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**A Multimodal Semiotic Analysis of Multilingual Billboard
Advertisements in Lahore, Pakistan**



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Abstract

Outdoor advertising is a powerful way of communicating, using linguistic and visual resources to create persuasive messages in multicultural urban contexts. The aim of this research is to examine the multilingual and multimodal semiotic strategies adopted in billboard advertisements in Lahore, Pakistan by applying the theory of Visual Grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The study employs a qualitative multimodal discourse analysis approach and a purposive sample of ten advertisements from billboards that were taken from various commercial and transportation routes in Lahore. The analysis is presented on the interaction between language choices, code-mixing, visual composition (and the notion of 'sacredness'), the symbolic use of colour, typography, cultural imagery, and representational and compositional meanings. The results show that Urdu and English are strategically used in tandem with some degree of Punjabi use, to reach local cultural groups and the aspirations of global consumers. The visual elements such as colour schemes, celebrity endorsements, iconic imagery, spatial organization and symbolic cultural references combine with verbal components to create powerful narratives that create a sense of trust, modernity, prestige, familiarity and emotional engagement. The study also shows that multilingualism and multimodality are used as complementary semiotic resources that assist in audience identification and impact consumer perceptions in an advertising field where variety of cultures exists in the city of Lahore. This study is an extension of the study done by Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal semiotic framework to the Pakistani context, which adds to the literature in Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Advertising Studies, Linguistic Landscape Research, and Intercultural Communication. The results also have a practical angle for advertisers, communication professionals, and policy makers to think about how to create culturally responsive and linguistically inclusive advertising strategies in multilingual societies.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis; Semiotics; Visual Grammar; Billboard advertisements; Multilingualism; Advertising discourse; Kress and van Leeuwen; Lahore; Pakistan.

Introduction

Outdoor advertising has been one of the most visible modes of public communication, allowing advertisers to communicate with the audience using strategically placed visual and linguistic cues, in common everyday urban

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environment. Billboards are among the most potent means of outdoor advertising media since they are multimodal that is they carry verbal messages, images, colour, typography, spatial organization and cultural symbolism, all of which are effective in persuading recipients. Billboard advertising is different from that which takes place indoors, for example in print and digital media, because it happens in public where it informs, persuades and influences social perceptions of brands, lifestyles and cultural identities. Therefore, the interaction of the language and the visual resources in creating meaning in culturally diverse societies through billboard advertising is an important site to examine (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010).

The evolution of modern advertising has drawn the researchers' focus from language, to multimodal discourse analysis, where the multimodality of meaning is seen to be created through the interaction of more than one semiotic mode. Social semiotic theory states that communication is multimodal, that is, the visual image, colour, typography, layout, gesture and written language are all meaning making resources to each other. As such, Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar is one of the most influential analytical frameworks for exploring the ways in which representational, interactive and compositional meanings are assembled in visual communication. Their model shows that there is a "grammar" of visual texts, like there is for language, which can be used to explain the social, cultural and ideological meaning that images enable to communicate. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010).

Advertising discourse is especially appropriate for a multimodal semiotic investigation because of the importance of the coordinated use of verbal and visual signs for the persuasive effect of advertising. Images do not exist by themselves, but in combination with other elements such as written text, colour scheme, typography and symbolic images to help readers understand and feel a response to the image. In advertising Barthes (1977) recognized the denotative and connotative elements of language, which he believed could bind the multiple meanings of images and decrease the interpretative ambiguity. The multimodal approach to scholarship is also topical, because successful advertisements are built from a mixture of visual and linguistic elements which work together to create convincing plots and consumers (Martinec & Salway, 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

In multilingual societies, the choice of language is itself a very potent semiotic resource, making things even more complicated. Advertisers can reach both

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local cultural groups and global consumer dreams with the strategic use of multiple languages. English often connotes modernity, prestige, globalization and technological progress, while indigenous language(s) connote familiarity, authenticity, trust and cultural belonging. Code-mixing and code-switching are therefore not restricted to the convenience of language but rather are used as conscious persuasive tactics on the language level to communicate with heterogeneous audiences who have different language repertoires. The latest researches show that multilingual advertising is effective in user engagement through the interaction of the language and image of the text in the creation of local and global identity (Loan, 2022; Kravchenko & Yudenko, 2023).

The multilingual advertising context is rich and unique in the case of Pakistan due to its multi-lingual environment. Urdu is the national language, English is an official language related to education, business and globalization, while other regional languages such as Punjabi are used in the local context and play a significant role in the lives of people in Lahore. Lahore is the second largest urban centre and the cultural hub of Pakistan and is a multilingual city where commercial advertisements are a combination of local culture and global marketing strategies. Urdu, English and Punjabi are often used in conjunction with culturally appropriate visuals, celebrities, religious references, architectural references, and colour symbolism in city wide billboard advertisements to connect with a wide variety of audiences. These multimodal choices are not only pro commercial products, but act as the building of identities, aspirations and social values that are part of the changing culture of urban Pakistan.

While Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) has come a long way in the last 20 years, few studies have explored the billboard advertisements in Pakistan from a holistic social semiotic viewpoint. Compared to existing Pakistani studies which have investigated the representation of females in advertisements, consumer behavior and/or discourse analysis of the advertisement text, studies have relatively less attention on the integrated analysis of multilingual linguistic choices, visual grammar and the cultural symbolism in advertisements as analyzed within Kress and van Leeuwen's framework. Moreover, there is an absence of systematic studies that examine the three types of meaning (representational, interactive, and compositional) at the same time in the multilingual billboard advertisements in the context of Pakistan's sociolinguistic situation. This disjuncture hinders our comprehension of the strategic use of both language and pictorial communication by advertisers, as they attempt to manipulate consumers' interpretations and to negotiate the construction of cultural identities.

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The present study is an attempt to explore the problem with the theoretical framework of Visual Grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen in the context of multilingual billboard advertisements in Lahore. Focusing specifically at the level of verbal language, code-mixing, colour, imagery, typography, spatial composition and cultural symbols, the study investigates the interaction of these elements in creating persuasive meanings in billboard advertising. The study employs a multimodal approach to discourse analysis by analysing real billboard advertisements that were gathered from key commercial spots in Lahore, which enriches the fields of advertising studies, social semiotics and linguistic landscape studies. It also extends the use of Visual Grammar to the Pakistani context and offers insights to the advertisers, communication professionals and policy makers for designing culturally relevant and linguistically inclusive ads in multilingual societies.

Literature Review

Literature Review

Evolution of Semiotics and Social Semiotics

Semiotics, broadly defined as the study of signs and meaning-making processes, has evolved into one of the most influential theoretical paradigms for understanding human communication across linguistic, visual, and cultural contexts. The discipline originated with the foundational works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, who independently conceptualized signs as the primary units through which meaning is produced and interpreted. Saussure (1916/1983) viewed language as a structured system of signs composed of the *signifier* (the physical form of a sign) and the *signified* (the concept it represents), emphasizing that meaning emerges through differences within a linguistic system rather than from intrinsic relationships between words and objects. In contrast, Peirce (1931–1958) proposed a triadic model consisting of the representamen, object, and interpretant, arguing that meaning is generated through an ongoing process of interpretation known as semiosis. Together, these foundational perspectives established the theoretical basis for contemporary semiotic inquiry across diverse communicative contexts.

The application of semiotics to media and advertising was substantially advanced by Roland Barthes, whose work demonstrated that advertisements communicate not only literal meanings but also culturally embedded ideological messages. In *Mythologies*, Barthes (1972) argued that everyday cultural artefacts function as systems of signs capable of naturalizing particular social values and ideologies. Later, in *Image, Music, Text*, he introduced the concepts of denotation and connotation, explaining how visual images

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simultaneously communicate explicit meanings and culturally conditioned symbolic associations (Barthes, 1977). Barthes further proposed that linguistic elements perform an anchoring function by directing viewers toward preferred interpretations of visual messages while reducing their inherent ambiguity. His work has profoundly influenced advertising studies, where images, slogans, logos, colours, and typography collectively construct persuasive meanings that extend beyond the literal representation of products.

Although structural semiotics provided a powerful analytical framework, scholars increasingly recognized that meaning is socially situated and influenced by cultural, political, and historical contexts. This realization gave rise to **social semiotics**, which views signs not as fixed entities but as socially motivated resources employed by communicators to achieve specific purposes within particular contexts (Hodge & Kress, 1988). Social semiotics emphasizes that meaning is continuously negotiated through social interaction and cultural conventions, allowing researchers to investigate how communication reflects ideology, identity, and power relations. Rather than treating language as the sole carrier of meaning, social semiotics considers images, colour, typography, gesture, spatial organization, sound, and other semiotic resources as equally significant components of communication.

Building upon Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) developed one of the most influential models for analysing visual communication through their theory of Visual Grammar. They argue that images possess a systematic grammar comparable to linguistic grammar and that visual communication simultaneously realizes three metafunctions: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. Representational meaning concerns the participants, actions, and conceptual structures depicted in images; interactive meaning examines the relationship established between the image and its viewers through gaze, distance, perspective, and modality; while compositional meaning focuses on information value, salience, framing, and layout that organize visual information into coherent communicative wholes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This framework has become the dominant theoretical model in multimodal discourse analysis because it enables systematic examination of how visual and linguistic resources interact to construct meaning.

