

VISUAL SEMIOTIC RESOURCES IN PAKISTANI RESTAURANT INSTAGRAM ADVERTISEMENTS: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The increasing reliance on Instagram as a digital marketing platform has transformed the way restaurant brands communicate with consumers through visual and linguistic resources. Unlike traditional advertising, Instagram advertisements integrate images, colors, typography, layout, captions, hashtags, emojis, and branding elements into a unified multimodal message intended to persuade viewers and strengthen brand identity. Despite the widespread adoption of Instagram marketing among Pakistani restaurant chains, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to examining how visual semiotic resources contribute to persuasive communication within this context. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the visual semiotic features employed in Instagram advertisements of leading international restaurant brands operating in Pakistan. Drawing upon Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotic Theory of Visual Grammar and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study employs a qualitative multimodal discourse analysis to examine six purposively selected Instagram advertisements published by McDonald's Pakistan, KFC Pakistan, Domino's Pakistan, Ranchers Café, Papa John's Pakistan, and Koffee Net. The analysis demonstrates that advertisers strategically combine representational, interactive, and compositional meanings to construct persuasive marketing messages. Color symbolism, salience, framing, gaze, typography, product placement, and image-text interaction work collectively to capture consumer attention and promote brand engagement. The findings further reveal that visual communication frequently assumes a dominant persuasive role, while linguistic elements reinforce rather than replace visual meanings. The study contributes to multimodal discourse studies, digital advertising research, and social media marketing by demonstrating how semiotic resources are systematically organized to influence audience perception in Pakistan's competitive restaurant industry.

Keywords: Multimodal discourse analysis; visual semiotics; Instagram advertising; restaurant marketing; Kress and van Leeuwen; social semiotics; Pakistan.

Introduction

Digital communication has fundamentally transformed contemporary advertising practices. The rapid expansion of social networking platforms has shifted marketing strategies from conventional print and broadcast media toward highly interactive digital environments where consumers actively engage with brands through visual content. Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most influential social media applications because of its emphasis on photographs, videos, reels, stories, and visually attractive promotional campaigns. Restaurants, fashion brands, travel companies, and multinational corporations increasingly rely on Instagram to establish their identities, communicate promotional messages, and cultivate long-term relationships with consumers. Rather than presenting products through textual descriptions alone, Instagram enables organizations to construct persuasive messages by combining visual, linguistic, spatial, and symbolic resources into coherent multimodal texts. The uploaded thesis likewise positions Instagram as a major platform through which restaurant brands operating in Pakistan promote products using integrated visual and verbal elements analyzed through multimodal discourse analysis.

The development of social media has consequently altered the nature of advertising discourse. Traditional advertising generally depended on lengthy verbal explanations supported by static images, whereas Instagram advertisements rely primarily upon visual communication. Images occupy the central communicative position, while captions, slogans, hashtags, emojis, and logos provide complementary meanings. Consumers often interpret these advertisements

within a few seconds while scrolling through their social media feeds, making visual persuasion considerably more important than extended textual explanation. Consequently, advertisers carefully organize every semiotic resource—including composition, color, typography, framing, gaze, spatial arrangement, lighting, and image quality—to maximize persuasive impact. This transformation reflects broader developments in multimodal communication, where meaning emerges through the interaction of multiple semiotic modes rather than language alone.

In Pakistan, Instagram marketing has experienced remarkable growth during the last decade. Increasing smartphone penetration, affordable internet services, and changing consumer lifestyles have encouraged businesses to invest heavily in social media advertising. Restaurant brands, in particular, have recognized Instagram as an effective platform for reaching younger consumers who regularly interact with digital content before making purchasing decisions. International franchises such as McDonald's Pakistan, KFC Pakistan, Domino's Pakistan, and Papa John's Pakistan, alongside successful local restaurant chains such as Ranchers Café and Koffee Net, maintain highly active Instagram profiles featuring professionally designed advertisements, promotional campaigns, seasonal offers, celebrity endorsements, and interactive customer engagement activities. These advertisements do considerably more than merely present food products; they construct desirable lifestyles, emotional experiences, and symbolic meanings associated with consumption.

Research Objectives

The article is guided by the following objectives, derived from the thesis:

1. To identify the visual semiotic resources employed in Pakistani restaurant Instagram advertisements.
2. To examine how visual elements contribute to persuasive meaning-making in digital food advertising.
3. To investigate how compositional, representational, and interactive meanings are realized through Instagram advertising practices.

