

ECO-IDEOLOGIES IN PAKISTANI FOOD ADVERTISING: AN ECOLINGUISTIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The study examines eco-ideologies in Pakistani food advertisements through an ecolinguistic analysis of discourse. It examines how environmental concepts are represented and how human beings are positioned in relation to nature. A qualitative research design was chosen, and a purposive sample of 40 food advertisements was used across television, online platforms, and print media. The data were analyzed with attention to linguistic features such as vocabulary, slogans, and metaphors, as well as visual effects such as green landscapes, farms, and family backgrounds. The results show that ecological language, including words such as “natural,” “pure,” and “farm fresh,” is commonly used in Pakistani food advertising to foster favorable attitudes toward health, sustainability, and cultural values. These environmental assertions are, however, mostly symbolic and do not clearly indicate real sustainable practices. Other issues highlighted in the study include greenwashing and profit-oriented approaches that prioritize marketing objectives over environmental accountability. The IDEFO model also highlights the contrast between existing advertising practice and a suggested eco-linguistic ethical approach. On the whole, the study highlights the need for clear, culturally sensitive, and sustainable food advertising in Pakistan.

Keywords:

Ecolinguistics, Eco-ideology, Food Advertising, Greenwashing, Pakistani Media

Introduction

Environmental issues have become the most significant worldwide, including global warming, pollution, food waste, and the depletion of natural resources (Tang, 2020). These problems have now been integrated, which has become part of how people think, act, and consume products

in their daily life. The language is also influencing the population's attitude towards nature and sustainability as environmental protection grows (Ashraf, Arslan, & Murtaza, 2025). Advertising is one of the most powerful types of language of communication. Advertising does not entail just selling goods but also shaping values, convictions, and ideology. The environmental theme has become widespread in advertising, especially with terms such as “natural,” “organic,” “eco-friendly,” and “healthy for the planet” (Choudhury, Islam, & Sujauddin, 2024).

According to Motreniu (2024), the ecological ideas and principles explored in advertising constitute environmental discourse, which refers to the ways in which promotional language and images convey environmental ideas. The use of green language has become a trend among companies that seek to demonstrate that their products are safe and environmentally friendly (Kang & Kim, 2022). This kind of discourse can generate environmental consciousness, although it can also be misleading. Pham & Barretta (2024) explained that some advertisements present an environmentally friendly image but do not actually make efforts to protect the environment. This has been commonly known as “greenwashing”. As a result, there is a need

to learn how environmental meanings are crafted and expressed in advertising language (Bozhko, 2025).

Such language can be analyzed using the useful framework of ecolinguistics. It concerns the connection between language, society, and the natural world (Penz & Fill, 2022). Ecolinguistic analysis helps researchers recognize that certain ways of speaking about nature can contribute to environmental protection or destruction. In an ecological perspective of language, advertising speech can influence how individuals view nature, consumption, and responsibility (Motreniuc, 2024). Thus, the importance of environmental language study in advertising is important for understanding the hidden ideologies that influence public thinking and behavior. Food advertising plays a special role in this regard because food is directly related to nature, agriculture, and the environment (Pandey & Pandey, 2023). There is an environmental impact on the production, processing, packaging, and consumption of food. Consequently, food companies often use environmental claims to attract consumers who are concerned about health and sustainability (Cook et al., 2023). Concepts such as freshness, purity, natural ingredients, and traditional farming practices are often emphasized in advertisements. These messages provide a good image of food products and persuade consumers to connect them with nature and well-being (Hussain et al., 2022).

Food advertisement in Pakistan contributes significantly to the consumer culture (Latif & Arslan, 2024). Advertisements for packaged foods, dairy products, cooking oils, beverages, and snacks are everywhere on television, social media, billboards, and online platforms. Such advertisements reach a large audience and have a powerful impact on food selection (Sacks & Looi, 2020). Over the past few years, Pakistani food brands have been getting increasingly environmentally and health-conscious in their appeal to consumers. Words like “pure,” “farm fresh,” “natural,” and “chemical-free” are commonly used in advertisements (Attri & Bairagi, 2023). This kind of language indicates an increase in environmental and health awareness among Pakistani consumers.