The increasing digitization of communication has further strengthened the importance of social semiotics. Contemporary communication rarely relies on language alone but instead integrates multiple semiotic resources operating simultaneously. Kress (2010) argues that modern communication is inherently multimodal, requiring researchers to investigate how written language, visual

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imagery, typography, colour, gesture, and spatial arrangement collectively contribute to meaning-making. Consequently, multimodal social semiotics has become particularly valuable for analysing advertising discourse, where persuasive communication depends upon the coordinated interaction of verbal and visual modes. Billboard advertisements exemplify this multimodal complexity because they combine linguistic choices, colour symbolism, photographic imagery, typography, branding, and spatial composition to construct culturally meaningful messages within public spaces. Understanding these interactions requires analytical frameworks capable of explaining how different semiotic resources operate together to shape audience interpretation and consumer behaviour.

The theoretical developments from structural semiotics to contemporary social semiotics therefore provide the conceptual foundation for investigating billboard advertising in multilingual societies. In culturally diverse cities such as Lahore, advertisers strategically combine multiple languages with visual symbolism to negotiate local identities while simultaneously projecting global aspirations. Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar offers an appropriate analytical framework for examining these multimodal interactions because it recognizes that meaning emerges through the integrated operation of linguistic and visual resources rather than through isolated textual or pictorial elements.

Research Gap

The multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics have been developed analytical methods that have taken root in studying visual communication and advertising discourse. Previous studies have shown that advertising is a multimodal text in which language, images, colour, typography, space and cultural symbols are not separate conveyers of meaning but rather interdependent, constructing persuasive meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010). Multimodal advertising has been explored by scholars in different cultural contexts and it has been emphasised how the visual grammar affects the perception, brand identity and the ideological representation of the consumer (Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran, 2016; Machin, 2013). Likewise, research on multilingual advertising has revealed that code switching and code mixing are used strategically to construct local identity, while at the same time conveying global values and modern lifestyles (Martin, 2008; Piller, 2003).

Although there are these important contributions, there are some important gaps in the literature. First, most of the multimodal advertising research has been conducted with western or European and East Asian contexts, while

limited research has been conducted on the billboard advertising within the South Asian multilingual contexts with a special focus on Pakistan. The existing studies in Pakistan have focused on either the representation of gender, consumer behaviour, media discourse or linguistic elements of an advertisement, but none of these studies have undertaken a systematic multimodal analysis of an advertisement based on the modern social semiotic theory (Mushtaq, 2021).

Secondly, while multilingualism has been a defining feature of the linguistic landscape of Pakistan, there has been little research on the concurrent existence and complementary roles of Urdu, English and regional languages in advertisements on billboards. Many previous studies have tended to study foreign-language decision-making without considering the interaction between the language and the visual modality in the creation of persuasive meaning.

Third, the Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been one of the most popular models of multimodal communication analysis but its use in analysing Pakistani billboard advertisements is still limited. In particular the synergistic interplay of representational, interactive and compositional meanings in the context of colour symbolism, typography, layout, imagery, cultural reference and multilingual linguistic decision in the advertising landscape of Lahore has not received much attention.

Moreover, there are limited studies that have looked at the billboards as a reflection of wider sociocultural values, identity construction or globalization in the context of rapidly changing urban landscape of Pakistan. Billboard advertising is not only about the sale of commercial products, but it's also about the reproduction of cultural ideologies, consumer aspirations and social identities. To gain a full picture of how language and visual resources interact to form persuasive messages in the culturally and linguistically diverse contexts of public space, a multimodal investigation is necessary.

In order to address the aforementioned gaps, the present study adopts Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic approach to analyze the multilingual billboards in Lahore, Pakistan. Combining linguistic analysis with visual grammar, the study examines the interrelationship between verbal language, colour, imagery, typography, layout and cultural symbolism in the creation of meaning and its impact on the reader's interpretation. The research extends the use of Visual Grammar to an intercultural and multilingual South Asian context in order to enhance the application of Visual Grammar to multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, advertising discourse, and linguistic landscape studies.

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Theoretical Framework

Social Semiotic Theory and Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen.

This work is based on the Social Semiotic Theory of Visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), which is one of the most prominent theories used to analyse multimodal communication. The framework was adapted from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978) and believes that the system of signs in the visual domain, like language, has a structured grammar that systematically provides organization and communication of meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

While the traditional semiotic approaches focus mainly on single signs and symbols, Kress and van Leeuwen consider visual communication as a socio-cultural process in which meaning is constructed together with a number of semiotic resources such as images, written language, colour, typography, composition, framing, perspective and spatial organization. They focus on the idea that communication is inherently multimodal and meaning is not being created in the language but rather in the interaction of the communicative modes (Kress, 2010).