Research Questions

1. Which visual semiotic resources are employed in Pakistani restaurant Instagram advertisements?
2. How do these visual resources contribute to persuasive communication and meaning construction on Instagram?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The rapid growth of digital communication has fundamentally transformed advertising from a predominantly textual practice into a multimodal phenomenon in which meaning is constructed through the interaction of multiple semiotic resources. Contemporary advertisements are no longer composed merely of written slogans accompanied by illustrative images; instead, they integrate photographs, typography, colour, layout, motion, emojis, icons, sound, and hyperlinks into coherent communicative texts designed to attract, persuade, and engage audiences. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have accelerated this transformation by privileging visual communication over conventional textual discourse. Restaurant brands operating in highly competitive digital markets increasingly rely on sophisticated multimodal strategies to differentiate themselves, strengthen brand identity, and influence consumer purchasing decisions. The uploaded thesis similarly frames Instagram advertisements as multimodal texts that combine visual and linguistic resources to communicate persuasive marketing messages through integrated semiotic systems.

Within linguistic and communication studies, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) has emerged as one of the most influential approaches for investigating such complex

communicative phenomena. Unlike traditional discourse analysis, which primarily focuses on language, MDA recognizes that meaning is distributed across several semiotic modes that function simultaneously. Consequently, researchers examine not only linguistic expressions but also images, colour, typography, spatial organization, gesture, gaze, and other visual resources that collectively shape interpretation. This theoretical shift reflects broader developments in social semiotics, which argue that communication involves socially organized systems of signs rather than isolated linguistic structures.

The literature concerning multimodal advertising has expanded considerably over the past two decades. Nevertheless, research focusing specifically on Instagram advertisements within developing countries, particularly Pakistan, remains relatively limited. Most existing studies investigate Western advertising campaigns, luxury brands, fashion industries, tourism promotion, or political communication. Comparatively fewer investigations examine how restaurant brands employ multimodal strategies within culturally diverse digital environments. This review therefore synthesizes scholarship relating to multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, digital advertising, visual communication, Instagram marketing, and restaurant branding while identifying the research gap addressed by the present study.

2.2 Multimodal Communication and Meaning Construction

The concept of multimodality originates from the recognition that human communication extends beyond spoken and written language. Every communicative event involves multiple semiotic resources operating simultaneously to produce meaning. These resources include visual images, gesture, posture, typography, colour, layout, sound, facial expression, and spatial organization. According to social semiotic theory, meaning is not inherently located within language itself but emerges through socially organized sign systems that individuals interpret within specific cultural contexts.

Jewitt (2021) argues that multimodal communication has become the defining characteristic of contemporary digital discourse because online environments naturally integrate multiple communicative modes. Unlike printed newspapers or traditional books, digital media permit continuous interaction between images, videos, text, sound, hyperlinks, animation, and user participation. Consequently, meaning construction has become increasingly dynamic and interactive rather than linear.

Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2023) similarly emphasize that multimodal communication requires analytical approaches capable of examining relationships among diverse semiotic resources. Rather than studying individual modes independently, researchers investigate how visual and linguistic elements complement, reinforce, modify, or even contradict one another. Such interaction enables communicators to construct highly sophisticated persuasive messages that cannot be explained through linguistic analysis alone.

This perspective has particular relevance for advertising because commercial communication rarely depends upon language in isolation. Consumers generally process advertisements holistically, interpreting images, colours, logos, slogans, and typography simultaneously. Consequently, advertising effectiveness depends upon the successful integration of these various communicative resources into coherent multimodal texts.

Recent scholarship has further emphasized that multimodal communication influences emotional as well as cognitive responses. Visual imagery frequently generates immediate affective reactions before audiences consciously process accompanying textual information. Bright colours may stimulate appetite; warm lighting may evoke comfort; smiling faces may encourage emotional identification; and carefully arranged compositions may guide viewers toward intended interpretations. These observations suggest that multimodal communication functions as both an informational and psychological process.

2.3 Social Semiotics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Social semiotics provides the theoretical foundation for contemporary multimodal discourse analysis. Unlike structural approaches to semiotics that emphasize fixed relationships between signs and meanings, social semiotics conceptualizes meaning as socially constructed, culturally negotiated, and context dependent. Signs acquire significance because communities collectively establish conventions governing their interpretation.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics significantly influenced this theoretical development by proposing that language simultaneously performs three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Rather than viewing grammar as a collection of formal rules, Halliday conceptualized language as a resource for making meaning within social contexts. His functional perspective subsequently inspired researchers to extend similar principles beyond language toward visual communication.