Packaged foods, dairy products, cooking oils, beverages, and snacks are all advertised on TV, social media, billboards, and the internet (Matos et al., 2023). These advertisements have a very high reach, and their influence on food choices is very strong. Over the last several years, Pakistani food brands have increasingly emphasized environmental and health-related aspects to consumers (Qazi et al., 2024). Advertisements often use words such as “pure,” “farm fresh,” “natural,” and “chemical-free.” Such a language shows that Pakistani consumers have become more environmentally and health-conscious (Fuzail, 2025).

The lack of ecolinguistic research in Pakistani advertising means that little research has been conducted on the ideological messages concealed in food advertisements (Yousaf, Ahmad, & Syed, 2024). Without this analysis, it will be difficult to tell whether these advertisements address responsibility or simply use it to sell their products. The eco-ideological analysis of food advertising may help in understanding how language is used to shape consumers' perceptions of nature and sustainability (Malik, 2025). It can also help determine whether the advertisements encourage responsible consumption or unsustainable practices.

Research objectives:

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the environmental issues and linguistic devices employed in Pakistani food advertisements.
2. To examine how these advertisements construct meanings related to nature, health, and sustainability.
3. To explore whether the advertised messages support ecological awareness or promote misleading green images.

Research questions:

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are environmental ideas represented in Pakistani food advertising language?
2. What eco-ideologies are constructed through linguistic choices in these advertisements?
3. To what extent do Pakistani food advertisements promote genuine environmental responsibility or greenwashing?

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to address this research gap by examining eco-ideologies in Pakistani food advertisements through an ecolinguistic discourse analysis. The purpose of the study is to explore how environmental concepts are represented in food advertisements and what kind of relations between human beings and nature are promoted. To reveal the hidden ideologies in advertising discourse, the study will examine linguistic elements such as word choice, metaphors, and framing. Based on ecolinguistic theory, the research also aims to assess whether these discursive practices contribute positively to ecological well-being or reinforce unsustainable consumer behaviors (Zhang & Xiao, 2024).

Literature Review

Advertising is an essential part of modern society because it not only sells products but also shapes people's ideas, lifestyles, and values (Holm, 2023). Scholars have studied how advertisements use language and images to attract customers and shape their opinions. Scholars have examined how advertisements discuss nature and the environment in recent years (Campos et al., 2021). The research area is significant because environmental issues and climate change have increased awareness of sustainability and responsible consumption. The literature review examines past studies on ecolinguistics, advertising discourse, and eco-ideologies in media, particularly in food advertising.

Ecolinguistics is an educational discipline that studies the connection between language and the environment (Alsalihi, 2025). It concerns how language influences people's thinking about nature and ecological problems. Researchers believe that language plays a role in how humans perceive and treat the natural world (Rorty, 2020). For example, when nature is introduced through language as a human resource, people may be justified in using it. However, when language presents nature as valuable and worthy of preservation, it can influence individuals to act responsibly toward the environment (Schroeder, 2021).

A crucial concept of ecolinguistics is that language creates stories or patterns that people follow in their everyday thinking (Ashraf et al., 2025). Such stories are found in media, education, politics, and advertisements. In its advertising, the company often builds its products' reputation by associating them with nature, health, or purity. With some researchers, however, these environmental messages are sometimes misleading because companies use natural imagery to boost sales rather than to ensure they help protect the environment (Ponton, 2024). Discourse analysis is another important area related to this study. Discourse analysis is the study that explores the use of language in real-life communication, even in advertisements. Specialized language techniques are used in advertisements to influence individuals to purchase products (Yusuf & Abas, 2024). The methods encompass emotive language, appealing slogans, repetition, and the projection of positive descriptions. Images, colors, and symbols are also used in advertisements to influence consumers. Advertisers have discovered a tendency to associate goods with joy, family life, success, and good health through advertising language (Romeh et al., 2024).