Central to the Visual Grammar are three closely related metafunctions that are adapted from the functional model of Halliday.

Representational Meaning

Representational meaning is the content of a picture. It explores how these are depicted graphically: Participants, actions, objects, settings, cultural symbols and conceptual relationships. Kress and van Leeuwen differentiate between narrative representations (which represent action, event or process through vectors) and conceptual representations (which are used to classify or symbolize the persons involved but do not represent action). In billboard advertising, representational meaning helps researchers to analyse the visibility of products, celebrities, buildings, landscapes, food, clothing and cultural artefacts to build commercial and cultural meanings.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning explains the relationship between the represented participants and the viewers. This dimension explores the social interaction of images through the use of gaze, social distance, camera angle, perspective and visual modality. The direct gaze can suggest an interpersonal involvement and emotional engagement, while the indirect gaze places the viewers as observers. Likewise, there is often an effect of identification and persuasion, when the close-up, frontal angles and high visual realism are used. The interactive meaning, then, offers some valuable insight into how billboard ads try to create trust and credibility, aspire, and emotionally connect with

potential customers.

Compositional Meaning

The compositional meaning is related to the organization of the visual elements into coherent messages. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state that there are three key principles in composing visually:

Information value – the positioning of information (left/right, top/bottom, centre/margin) and how this is perceived by viewers.

The salience of specific elements based on their visual salience (size, colour, contrast, focus, lighting or positioning).

Framing: indicating conceptual relationships between the components by their connection and separation.

These compositional resources lead viewers' gaze and help to create a hierarchy of information in billboard ads.

To present: the application of the present study.

It is especially fitting that Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework is selected for its focus on public space and the combination of linguistic and visual resources in billboard adverts, which are exactly the context and resources employed in the selected texts. In the multilingual space of Lahore, advertisers embed Urdu, English and sometimes Punjabi in the photographs, typography, colour symbolism, cultural imagery, celebrity endorsements and spatial layout to create persuasive commercial messages.

This framework is used to analyse how the multi-lingual linguistic resources are interwoven with the representational, interactive and compositional visual resources to shape the interpretation of the audience in the present study. These will be analysed in the context of language choice and code-mixing, colour symbolism, typography, visual salience, cultural symbols, spatial organization, and image composition, within selected billboard advertisements. The framework brings together linguistic and visual analysis, allowing a comprehensive understanding of the negotiation by the advertising industry of local cultural identity, global consumer aspirations and persuasive communication in Lahore's multicultural advertising context.

Hence, the conceptual and analytical framework of Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar is used as a tool to examine how the billboards use multimodal semiotic resources to create meaning, consumer perception and consolidate cultural identities in the current Pakistani society.

Research Questions

1. Which languages are being used on billboards for marketing in Lahore?
2. Which semiotic strategies are being employed by advertising companies on billboards?

Research Methodology

The design of the study is qualitative and uses multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) to analyze the semiotic and linguistic resources utilized in the billboard advertisements in Lahore city, Pakistan. This is a qualitative study since the focus is on understanding the process of meaning construction that occurs when language, images, colour, typography, and cultural symbols are interwoven in authentic contexts. The study is based on the theory of Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that considers billboard advertisements as multimodal texts in which verbal and visual elements work together to send persuasive messages. The aim of the research is not quantifying the advertising features, but to understand how these semiotic resources create meanings, represent cultural identities and shape audience perceptions in a multilingual and multicultural context of Lahore.

Data Collection

The empirical data comprised of 10 adverts displayed on billboards from purposive sampled key commercial and high traffic zones of Lahore such as Mall Road, Liberty Market, Canal Road, Johar Town, Valencia Town, Lake City, Ring Road, Motorway corridors, Bahria Town and DHA. The sites were chosen as they reflect a variety of commercial, residential and transportation environments where billboard advertising appeals to a wide range of language, culture and socioeconomic groups. The chosen billboards are of different product categories such as food and beverages, telecommunications, cosmetics, shopping malls, steel manufacturing, household products, and real estate. Field visits were conducted to photograph each billboard at high-resolution; observational field notes were taken to capture the location, context, environment and placement of each advertisement. This sampling strategy took into account that the ads selected had rich multimodal and multilingual characteristics, such as those required to conduct a semiotic analysis.