Building upon Halliday's framework, Kress and van Leeuwen developed a social semiotic theory of visual grammar that applies functional principles to images. They argue that visual communication, like language, systematically constructs representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. Images therefore possess grammatical structures analogous to linguistic organization, enabling researchers to analyze visual texts systematically rather than intuitively.

According to this perspective, representational meaning concerns the depiction of participants, objects, actions, and events. Interactive meaning examines relationships established between represented participants and viewers through gaze, social distance, camera angle, and perspective. Compositional meaning investigates how layout, framing, salience, information value, colour, and spatial organization integrate individual elements into coherent visual wholes.

Recent studies continue to demonstrate the usefulness of social semiotics for analyzing digital communication. Hiippala (2022) argues that multimodal discourse analysis provides one of the most comprehensive methodologies for examining online communication because it accommodates both traditional linguistic analysis and contemporary visual practices. Similarly, O'Halloran and Lim (2022) observe that multimodal frameworks enable researchers to investigate increasingly complex forms of communication emerging across social networking platforms.

Within advertising research, social semiotics has become particularly valuable because it facilitates detailed examination of persuasive strategies embedded within commercial imagery. Instead of evaluating advertisements solely according to marketing outcomes, researchers investigate how meaning itself is visually organized through systematic semiotic choices.

2.4 Visual Grammar: Kress and van Leeuwen's Framework

Among the numerous approaches to multimodal discourse analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar remains the most widely applied analytical framework. Originally developed in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, this model conceptualizes images as structured communicative systems governed by semiotic principles comparable to linguistic grammar.

The framework identifies three interconnected dimensions of visual meaning.

Representational Meaning

Representational meaning concerns how visual participants, objects, and activities are depicted. Narrative representations illustrate actions, movements, and events through vectors that indicate dynamic relationships among participants. Conceptual representations, by contrast, emphasize classification, symbolism, identity, or attributes rather than actions.

Within restaurant advertising, representational meaning frequently appears through carefully photographed food items, smiling customers, serving staff, and lifestyle imagery. Such representations communicate not only the physical characteristics of products but also

symbolic meanings associated with pleasure, freshness, celebration, hospitality, and satisfaction.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning examines relationships established between represented participants and viewers. Four principal variables determine this relationship:

- Gaze
- Social distance
- Camera angle
- Perspective

Direct gaze establishes interpersonal engagement by inviting viewers into communicative interaction, whereas indirect gaze encourages observation rather than participation. Close-up photography creates intimacy, while distant shots emphasize broader contexts. Eye-level perspectives promote equality, whereas high and low camera angles communicate power relationships.

Instagram restaurant advertisements frequently employ close-up photography combined with eye-level perspectives to create psychological proximity between consumers and advertised products. Such techniques encourage viewers to imagine themselves experiencing the food personally.

Compositional Meaning

Compositional meaning concerns how individual visual elements are organized into coherent structures.

Major compositional resources include:

- Information value
- Salience
- Framing
- Colour
- Typography
- Spatial arrangement

Information value refers to the placement of visual elements according to culturally established reading conventions. Salience determines which elements attract immediate attention through size, colour contrast, focus, brightness, or positioning. Framing establishes relationships among visual components, while colour contributes emotional and symbolic meanings.

Digital advertisements frequently combine these compositional resources to guide viewer attention toward featured products before introducing supporting promotional information such as discounts, slogans, or brand logos.

Recent research indicates that visual grammar remains highly applicable despite significant technological changes in digital communication. Although Instagram introduces new communicative features such as reels, stories, animations, emojis, and interactive elements, the underlying principles of representational, interactive, and compositional meaning continue to explain how visual persuasion operates across contemporary social media environments.

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **qualitative research design** employing **Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)** to examine how visual semiotic resources construct persuasive meanings in Instagram advertisements published by restaurant brands operating in Pakistan. Qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate because the objective is not to quantify advertising features but to investigate how different semiotic resources interact to communicate commercial messages.

The methodological orientation follows the research design presented in the uploaded thesis, which uses qualitative multimodal discourse analysis grounded in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyze selected Instagram advertisements.

Multimodal discourse analysis views advertisements as complex communicative texts in which images, colours, typography, layout, captions, logos, and other visual elements function collectively to construct meaning. Rather than analysing these resources independently, the study investigates their interaction within complete advertising compositions. Such an approach enables comprehensive examination of persuasion strategies that would remain inaccessible through conventional linguistic analysis.