Freshness, natural ingredients, and purity in food advertising are usually emphasized through language and images. “Fresh,” “pure,” “natural,” and “organic” are the common words used to make the products appealing. Consumers perceive the product as healthy and eco-friendly when such words are used (Su et al., 2022). Critics, however, point out that in some cases these words are used only as marketing tools. It is commonly referred to as greenwashing, where the environmental claims are overstated or even untrue.

Media and advertising scholars have also discussed the nature of the representation of nature in promotional messages. Nature is commonly depicted as green fields, farms, mountains, or fresh fruits and vegetables. Such pictures convey a calm, healthy perception and appeal to consumers (Spence & Pillay, 2025). However, the industrial processes involved in food production are occasionally obscured in these representations. Advertisements do not tend to display large factories, packaging waste, and environmental pollution. Rather, the advertisements provide food production as natural and simple, which is not always true (Niceforo, 2023).

In South Asian countries such as Pakistan, research indicates that advertising usually combines the ancient culture with contemporary marketing techniques (Shah, Olya, & Monkhouse, 2023). Pakistani food advertisements often depict family events, hospitality, and culture. Food is presented as something that brings people together. Meanwhile, advertisements promote the packaged and processed food products as convenient and high-quality. Customers are also attracted to environmental concepts such as farm freshness and purity (Kukreja & Patil, 2025). Although there is growing research on advertising and ecolinguistics, little attention has been paid to Pakistani food advertisements from an ecolinguistic perspective. The majority of studies focus on branding mechanisms, consumer behavior, or cultural values in advertising, rather than on environmental connotations (De Mooij, 2021). Thus, it is necessary to analyze how Pakistani commercials draw on environmental language and what conceptions of nature and consumption they promote.

However, the environmental meanings in Pakistani food advertisements have not been explored in detail. Most advertising research in Pakistan focuses on marketing strategies, consumer behaviour, or cultural representation (Raza, Abu Bakar, & Mohamad, 2020). Little attention has been given to the construction of environmental concepts and ideologies through advertising language. Specifically, ecolinguistic studies in the Pakistani media context are rare (Alvi, Ahmad, & Fatima, 2025). This leaves a major research gap, especially as environmental challenges in the country become more acute.

Consumer interest in Eco-friendly products is another significant issue in previous studies. A lot of research indicates that consumers have shifted towards products that are health-conscious and seem to be environmentally friendly (Tan, Lau, Sarwar, & Khan, 2022). Due to this trend, companies incorporate some environmental messages in their advertisements. However, researchers warn that not every green assertion is good. In other cases, companies adopt environmental language to enhance their image and increase revenue. Ecolinguistic analysis helps the researcher assess whether the advertisements genuinely convey sustainable values or merely stimulate the consumption of more items (Ahmed, Ain, & Ghilzai, 2021).

Qualitative approaches are frequently applied by researchers of advertising discourse, who examine words, slogans, and images in advertisements (Akram & Saleem, 2022). Other studies combine language analysis with visual analysis because images play a significant role in advertising communication. Food advertisements particularly rely on the images of farms, fresh harvests, and smiling families during meals. Consequently, the integration of ecolinguistic concepts and discourse analysis is an effective way to examine how adverts make sense of the environment (Javed, Fatima, & Imran, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

The research design applied in this study is qualitative, as it focuses on meanings and ideologies rather than numerical data. The qualitative method is appropriate for understanding the language and imagery used in advertisements, and it enables interpretation of how environmental ideas are formed. The research is based on ecolinguistic discourse analysis, which examines the connections among language, culture, and the environment.

Research Approach

The study is based on the ecolinguistic discourse analysis. This method helps determine how advertisements promote certain eco-ideologies through words, phrases, and visual representations. It fits in this study because it reveals hidden messages on nature, consumption, and environmental responsibility in food advertisements.

Data Selection

The data consists of **Pakistani food advertisements** collected from television commercials, social media platforms, and print media. They were selected through purposive sampling, based on their content and the environmental or nature-related themes they featured (freshness, purity, farms, or natural ingredients). This ensured that the selected data directly addressed the research objectives.