Analytical Framework

Relying on the Social Semiotic Theory of Visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), the data were analysed according to three interrelated metafunctions, namely representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning, which conceptualise visual communication. The study examined Urdu, English, and wherever appropriate, Punjabi language use in relation to the use of language choice, multilingualism, code-mixing, slogans, lexical choice and typography as means to attract different audiences by strategically using language in Urdu, English and Punjabi. For the visual analysis, the focus was on the representational features, such as the

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participants, the products, representing cultural symbols, the setting, colors, lighting, and the brand imagery, the interactive features, such as gaze, perspective, social distance, and visual modality, as well as the compositional features, such as information value, salience, framing, layout, and the spatial organization. Combining linguistic and visual analyses allowed for a detailed understanding of the interaction between verbal and visual semiotic resources used to build persuasive meanings and to manifest cultural values in the context of advertising in Lahore.

The billboard advertisements were segmented into six large advertising categories: food and beverages, cosmetics and personal care, telecommunications, shopping malls and retail, household and consumer products, and real estate. Within each category, common linguistic features, visual strategies, colour symbolism, cultural references and persuasive devices were explored. Special attention was given to the use of multilingual text choices, iconic images, typography, and visual composition as ways of creating brand identity, provoking emotional reactions and impacting consumer behavior. By comparing the billboards, a common trend emerged and multimodal strategies were identified which were used by the advertisers to effectively communicate with the culturally and linguistically diverse population of Lahore.

Data Analysis

The data were collected by the researcher through fieldwork and its analysis. This research focuses on Kress and Van Leeuwen's framework for selected billboards in Lahore. A key aspect of the analysis is the exploration of the language used on the billboards. This study paid special attention to the mixed languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, and English, which reflected the linguistic diversity of Lahore. Urdu is widely used as a national language and is spoken to connect the majority of the population. Punjabi is mostly found in local, culturally rooted areas of the old city. English is mostly used to convey modernity and a global outlook. The combination of these languages not only enhances the accessibility of advertisements but also reflects the cultural hybridity of Lahore's urban environment.

This study examines the visual and semiotic features of the billboards. This includes the use of images, symbols, and cultural references that resonate with the city's residents.



Fig.1 Billboard advertisement for a tea company, Tazgi

In Fig.1, "Have a cup of تازگی . Phrase 1 is code-mixing of two languages, English and Urdu. It is a combination of international and national languages. Word CUP" is printed in bold, which signifies its symbolic relevance to tea as a cup of tea. Phrase 2 is entirely in Urdu, a national or regional language, to make it understandable to local people in Lahore. Urduization is also observed in this phrase 2 (وایٹلپیو-زندگیجو), where the word "وایٹل" is written in Urdu, but it is of English origin. In these 2 phrases, it is noted that there is a connection between the two sentences. The first phrase is suggestive: " have a cup of tea," and 2nd phrase is its importance (وایٹلپیو-زندگیجو) for freshness or to make them active. Here word "زندگی" indicates life meaning as a freshness, to encode the use.

Semiotic Visual analysis

The background of image 1 is green, which conveys freshness, and the red bottom line adds an iconic touch that makes it persuasive. This important note or tagline on this billboard prompts the audience to have a cup of tea, which is very important for keeping them fresh and active. In this billboard, there is a picture of a cup, an iconic symbol of tea's freshness, and tea leaves.

Food brand

This billboard was placed along the motorway, where many people used to travel long distances. This board visualised the freshness of a tired audience travelling there and persuaded them to buy the product (tea). Therefore, this message on the board aims to convey that the tea تازگی is enriched with top-quality ingredients, making it active and fresh. This advertisement skillfully employs a unique approach to persuade the audience on the Motorway to buy this product.



Fig.2 An advertisement for a well-known steel manufacturing company

Both English and Urdu languages are used on this board. "پاس" and "خاص" are two Urdu Rhyming words used in it as adjectives. Shekhoo Steel is the name of a steel company, written in English and in a large font to emphasize its importance as a steel brand.

Background blue colour, as colours play a significant role in advertising to evoke emotions. The color light blue is associated with wealth and positivity. An iconic picture of a man shows confidence in this steel product for construction companies. The building behind the man shows construction. Red and Black colours are used in the text; dual colour has been shown. Adjectives are in Red to show their significance. The brightness of colour conveys excitement and value. Images of Shekhoo Steel Products and the tagline both create a direct connection to the steel company.

Promotion and sales

Promotion and sales boards mostly capture immediate attention with bold, colorful images. Image 2 is a promotional or sales billboard displayed on the Ring Road to boost sales of Shekhoo steel products, primarily used in construction by construction companies. The main target of this type of billboard is to seek the attention of construction companies and builders by adding the tagline "ویں خاص ہے".