3.2 Research Approach

The research follows an **interpretivist paradigm**, which assumes that meanings are socially constructed rather than objectively fixed. Visual signs acquire significance through cultural conventions, commercial practices, and audience interpretation. Consequently, Instagram advertisements are examined as social semiotic artefacts reflecting broader cultural assumptions regarding food, consumption, identity, leisure, and commercial persuasion.

Interpretivism is particularly suitable because restaurant advertisements do not merely present products objectively; instead, they construct symbolic meanings associated with lifestyle, family relationships, celebration, convenience, luxury, and happiness. These meanings emerge through interaction among visual and linguistic resources rather than existing independently within individual signs.

3.3 Data Selection

The dataset consists of **six Instagram advertisements** collected from the official Instagram accounts of internationally recognized restaurant brands operating in Pakistan:

- McDonald's Pakistan
- KFC Pakistan
- Domino's Pakistan
- Papa John's Pakistan
- Ranchers Café
- Koffee Net

The advertisements were purposively selected because they demonstrate rich combinations of visual and linguistic resources suitable for multimodal analysis. As reported in the thesis, purposive sampling was employed to select advertisements containing clear visual and textual elements appropriate for analysis through Kress and van Leeuwen's framework.

Selection criteria included:

- Official Instagram publication
- High-quality visual composition
- Presence of integrated textual components
- Brand logo visibility
- Promotional purpose
- Rich multimodal characteristics
- Clear representation of restaurant products

The selected advertisements represent different promotional campaigns while maintaining sufficient comparability for systematic analysis.

3.4 Analytical Framework

The study combines two complementary theoretical perspectives.

Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar

The primary analytical framework examines three metafunctions:

Representational Meaning

This dimension investigates:

- participants
- objects
- actions
- symbolic representation
- narrative structures

The analysis considers how food products, customers, restaurant environments, and promotional objects are visually represented.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning focuses on relationships established between advertisements and viewers through:

- gaze
- camera angle
- social distance
- perspective

These resources determine how advertisements invite audience participation and emotional engagement.

Compositional Meaning

Compositional analysis examines:

- salience
- framing
- information value
- colour
- layout
- typography

Together these resources organize visual information into coherent persuasive structures.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics

Although the article primarily emphasizes visual semiotics, Halliday's functional approach provides supplementary analysis of linguistic resources.

Particular attention is devoted to:

- promotional slogans
- captions
- lexical choices
- imperative structures
- interpersonal meanings
- textual organization

This integration reflects the theoretical structure adopted throughout the original thesis.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis proceeded through five stages.

Stage One

Each Instagram advertisement was examined repeatedly to identify major visual and linguistic elements.

Stage Two

Visual resources were categorized according to representational, interactive, and compositional meanings.

Stage Three

Linguistic components including captions, slogans, hashtags, and promotional statements were analysed using Halliday's functional framework.

Stage Four

Visual and linguistic findings were integrated into comprehensive multimodal interpretations.

Stage Five

Comparative analysis identified similarities and differences across the six restaurant brands. This systematic procedure ensured analytical consistency throughout the research.

4. Findings and Discussion

Advertisement One: McDonald's Pakistan

4.1 Representational Meaning

The McDonald's advertisement presents a highly recognizable promotional image centred upon a featured burger meal accompanied by fries and a beverage. The food occupies the central visual position and is photographed using high-resolution close-up imagery that emphasizes freshness, texture, and product quality. The burger appears considerably larger than its surrounding elements, immediately directing viewer attention toward the advertised product. The advertisement employs narrative representation rather than conceptual classification. The arrangement of food items suggests readiness for immediate consumption while simultaneously constructing an experience of enjoyment rather than merely displaying individual products. Steam effects, lighting, and carefully positioned ingredients communicate freshness and sensory appeal.

The absence of human participants further increases emphasis on the product itself. Rather than representing social interaction, the advertisement encourages viewers to imagine personal consumption experiences. This strategy transforms the meal into the principal communicative participant.

Symbolically, the burger functions as more than food. It represents convenience, indulgence, satisfaction, and contemporary urban lifestyles associated with international fast-food culture.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning is established primarily through camera positioning.

The advertisement employs:

- close social distance
- frontal perspective
- eye-level angle

The close-up perspective reduces psychological distance between viewers and the product, encouraging intimate visual engagement. Consumers observe the burger almost as though it were physically positioned before them.