Data Analysis Procedure

The selected advertisements were carefully transcribed and organized for analysis. It was analyzed in terms of both linguistic features (vocabulary, slogans, metaphors, and descriptive phrases) (green landscapes, farms, crops, and rural settings) and visual elements (such as green landscapes, farms, crops, and rural settings). Repeated themes and patterns related to the eco-ideologies were identified and explained. The results were then discussed in line with ecolinguistic theory to understand the connection between humans and nature promoted in the advertisements.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

All advertisements in this study are publicly accessible and were examined only for academic purposes. The research is also limited to a small sample of advertisements, which may not be representative of all Pakistani food advertisements. However, the detailed qualitative study provides useful insights into eco-ideological representations in advertising discourse.

Result Analysis and Findings

1. Descriptive Statistics

The advertisement sample of 40 products indicates an equal promotional coverage in three major media outlets. Television had the highest percentage of 37.5 percent, followed by digital platforms (32.5 percent) and print media (30 percent), coming next. Composite analysis of media distribution indicates a mean of 13.33 ads, a median of 13, and a mode of 15 (television) with low standard deviation (1.25) meaning the channels represent it in a relatively similar way shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for both media distribution and product category distribution

	Media Distribution	Product Category Distribution
Measure	Value	Value
Mean	13.33	10
Median	13	8.5

Mode	15	16
Standard Deviation	1.25	3.77

There is more variation in product category distribution. Spices and seasonings 40, Ready-to-cook mixes 25, and both sauces/ condiments and other products 17.5 were the only categories that contained 400, 250, and 175, respectively. The mean of the product distribution is 10 ads per category, and the median is 8.5, with two modes (7 and 16) and a standard deviation of 3.77, indicating significant variance in how attention is distributed across product types in Figure 1. Altogether, the advertising campaigns seem evenly distributed across the media but are more focused on specific product segments.

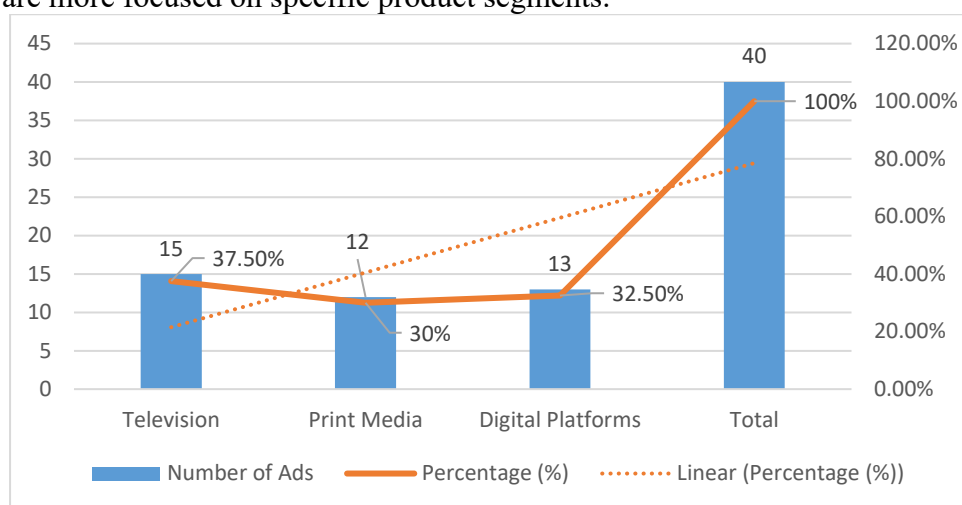


Figure 1: Variation in advertisements on various social media

1. Themes and Codes for Overall Pakistani Food Advertising

The analysis shows that the language and images employed in Pakistani food advertisements consistently create an ecological meaning that is shaped by cultural, social, and consumer values. The majority of brands associate their products with nature and wholeness through words such as natural goodness, farm fresh, or even with green fields and healthy elements in pictures. This encourages an ecological discussion, implying that the products are clean and fertile, although there are no clear demonstrations of their concrete sustainability practices.