Fig.3 *Billboard is an advertisement for a popular food chain named "Hardees".*

This board in image 3 is clearly displayed in English. The name of the brand is also mentioned on top: "Hardees". "New Jalapeño Chicken Burger" has been introduced, where "Crispy chicken" symbolises its taste, and its flavour is also mentioned under it, "Buffalo sauce". Slogan is "Heat me up!" Means just eat it. The international language, English, is used to attract the attention of educated or upper-class people, who mostly patronize these costly eatery brands. The use of English in advertising signals globalization and modernization trends in the exchange of knowledge.

This image 3 Board simply symbolizes a renowned food brand. A dark black background enhances the clarity of text and images. The Horns of Buffalo are in the center to show higher mental ability by eating this burger enriched with buffalo sauce. Buffalo horns are a symbol of power and a higher level of mental acuity. An iconic picture of an open mouth shows the yumminess or tempting taste of a burger. Wires in front of these billboards indicate that the researcher took this picture live from a busy main road in a commercial zone.

Promotion of a food brand

This board is advertising a promotion for a food brand to raise its sales. This board was placed on Valencia Pine Avenue, the main road in Valencia, in front of Hardee's to trigger the hunger of children and youngsters, because 5 schools are in this area on the same road. These types of billboards are used to evoke a craving and a sense of enjoyment. These types of billboards also semiotically present pleasure.



Fig.4 Billboard shows an advertisement for Jazz Network, Pakistan's 4G network provider

The phrase "PAKISTAN'S No. 1 NETWORK" represents the Jazz network, which is providing the Jazz 4 G network, which is very much needed nowadays as it is essential. The company name "Jazz" is written at the top Left of the board. Slogan is on the bottom of the left side: "Dunya ko Bta do." Nowadays, code mixing is widely used on boards by advertising companies, so that uneducated people can also easily understand board language. Phrase "Dunya ko bta to" in Urdu code mixing the mantra is the way to tell your success, everyone.

The image portrays a happy, satisfied female icon, showing Jazz Network's commitment to providing us with 4G. The dress shirt worn by the model girl, a Turkish actress, reflects the West's influence on our billboards in Pakistan. An image of actresses captures the audience's attention. The bright red background represents the Jazz network, as red and white are the network's main colors across Pakistan. Red colour background and borders to elicit positive emotions to enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement.

Promotion and sales billboards

This Image 4 Billboard is a promotional board for the telecommunications company "Jazz" aimed at increasing its sales.



Fig.5 An advertisements of a cosmetic company's "Care".

These advertisements of cosmetics companies persuade the audience to buy

their products. English language on the billboard image 5 represents modern trends in advertisements. The fragrance of French romance". "Beautiful skin Rozana" on image 6 is code-mixing of both languages, Urdu and English, a complete blend of top trending ways of advertisement.

Iconic Pictures of actors on both boards in Fig 5 and Fig 6 are placed in light blue in image 5 and light peach in image 6. There is a strong association between these colours and females, as females tend to use cosmetics. Image 5 shows the beauty and fragrance of roses. The Eiffel Tower in image 5 symbolizes France's renowned, long-lasting fragrances. In image 5, a couple is shown using perfumes or fragrances to attract others or for intimacy. It shows a strong connection between two opposite genders.

Sales and Promotion of Cosmetics

Sales and promotional advertisements by cosmetic companies aim to attract attention and inspire desire. They often use soft colors and iconic pictures of a bright-faced model, which symbolize beauty and confidence. These billboards mostly depict modern, elegant lifestyles.



Fig.6 An *advertisements for billboards of shopping mall."Emporium"*

Semiotic Linguistics Analysis

In both billboards, English is used to describe timing and activities in Malls. Complete details are provided on both billboards, with timings to raise awareness among the people in the Urban Areas of Lahore.

In Fig.6, an original picture of Emporium Mall highlights its uniqueness and encourages customers to come for more recreation and shopping. The catchy, colorful boards at both malls attract audiences. In Image 8, the carnival in the center symbolizes a catchy, colorful billboard for the mall.

Promotional and Sales of Real Estate

Shopping mall marketing billboards feature different offers and new product or brand launches to increase sales.



Fig.7 billboard advertisements of the real estate business.

Real Estate business in Pakistan follows global marketing trends for the sale of land and property, with complete location details and the number of Agents on board. Mostly, real estate companies' names are also written in the footers of boards (Simone, 2021).