Unlike advertisements featuring direct human gaze, product-centred advertisements establish interaction through visual accessibility rather than interpersonal contact. The frontal angle encourages immediate viewer involvement while avoiding hierarchical relationships associated with high or low camera positions.

Lighting further strengthens interaction. Bright highlights emphasize freshness while subtle shadows enhance three-dimensional realism.

Collectively these choices encourage viewers to imagine tasting rather than merely observing the advertised meal.

Compositional Meaning

Compositional organization represents one of the advertisement's strongest persuasive features. The burger occupies the centre of the composition, making it the most salient visual element. Several semiotic resources contribute to salience:

- large size
- high colour contrast
- sharp focus
- central placement

- strong lighting

The famous McDonald's logo occupies an upper compositional position where it reinforces brand recognition without distracting attention from the featured meal.

Information value follows conventional reading patterns.

Viewers first notice:

1. Burger
2. Promotional message
3. Fries and beverage
4. Brand logo

Colour plays an especially significant persuasive role.

The advertisement predominantly employs:

- red
- yellow
- brown
- white

These colours correspond closely with McDonald's global branding.

Red stimulates appetite while simultaneously communicating excitement and urgency.

Yellow symbolizes happiness, warmth, and optimism.

Brown emphasizes grilled freshness and authenticity.

White backgrounds improve visual clarity by increasing contrast.

Typography remains bold, simple, and immediately readable.

Large fonts communicate promotional confidence while maintaining visual balance.

Discussion

The McDonald's advertisement demonstrates how visual communication dominates contemporary Instagram marketing.

Language plays a supportive rather than primary communicative role.

Instead, colour, composition, lighting, photography, and product placement collectively construct persuasive meanings.

Representationally, the advertisement depicts food as desirable.

Interactively, it creates intimacy.

Compositionally, it guides viewer attention through systematic salience.

These findings strongly support Kress and van Leeuwen's proposition that images possess structured grammatical organization capable of communicating sophisticated meanings independently of extensive textual explanation.

Advertisement Two: KFC Pakistan

Representational Meaning

The KFC advertisement similarly foregrounds food products but adopts a noticeably different representational strategy.

Instead of emphasizing a single burger, the advertisement presents multiple fried chicken pieces arranged within branded packaging.

This arrangement communicates abundance rather than individuality.

The food occupies almost the entire visual frame, leaving minimal unused background space.

Golden fried chicken visually symbolizes:

- crispness
- freshness
- richness
- indulgence

The inclusion of branded packaging strengthens institutional identity while simultaneously reinforcing authenticity.

Unlike McDonald's minimalist presentation, KFC creates visual richness through product multiplicity.

Consumers perceive value through quantity as well as quality.

The food therefore functions symbolically as generosity, celebration, and shared dining experiences.

Interactive Meaning

Interaction is established through extremely close photographic distance.

The advertisement almost eliminates psychological separation between viewer and product.

Every texture—including crispy coating, seasoning, and surface details—is clearly visible.

Such photographic realism encourages sensory imagination.

Consumers can almost "feel" the crispness through visual observation.

The camera remains positioned at eye level, reinforcing equality between viewer and advertisement.

No dramatic perspectives are introduced.

Instead, visual realism strengthens credibility.

Lighting employs warm golden tones that reinforce appetite stimulation.

The absence of human participants again directs complete attention toward food products.

Compositional Meaning

Visual organization demonstrates remarkable balance.

The chicken bucket occupies central compositional space.

Supporting products surround rather than compete with the main participant.

Brand colours dominate the composition:

- red
- white
- black

These colours reinforce immediate brand recognition.

The KFC logo functions as a strong compositional anchor linking product presentation with institutional identity.

Typography emphasizes promotional offers through bold white lettering placed against darker backgrounds.

Visual hierarchy directs attention efficiently:

Product → Offer → Logo

This sequence minimizes cognitive effort while maximizing persuasive effectiveness.

Advertisement Three: Koffee Net

4.3 Representational Meaning

Unlike the fast-food advertisements of McDonald's and KFC, the Koffee Net advertisement constructs a markedly different representational narrative by emphasizing premium coffee culture rather than convenience or quantity. The central participant is a carefully prepared coffee beverage presented in an aesthetically designed cup bearing the restaurant's logo. Additional visual elements, such as roasted coffee beans, coffee-making accessories, wooden textures, and soft background lighting, collectively establish an atmosphere associated with relaxation, sophistication, and contemporary café culture. This type of visual representation aligns with the multimodal characteristics identified in the thesis, where coffee advertisements rely on symbolic imagery and environmental cues to communicate meanings beyond the product itself.

