasure through omission and aestheticisation. This suggests that in the Pakistani soft drink sector, the dominant strategy is not to falsely claim environmental virtue but to render environmental and health considerations entirely invisible—an ecolinguistically "destructive" discourse type that operates through silence rather than misrepresentation. This distinction offers a meaningful refinement to the existing literature, which has tended to conflate greenwashing with ecological erasure without always differentiating between advertisements that make false green claims and those that simply erase ecological considerations altogether.

Overall, the discussion confirms that Pakistani soft drink advertisements systematically employ multimodal resources—colour, gaze, salience, framing, and metaphor—not as neutral persuasive tools but as ideologically loaded strategies that construct a destructive ecological story: one in which nature is instrumentalised or erased, plastic waste and health risks are rendered invisible, and consumption is naturalised as an unproblematic pathway to joy, belonging, and vitality.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the multimodal strategies used in Pakistani soft drink advertisements and evaluated whether these strategies construct beneficial, ambivalent, or destructive ecological discourses, drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodality and Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistics frameworks. The analysis of four advertisements Cola Next, Pepsi and Coca-Cola, found that these texts rely on a consistent set of multimodal strategies, including celebrity-driven gaze, colour symbolism, salience, and weak framing, to present the beverages as inseparable from energy, celebration, and social belonging.

In answering the second research question, all four advertisements were found to construct predominantly destructive ecological stories. Through pro-consumption ideology, "Drink = Life" metaphors, one-sided positive evaluation, aspirational identity, and systematic erasure of plastic waste and health risks, these advertisements normalise consumption while rendering its environmental and health consequences largely invisible. Importantly, this erasure is achieved not through language alone but through the coordinated interaction of linguistic and visual modes, confirming that multimodal and ecolinguistic meaning-making are mutually reinforcing rather than separate processes.

These findings support the study's central argument: soft drink advertising in Pakistan functions as a powerful ideological tool that shapes public perceptions of nature, health, and consumption in ways that favour commercial interest over ecological and social wellbeing.

Recommendations

Taken together, these findings point to several directions worth pursuing. Advertisers and marketers should move beyond erasure-based strategies toward more transparent advertising that acknowledges, rather than obscures, the environmental and health implications of their products. Regulatory bodies such as PEMRA should also consider guidelines requiring greater transparency in beverage advertising regarding sugar content, plastic packaging, and environmental impact. Alongside regulatory reform, media literacy initiatives should help consumers, especially younger audiences, critically recognise the techniques used to mask the ecological and health costs of soft drink consumption. In terms of future research, scholars could expand the corpus beyond four advertisements and include other beverage categories, such as energy drinks or bottled water, to generate more generalisable, comparative findings. Future studies could also incorporate audience reception research to examine how Pakistani consumers actually interpret these multimodal and ecological strategies, complementing this study's text-based analysis. Finally, cross-cultural research comparing soft drink advertising across South Asian or developing-economy contexts would help determine whether these destructive ecological patterns are Pakistan-specific or part of broader global trends. In sum, this study highlights the need for greater critical attention to the discursive practices of the soft drink industry in Pakistan, as the gap between advertised imagery and ecological reality continues to widen amid the country's environmental challenges.

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