Table 2 represents ecological meaning in Pakistani food advertising (English Biscuit Manufacturers, 2024; Aurora Magazine, 2023; Sooper creates national history, 2014; Lotte Kolson, 2023; Unilever Pakistan, 2022; Breckford, 2010; The Express Tribune, 2014)

Table 2: Represents ecological meaning in Pakistani food advertising

Brand Name	Choice of Words / Phrase (Ad)	Ecological Representation	Theme	Code	Representation in Ad
Peek Freans Sooper	“Sab se aagay, sab se ooper!” (Superior taste)	Suggests excellence with quality — invoking natural goodness and heritage through familiarity.	Quality & Purity	Excellence rhetoric	Differentiates the product as high-quality everyday food that has the connotation of healthiness and tradition.

Royal Ringo Biscuits	(Old PTV ads about crunchy delight)	Relates sensory pleasure with wholesome enjoyment; connects rasa (taste) with emotional ecological experience.	Taste & Enjoyment	Sensory language	Focalises joy and gratification that involves food experiences based on daily living.
Innovative Biscuits	“What you consume has the power to change your life!”	Frames consumption as an ecological choice with personal health impacts.	Health & Nutrition	Health empowerment language	Implicates ecological and health results in relation to conscious food choices.
Lotte Kolson (e.g., Bravo, Slanty)	“Crunchy moments, tasty memories” (hypothetical ad text)	Uses natural imagery of daily life, simplicity, and emotional connection with snack culture.	Family & Social Bonds	Social–ecological connection	Connects food with social situations and daily lives, which strengthens common experiences.
Unilever Pakistan Foods (Rafhan)	“Wholesome desserts, wholesome life” (hypothetical ad example)	Language evokes natural sources (corn, maize) and family enjoyment of traditional desserts.	Culture & Environment	Natural source rhetoric	Implicates an environmental/nature-related story with nutritious food.
Omoré	“WOW Bhara Bite / Khushi Ki Bite”	Associates sensory delight with everyday joy in social settings, making food naturally enjoyable.	Taste & Enjoyment	Joyful ecological framing	Locates food in the interplay and the context of leisure and pleasure.
(Generic Snack/Tea Biscuits)	“From farm freshness to your table” (common ad pattern)	Creates a discourse of ecological origin and purity even without strong evidence.	Nature & Environment	Origin/Source language	Symbolizes storytelling of food ecosystems (farm) and human consumption.

There are also powerful cultural themes: most advertisements place food in the context of heritage and family values and employ words that evoke tradition and social connections. These codes not only reinforce brand identity but also situate food consumption within a shared ecological and cultural context, as shown in Table 2. Such health-related features as a healthy choice are associated with ecological values and sustainability assertions (e.g., eco-friendly packaging), creating the image of an environmentally conscious attitude, albeit symbolic. In general, the results indicate that the ecological discourse of Pakistani food advertising is

situated within broader emotional and cultural contexts that shape consumers' perception of food as natural and socially significant.

1. IDEFO Model

The IDEFO model is used to compare the existing issues in Pakistani food advertising and a suggested ecolinguistics solution. The diagram in the Current Advertising Problem (A1) section illustrates issues such as cultural stereotyping, greenwashing allegations, and a profit orientation over ethics. These aspects lead to deceptive food advertisements that capitalize on cultural prejudices and vague environmental claims to manipulate consumers, as shown in Figure 2. The arrows indicate the direction of the marketing strategies to consumer misperceptions, such as false eco-claims and cultural prejudice.

The Suggested Ecolinguistics Approach (A2) can offer a solution to these issues by emphasizing authentic and responsible food advertising. It promotes authentic cultural portrayal, transparent, environmentally friendly policies, and environmentally friendly media outlets. The practice upholds ethical principles and rules, and fosters informed consumer attitudes grounded in trust, environmental consciousness, and cultural identity. According to this model, the present-day deceptive marketing approach would be replaced by transparent, eco-friendly marketing practices that would lead to a more responsible and sustainable advertising system.