From Kress and van Leeuwen's perspective, the advertisement represents a **conceptual process** rather than a narrative one. There is no visible action or movement; instead, the coffee is displayed as a symbolic object representing quality, craftsmanship, and premium taste. The absence of human participants further reinforces the symbolic status of the beverage. Rather

than depicting consumption, the advertisement encourages viewers to associate the coffee with a desirable lifestyle characterized by comfort, creativity, and leisure.

The use of wooden surfaces and coffee beans contributes additional symbolic meanings. These elements communicate authenticity, freshness, and artisanal preparation, distinguishing the product from mass-produced beverages. Through this representational strategy, the advertisement shifts consumer attention from the functional purpose of coffee toward the emotional and cultural experiences associated with café consumption.

Interactive Meaning

The relationship between the advertisement and the audience is established primarily through **visual intimacy**. A close-up perspective enables viewers to observe the texture of the coffee foam, the richness of the beverage, and the details of the branded cup. This reduced social distance creates an illusion of physical accessibility, encouraging consumers to imagine themselves holding and drinking the coffee.

The camera angle is positioned at eye level, establishing equality between the viewer and the represented product. Unlike advertisements employing dramatic low or high angles, the eye-level perspective creates a sense of realism and trustworthiness. The lighting further enhances this interaction by producing warm tones that evoke feelings of comfort, calmness, and hospitality.

The absence of direct human gaze does not diminish interpersonal communication. Instead, the coffee itself functions as the communicative participant. Its visual prominence, combined with carefully controlled lighting and composition, invites viewers to participate imaginatively in the café experience.

Compositional Meaning

The compositional organization of the Koffee Net advertisement differs significantly from the fast-food advertisements analysed previously. Rather than employing bright colours and high visual intensity, the advertisement relies on **visual harmony** and **minimalist design**.

The coffee cup occupies the central position within the layout, immediately attracting viewer attention. Surrounding decorative elements, including roasted beans and wooden textures, support rather than compete with the primary participant.

Several compositional resources contribute to visual salience:

- Central placement of the coffee cup.
- High photographic clarity.
- Warm directional lighting.
- Limited background distractions.
- Strong contrast between the cup and surrounding environment.

Colour selection plays a particularly important persuasive role. Dominant colours include:

- Dark brown
- Cream
- Black
- Soft beige
- Golden highlights

These colours communicate warmth, elegance, sophistication, and premium quality. Brown symbolizes roasted coffee beans and natural authenticity, while cream tones soften the overall composition and enhance visual comfort. The restrained colour palette differentiates Koffee Net from fast-food brands that rely heavily on red and yellow to stimulate excitement.

Typography is similarly restrained. Promotional text appears in clean, modern fonts that complement rather than dominate the visual composition. The brand logo remains clearly visible without disrupting the balance of the advertisement.

The overall composition reflects a branding strategy based on refinement and lifestyle appeal rather than urgency or promotional intensity.

Discussion of Advertisement Three

The Koffee Net advertisement demonstrates how different restaurant categories employ distinct multimodal strategies while still adhering to the fundamental principles of visual grammar. Whereas McDonald's emphasizes convenience and KFC emphasizes abundance, Koffee Net promotes atmosphere, quality, and lifestyle.

Representationally, the coffee functions as a cultural symbol rather than merely a beverage. Interactively, the close perspective establishes intimacy without requiring human participants. Compositionally, minimalist organization, subdued colours, and balanced spatial arrangement reinforce perceptions of sophistication and premium quality.

These findings illustrate the flexibility of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework. Although each restaurant adopts a different marketing strategy, all three advertisements organize representational, interactive, and compositional meanings systematically to achieve persuasive communication.

4.4 Comparative Discussion of the First Three Advertisements

A comparative examination of the McDonald's Pakistan, KFC Pakistan, and Koffee Net advertisements reveals both shared multimodal characteristics and important differences in persuasive strategies. While all three brands seek to attract consumer attention and strengthen brand recognition, they employ distinct visual semiotic resources that reflect their respective market positions and brand identities.

Representational Meaning

All three advertisements position the food or beverage product as the central participant, thereby reinforcing the commercial objective of product promotion. However, the nature of representation differs considerably.

McDonald's presents an individual burger meal as a symbol of convenience, freshness, and urban fast-food culture. KFC emphasizes quantity and shared consumption by displaying multiple pieces of fried chicken within branded packaging. In contrast, Koffee Net adopts a symbolic representation in which the coffee beverage signifies sophistication, comfort, and premium café culture.