These large marketing boards are placed at key locations along busy roads in Lahore to attract investors' attention. In Images 9 and 10, luxury lifestyles are shown to capture the attention of the upper-class audience. Large, splendid buildings are shown on both boards. Mostly, real estate-related billboards will be presented in Green and Blue colours, as Blue represents royalty and Green depicts prosperity, to motivate investors to invest for huge profits. The red color in Image 10 indicates that the information is interesting or new, making it most prominent on the billboard.

Promotional billboards for Real Estate

The two boards above are real estate promotional billboards. On these boards, we can also see various sales and promotions from different societies. Phrases like "your Dream Home" convey feelings of achievement and security.

Discussion

The present study used the lens of Social Semiotic Theory of Visual Grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to analyze the interaction of linguistic and visual resources in the construction of persuasive meanings in multilingual billboard advertisements in Lahore. The results show that the billboard media in Lahore is a multi-modal media that combine verbal language, image, color, typography, composition and spatial elements and culture symbols into a whole to convey commercial messages. These semiotic resources are not used in isolation, but rather together to create perceptions of the consumer, reinforce the identity of the brand and create emotional connections with different target groups. The results corroborate Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) claim that visual communication has a system of grammar which enables simultaneously representing, interacting and composing meanings.

The model of strategic use of multilingualism in the advertising of billboards is

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one of the most important discoveries. The analysis showed that the use of English and Urdu is common among the advertisers, and Urdu can be seen as being less frequent than English and being used mainly in culturally localized contexts. The language of choice for advertising products sold by international brands of food and beverages, cosmetics, shopping malls, luxury homes and apartments was English, representing modernity, prestige, internationality, and aspirational lifestyles. On the other hand, Urdu was employed in order to create awareness, reach the audience and connect with them emotionally such as in ads directed at the wider audience. English slogans and Urdu promotional sentences are examples of code-mixing, which itself highlights the role of language as a communicative medium, but also as a persuasive semiotic means. This corroborates earlier studies that conclude that multilingual advertising makes it possible for a brand to manage both local branding and global aspirations at a time (Piller, 2003; Martin, 2008; Loan, 2022).

The visual analysis also shows that colours, images and spatial composition are key elements in the creation of persuasive meaning. Colour was thoroughly considered for its meaning within the various billboard placements and the resulting reactions it would elicit from the viewer, most of which were culturally familiar. In advertising and promotion for food and real estate, green was usually used to indicate freshness, prosperity and vitality of the environment, while red was a sign of excitement, urgency and brand identity, especially in advertising for telecommunication companies. Similarly, black color in food advertisements made the product more eye-catching and appealing, and blue color in construction and real estate advertisements conveyed reliability, trustworthiness and professionalism. The observations are congruent with social semiotic interpretations that the meanings of colour are not in the eye of the beholder but are culturally constructed and negotiated through common social conventions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2007).

The study also brings to light the persuasiveness effect of representational meaning in billboard advertising. Celebrities, ideals of lifestyle, buildings, and cultural icons (or even an idealized consumer) were almost always recruited to help promote products. Appetizing images were used to stress the freshness, pleasure, and indulgence of food, while images of beauty, elegance, and romance to international symbols like the Eiffel Tower and celebrity models were used in cosmetic ads. Similarly, real estate ads featured fancy homes, front lawns, and terms like Dream Home to create outlooks of success, accomplishment, and social advancement. These results do highlight that

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billboard advertisements are not only selling products but creating symbolized lifestyles, and social identities that align to consumers' aspirations. These types of representation help to uphold Barthes' (1977) ideas about how advertising conveys ideological meanings beyond the physical properties of things by incorporating culturally based signs and myths.

The same could be seen in the advertisements analysed for interactive meaning. Frontal perspectives, as well as viewer engagement (direct or implied) and high resolution was used on most billboards, as well as close visual proximity to create interpersonal connections with viewers. The presence of celebrities and smiling models added to the sense of credibility, trust and emotional connection, the strategic placement of ads in high visibility spaces provided more audience engagement opportunities. These visual strategies are linked to the ideas of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) of interactive meaning: the gaze, perspective, social distance and modality define the relationship between represented participants and viewers. In a crowded advertising environment like Lahore, such tactics may play a crucial role in securing attention from viewers who are inundated with a multitude of advertising messages.

The persuasiveness of the advertisements was further enhanced by the compositional meaning. The logos of brands, product names and promotional slogans were always placed in the most prominent place and used a large typography, contrasting colours and strategic layout. Most billboards contained high information elements, usually centered or at the top of the board in order to provide maximum exposure to passing motorists and pedestrians. Considering the relative short time available for outdoor viewers to take in information, the mix of text and visual components facilitated their ability to absorb the critical information. These results support Kress and van Leeuwen's claim (2006) that information value, salience and framing create structures that structure visual communication and direct the interpretation of the viewer.