The results section clearly contrasts the existing and recommended advertising practices in the Pakistani food industry. It mentions major problems such as greenwashing, cultural stereotyping, and profit-seeking strategies, which lead to consumer misinformation and the further spread of ecological inaccuracies. The suggested ecolinguistics strategy focuses on genuineness and environmentally-friendly marketing, and promoting clear-cut eco-friendly assertions and authentic cultural expression. This transition is directed towards perceptions informed by trust and sustainability. The model demonstrates the need for stricter rules and moral principles that shift towards responsible, clean advertising, taking into account cultural identity and environmental integrity.

Discussion and Recommendations

Research findings on this topic indicate that Pakistani food advertising extensively uses ecological language and imagery to create positive consumer perceptions. As the descriptive analysis indicates, advertisements are almost equally distributed across television, digital platforms, and print media, which implies that messages about the environment are promoted by the media through several sources (Koslow & Stewart, 2022).

However, an uneven distribution of product divisions implies that certain food segments receive relatively higher promotional coverage, especially spices, seasonings, and ready-to-cook products. This is an indication of market-driven interest, in which goods with the greatest consumer demand are more actively promoted through ecological narratives (Belz, Peattie, & Onel, 2025).

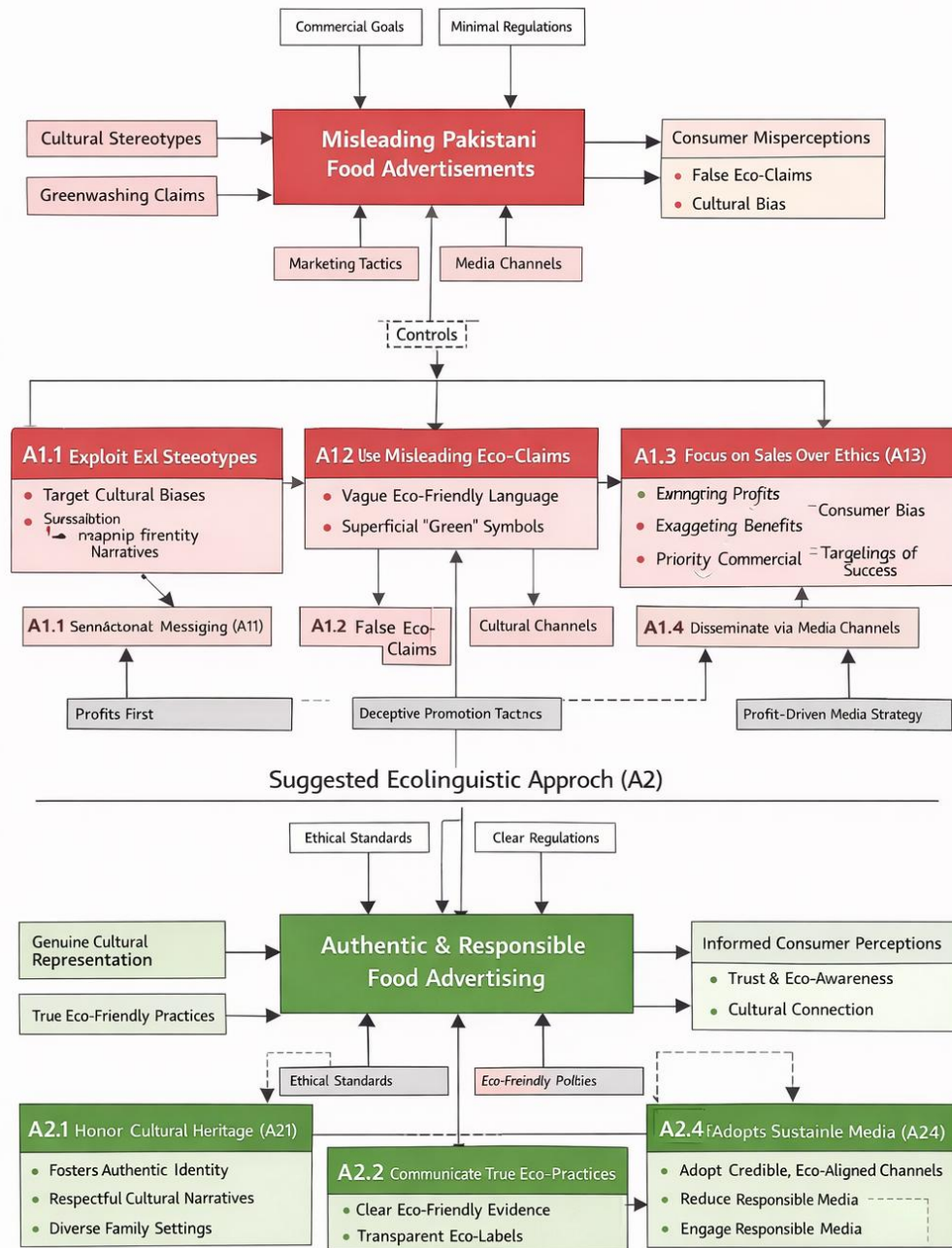


Figure 2: IDEF0 model compares the current problems in Pakistani food advertising with a proposed ecolinguistics solution

The thematic analysis indicates that Pakistani food advertisements are often associated with nature, purity, and freshness. *Natural goodness*, farm-fresh, and *wholesome* are some of the words that convey the impression of ecological authenticity (Sweetland, 2023). This perception is further reinforced by visual images like green fields and farms, and healthy families. In terms of ecolinguistics, these visual and linguistic decisions create a narrative in which food is presented as naturally produced and harmless to the environment. However, these statements are usually symbolic, as the analysis reveals that the advertisements rarely contain explicit evidence of sustainable practices (Rathee & Milfeld, 2024).

Cultural values are considered a key factor in strengthening ecological messages. Ecological meanings tend to be more emotionally appealing because food is often associated with family bonding, traditions, and social harmony. Embedded eco-ideologies in cultural narratives are the strategies that make consumption socially and environmentally responsible in

advertisements (Malik, 2025). This supports consumerist thought processes and restricts critical thinking about actual environmental issues such as waste, packaging, and resource consumption.