These differences demonstrate that visual representation extends beyond physical product depiction to include symbolic meanings associated with particular lifestyles and consumer identities.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meanings across all three advertisements are constructed through similar photographic techniques. Close-up perspectives, eye-level camera angles, and high-resolution imagery reduce psychological distance between viewers and products, encouraging sensory imagination and emotional engagement.

Notably, none of the advertisements relies on direct human gaze. Instead, interpersonal relationships are established through visual accessibility, realistic photography, and carefully controlled lighting. This suggests that product-centred advertising can create strong viewer involvement without featuring human participants.

Compositional Meaning

The advertisements display significant variation in compositional organization.

McDonald's employs vibrant red and yellow colours, strong contrast, and bold typography to communicate excitement and appetite. KFC similarly relies on red, white, and black but creates visual richness through multiple food items and promotional emphasis on value.

Koffee Net adopts a contrasting strategy characterized by restrained colours, minimalist composition, and refined typography. Rather than stimulating excitement, the advertisement seeks to evoke relaxation, elegance, and authenticity.

Despite these differences, all three advertisements employ salience, information value, framing, and logo placement systematically to guide viewer attention toward the advertised products before introducing supporting promotional information.

Overall Interpretation

The comparative analysis confirms that Instagram restaurant advertising depends heavily upon multimodal communication rather than linguistic persuasion alone. Images function as the primary carriers of commercial meaning, while captions, logos, and promotional slogans reinforce visual messages. Colour, composition, lighting, product positioning, and typography collectively shape consumer perceptions regarding freshness, quality, value, and brand identity. These observations strongly support the argument advanced in the uploaded thesis that restaurant advertisements on Instagram communicate through integrated visual and verbal semiotic resources, with visual meaning frequently assuming the dominant persuasive role.

4.5 Advertisement Four: Ranchers Café

Representational Meaning

The Ranchers Café advertisement differs from the multinational brands analysed previously by integrating local cultural preferences with contemporary fast-food aesthetics. The advertisement prominently features a signature burger accompanied by fries and a beverage, presented through high-resolution photography that emphasizes freshness, generous portion size, and premium ingredients. The burger occupies the central position of the composition, while secondary elements such as sauces, promotional graphics, and branded packaging reinforce the overall marketing message. This type of visual organization corresponds with the thesis's observation that Ranchers advertisements combine product-focused imagery with locally adapted promotional strategies to appeal to Pakistani consumers.

From the perspective of Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar, the advertisement primarily represents a **conceptual process**. Rather than depicting an action sequence, the food is displayed as an idealized object symbolizing abundance, freshness, and satisfaction. Every ingredient is carefully arranged to maximize visual attractiveness. Crisp lettuce, melted cheese, grilled meat, and glossy buns are intentionally highlighted through controlled lighting and sharp photographic focus. These visual choices encourage viewers to associate the product with quality and value.

The advertisement also constructs symbolic meanings connected with contemporary urban lifestyles. Rather than presenting food merely as nourishment, Ranchers positions its products as part of social gatherings, leisure activities, and youthful consumption patterns. Such symbolic representation extends commercial communication beyond the physical characteristics of the meal.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive meaning is established through close photographic distance and a frontal perspective. The viewer observes the burger from an angle that resembles natural dining experiences, thereby reducing psychological distance and encouraging sensory imagination.

Unlike advertisements that rely upon human participants, Ranchers establishes interpersonal engagement through product accessibility. The food appears almost within reach, inviting viewers to imagine themselves consuming the advertised meal.

Lighting contributes significantly to this interaction. Bright highlights emphasize freshness, while carefully balanced shadows create depth and realism. Warm colour temperatures stimulate appetite and strengthen emotional appeal.

The eye-level perspective further communicates equality between viewer and product. No dramatic camera angles are employed, allowing attention to remain focused upon the meal itself rather than photographic experimentation.

Compositional Meaning

The Ranchers advertisement demonstrates sophisticated compositional organization.

Visual salience is achieved through:

- Central positioning of the burger.
- Large photographic scale.
- Bright lighting.
- Strong colour contrast.
- Minimal background distractions.

The colour palette combines red, yellow, brown, and white, creating visual continuity with international fast-food branding while maintaining Ranchers' distinctive identity. Red stimulates appetite and excitement, yellow communicates optimism and warmth, while brown emphasizes grilled authenticity.