The results also show that the billboard advertisements reflect the Lahore's sociocultural hybridity. Indigenous language resources along with global visual aesthetics highlight the negotiation that goes on between advertisers and local cultural values, while the use of international brandings. Urdu, English, the presence of celebrities, architectural symbols and culturally familiar images indicate that billboard advertising is not just a commercial text but is also a reflection of the changing identity of the urban population of Pakistan. This finding is consistent with previous studies that found the space of the multilingual advertisement is one in which 'globalisation, localisation and

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cultural identity meet' in 'modern consumer culture' (Piller 2003; Martin 2008). Overall, the results have illustrated that billboards in Lahore are not mere promotion displays but rather are complex multimodal communication artefacts. The power of persuasion comes from the interplay between language, visual rules and conventions, culture and space. This study marks the extension of the use of multimodal discourse analysis in a relatively underresearched South Asian context of authentic billboard advertisements by employing the Social Semiotic Theory of Kress and van Leeuwen. It continues the current trend of research into advertising discourse, linguistic landscape and social semiotics in proving the strategic deployment of multilingual and multimodal resources in the construction of meaning, shaping consumer behaviour and negotiating cultural identities in the contemporary urban setting.

Conclusion

The current study explored multilingual billboard advertisements in Lahore, Pakistan in the context of the Social Semiotic Theory of Visual Grammar (SSTVG) by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to understand how linguistic and visual resources work together to produce persuasive meanings. The results showed that billboard advertisements are truly multimodal texts in which the use of language, images, colour, typography, layout, and cultural symbols is working together to deliver the commercial message. Billboards are not only promotional, but also a socio-cultural artefact, which mirror the linguistic diversity, cultural values and aspirations of Lahore's multicultural urban context.

The analysis revealed that advertisers strategically use multilingualism, especially the blending of Urdu and English, to engage audiences the maximum by using both languages which both elicits local cultural identities and global aspirations. Urdu brings familiarity and accessibility to the local consumers whereas English brings modernity, prestige and international appeal. Furthermore, the visual resources, such as colour symbolism, celebrity endorsement, iconic images, typography and spatial composition, play a prominent role in supporting persuasive messages and forming consumers' product and brand perception. The multimodal strategies show that a billboard advertisement is an effective advertisement that relies on the coordinated interaction of verbal and visual semiotic resources, as opposed to verbal content.

The study also validates the usefulness of the Visual Grammar for analysing billboard advertisements in multilingual and multicultural contexts developed by Kress and van Leeuwen. The framework enabled us to systematically

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analyze the meaning of representation, interacting, and composition; it showed how advertisers build narratives to persuade by strategically integrating linguistic and visual communication elements. This research extends the application of social semiotic theory to the advertising discourse in Pakistan and is, thus, a contribution to the emerging literature on multimodal discourse analysis, advertising discourse, linguistic landscape studies and intercultural communication.

The study, however, faces some constraints such as the small sample size (ten billboard advertisements) from selected locations within Lahore. This means that the results cannot be extrapolated to all outdoor advertising mediums in Pakistan. Larger data sets, comparative studies between cities, and mixed methods studies which included audience perception surveys and interviews could be used to further validate the findings in the future. Moreover, new types of digital and interactive billboard advertising have potential for future multimodal studies.

The implications of this study are for advertisers, communication practitioners, researchers, and policy makers within multilingual societies.

- For advertisers, the study suggests to use culturally sensitive multilingual advertising strategies by using Urdu, English, and if possible, regional language to get the message across to a diverse audience. The use of culturally relevant visual elements, such as the use of colour symbolism, imagery, typography, and spatial composition, should complement linguistic choices to reinforce a brand's identity, engage an audience, and aid in message retention.
- The multimodal design principles can be applied to advertising campaigns to make sure that verbal and visual elements work together. Considering the choice of cultural symbols, celebrity endorsement, and salience and information hierarchy is necessary to ensure that the advertisement is persuasive without violating local cultural values and social norms.
- The results highlight the need for policy and regulatory frameworks to create guidelines for culturally inclusive, linguistically accessible, and ethically sound communication by advertising. The regulations should promote advertising that is respectful to linguistic diversity, free from misleading visual depictions and consider the cultural values of the multilingual society of Pakistan, whilst simultaneously enabling creative innovation in the advertising industry.

In general, the study shows that multilingual billboard advertising is a sophisticated multimodal communicative text in which language and visual

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design work together to create consumer interpretation and sales of products. This knowledge of these semiotic resources can help advertisers create successful campaigns and can serve as a complement to the larger language, cultural and visual communication studies in modern urban contexts.

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