The IDEF0 model also emphasizes the gap between current advertising practices and the ideal ecolinguistic approach. It is observed that the current practice is more focused on profit than on ethics, and that greenwashing and cultural stereotyping are the result. Such strategies tend to deceive consumers with partial or exaggerated environmental claims. Overall, the results indicate that ecological discourse is used in Pakistani food advertising, but it is mostly adopted to achieve marketing objectives rather than to encourage actual environmental sustainability (Yousaf, Ahmad, & Syed, 2024).

According to the results, food advertisers are suggested to use more transparent and responsible ecological communication. Sustainable sourcing, production, and packaging practices must be explained clearly to ensure environmental claims are not misleading to consumers.

Regulatory authorities should develop **clear guidelines** to monitor environmental and eco-friendly claims in advertising. This will help minimize greenwashing and promote ethical marketing in the food industry.

The advertisers and brand managers of the future should prioritize authentic cultural representation over stereotypes, ensuring that cultural and ecological values are represented respectfully and accurately. This will enhance consumer confidence and brand credibility.

For future research, a larger dataset and consumer perception research are suggested to examine how the audiences perceive eco-ideological messages. Also, comparative research on local and multinational brands may provide more in-depth information. Overall, an ecolinguistic approach can be used to promote more ethical, culturally aware, and environmentally friendly food advertising in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This study has explored eco-ideologies in food advertising in Pakistan by applying ecolinguistic discourse analysis. The results indicate that food advertisements extensively use environmental language and imagery to create positive associations with nature, purity, and freshness. Such representations create the impression of ecological responsibility; they often remain symbolic and lack clear evidence of genuine sustainable practices. The analysis also indicates that ecological messages are strongly linked to cultural values such as family, tradition, and social bonding, and consequently become more convincing and emotionally engaging to customers. However, this mixture often caters to consumerist ideologies rather than fostering genuine environmental consciousness. The IDEF0 model draws a line between existing advertising models that focus on profit and, in some cases, greenwashing, and an alternative ecolinguistic model focused on transparency and ethical responsibility. Overall, this research indicates that more honest, environmentally friendly food advertising that respects both cultural identity and ecological integrity is necessary in Pakistan.

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