Typography is bold yet restrained. Promotional offers appear prominently without competing with product imagery. The logo occupies a stable compositional position that reinforces institutional identity while preserving overall balance.

Information value follows conventional reading patterns, directing viewer attention from the product to promotional information and finally to the brand identity. This systematic organization facilitates rapid comprehension within Instagram's fast-scrolling environment.

4.6 Advertisement Five: Papa John's Pakistan

Representational Meaning

The Papa John's advertisement adopts a representational strategy centred on pizza as a shared dining experience. Rather than highlighting individual slices, the advertisement frequently presents complete pizzas photographed from elevated perspectives, emphasizing variety, ingredient quality, and family-oriented consumption.

The pizza functions as both a commercial product and a cultural symbol representing togetherness, celebration, and social interaction. Fresh vegetables, melted cheese, premium toppings, and carefully arranged ingredients visually communicate craftsmanship and freshness.

The advertisement's representational structure aligns with conceptual rather than narrative processes. No explicit actions are depicted; instead, the pizza is presented as an ideal object inviting consumer desire.

Interactive Meaning

Interactive communication relies upon overhead and slightly angled photography that enables viewers to appreciate the complete product simultaneously. Although this perspective differs from the close frontal images employed by burger advertisements, it remains highly effective because pizzas are naturally appreciated as complete circular compositions.

Lighting emphasizes melted cheese, colourful toppings, and crust texture, creating sensory realism. Viewers can easily imagine aroma, flavour, and freshness despite the absence of motion or human participants.

The advertisement maintains moderate social distance, balancing detailed product visibility with appreciation of the entire composition.

Compositional Meaning

Composition emphasizes symmetry and visual harmony.

The pizza occupies dominant central space while promotional text remains secondary.

Colour contributes substantially to persuasive communication:

- Red tomatoes
- Green vegetables
- Golden cheese
- Brown crust
- White typography

Together these colours create visual richness while simultaneously communicating freshness and nutritional quality.

Typography remains clear and promotional. Limited textual content prevents visual overload while supporting the primary image.

Brand identity is reinforced through logo placement and consistent colour usage.

Overall composition encourages viewers first to appreciate product quality before considering promotional offers.

4.7 Advertisement Six: Domino's Pakistan

Representational Meaning

The Domino's advertisement similarly focuses upon pizza promotion but adopts a more energetic visual style emphasizing speed, excitement, and value.

Large pizzas dominate the composition while supporting products such as beverages or side dishes reinforce perceptions of complete meal experiences.

Representationally, food symbolizes convenience, affordability, and social enjoyment.

The visual emphasis upon melted cheese, toppings, and generous portion size communicates abundance and satisfaction.

Unlike minimalist coffee advertising, Domino's intentionally creates visual richness through multiple food elements.

Interactive Meaning

The advertisement establishes strong viewer engagement through vivid colours, high-resolution photography, and dynamic layout.

Camera distance remains sufficiently close to reveal detailed textures while preserving visibility of the complete promotional arrangement.

Lighting increases visual contrast and stimulates appetite.

Although no direct human gaze appears, consumers are invited to imagine themselves participating in shared dining experiences.

Compositional Meaning

Domino's demonstrates particularly effective visual hierarchy.

Viewer attention follows the sequence:

Pizza → Promotional Offer → Supporting Products → Logo

Bright blue and red corporate colours distinguish Domino's from competing brands while reinforcing international brand recognition.

Typography employs large promotional headlines emphasizing discounts and value.

Visual balance prevents overcrowding despite inclusion of multiple products.

The composition effectively integrates product imagery, branding, and promotional information into a coherent persuasive message.

Conclusion

This study examined six Instagram advertisements published by leading restaurant brands operating in Pakistan through the analytical lens of Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic theory of visual grammar, supported by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. The findings demonstrate that contemporary restaurant advertising relies fundamentally upon

multimodal communication in which images, colour, composition, typography, branding, and limited linguistic resources function collectively to persuade consumers.

Representational analysis revealed that food products operate as symbolic participants communicating lifestyle values alongside commercial information. Interactive analysis showed that close-up photography, eye-level perspectives, and realistic lighting establish psychological intimacy between viewers and advertised products. Compositional analysis further demonstrated that salience, colour, information value, framing, and logo placement systematically organize viewer attention.

Overall, visual communication assumes the dominant persuasive role, while linguistic elements reinforce rather than replace visual meanings. The study therefore contributes to multimodal discourse analysis by illustrating how social semiotic resources operate within Pakistan's rapidly expanding digital advertising environment.

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