



Persuasion Through Semiotics: A Multimodal Analysis of Beverage Advertisements in Ghana

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<i>Keywords:</i> beverages; billboard advertisements; multimodal analysis; persuasion; semiotic resources.	<i>This study explores the semiotic resources and embedded ideologies in billboard advertisements for beverages in Ghana, using a multimodal approach to understand how meaning is constructed and communicated. Although previous research in Ghana has primarily focused on linguistic elements, this study fills a gap by analysing a range of semiotic resources such as images, gestures, colours, symbols, typography, and text. Using Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar Theory, the analysis of 20 advertisements from six Ghanaian beverage brands revealed key findings. The study found that semiotic resources like celebrity images, logos, and product visuals were strategically employed to establish brand identity and appeal. Gestures conveyed product advantages or participant emotions, while symbols (e.g., logos and world maps) reinforced brand image. Colour emerged as a powerful communicative mode, serving not only to capture attention but also to reinforce brand recognition and evoke culturally resonant meanings. Distinct brand colours—such as Coca-Cola's red and Guinness's black—were strategically used to strengthen identity and aid recall. Moreover, colours like yellow and green conveyed symbolic associations: yellow suggested energy and happiness, while green implied freshness and calm, aligning effectively with consumer aspirations and lifestyle preferences. These findings underscore how Ghanaian advertisers blend visual and textual elements to effectively persuade consumers, highlighting the role of cultural context in shaping advertising strategies.</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, advertising plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes, social norms, and individual identities by appealing to desires, aspirations, and lifestyles. Cook (2001) characterises advertisements as crafted instruments designed to inform, persuade, and transform emotions and opinions. By strategically employing language and visuals, advertisements go beyond mere product promotion (Yılmaz & Kır, 2025); they significantly influence how consumers perceive themselves and encourage the adoption of lifestyles that resonate with advertised brand images. This influence is evident across various media platforms, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and, prominently, billboards.

These billboards utilise multimodal elements—text, colour, images, symbols, and layout—to capture viewer attention and convey messages effectively (Azidor Wonder, 2021).

In the beverage industry, billboard advertisements heavily rely on this multimodal approach to create an immediate and lasting impact. Multimodality goes beyond just language, exploring the various modes of communication and the ways in which meaning is created (Kress, 2009). The thoughtful combination of visual elements, symbols, and text forms cohesive messages that engage consumers on subconscious levels. Advances in graphic design and technology enable advertisers to intricately weave semiotic resources together, allowing for the efficient conveyance of complex ideas (Baldry, 2000; Baldry & Thibault, 2005). This synthesis exemplifies what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) refer to as "visual grammar," where the integration of various media is optimised for effective communication. Each component of an advertisement—from imagery and gestures to colour schemes and typography—plays a crucial role in how the audience interprets the overall message (Itanghi, Cheo, & Julius, 2023).

In Ghana, billboard advertisements for both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are prevalent, often utilizing semiotic resources that reflect societal values and aspirations. However, despite the ubiquity of multimodal advertising and its significant impact on consumer perceptions, there remains a gap in research investigating the semiotic composition and underlying ideologies of these advertisements. Existing studies have predominantly focused on linguistic aspects but have not sufficiently explored how visual elements, colours, symbols, and typography interact within billboard ads to communicate culturally resonant messages.

This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive multimodal analysis of beverage billboard advertisements in Ghana. It will explore the semiotic resources employed in these ads, the meanings they convey, and the ideologies they reflect. By investigating how both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage advertisements leverage multimodal elements to persuade and influence potential consumers, this analysis will enhance our understanding of the cultural and ideological nuances embedded in Ghanaian advertising. Moreover, it will illuminate the persuasive strategies utilised by advertisers in the competitive beverage market. By examining how these elements work together to influence viewer perception, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of advertising's role in shaping consumer identities and societal norms, particularly within the Ghanaian context, where cultural representation and brand appeal are vital for market success. The study, thus, investigates the following research question:

What semiotic resources are employed by companies in billboard advertisements of beverages to persuade the audience?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) framework by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) to analyse the data. Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that images can be read similarly to text, contributing meaning as independently structured messages rather than merely supporting verbal content. In this way, their theory seeks to identify and analyse visual "grammar" within multimodal texts, where both visual and verbal elements communicate cultural meanings. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) emphasise that visual elements function autonomously within multimodal compositions. While the verbal and visual can reinforce each other, each system draws on unique semiotic resources that are culturally specific. This

perspective supports the idea that both modes serve as realizations of cultural and social meanings within distinct semiotic systems.

In this study, Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory provides the framework for examining the visual strategies used in beverage advertisements. The Grammar of Visual Design (GVD) enables varied interpretations of the exact visual text, because it "provides detailed and explicit methods for analyzing the meanings established by the syntactic relations between people, places, and things depicted in images" using three levels of meaning (Roberts & Philip, 2006, p. 20). The approach allows an analysis of how advertisements use visual elements to convey culturally resonant meanings, independently or in complement with text, reflecting the social context in which they are situated.

3. RELATED LITERATURE ON BEVERAGE ADVERTISEMENT

In studies of beverage advertising, scholars outside Ghana have examined how visual and textual elements work together to communicate brand identity, evoke emotional responses, and convey underlying ideologies. Kvizdova (2015), for example, analysed Coca-Cola advertisements spanning a 50-year period and identified significant shifts in advertising strategies. Her findings suggest a gradual reduction in imagery and an increasing reliance on prominent graphical features, such as logos and slogans, to enhance brand recall. Additionally, Kvizdova observed a move from formal to informal, conversational language, which appeared to foster a more personal and relatable connection with consumers. Similarly, Tjirakusuma (2015) focused on the role of conceptual metaphors in visual advertising, highlighting the interplay between textual and visual elements. In one instance, a coffee advertisement used imagery of serene morning scenes as visual metaphors to imply freshness and vitality. These metaphors were found to be more effective in capturing audience attention than verbal metaphors alone, pointing to the persuasive power of visual representation.

Elvis and Bertrand (2019) conducted a study on non-alcoholic beverage advertisements in Cameroon, examining how advertisers use language and imagery to associate products with aspirational feelings such as greatness and comfort. Their analysis revealed that images of relatable figures—particularly young men and celebrities—were employed to project ideologies of a "better life" and "fueling greatness," suggesting that advertisers embed social values intentionally to shape consumer perceptions.

Helde (2015) investigated the ideological dimensions of print advertisements, including beverage ads, in Latvian media. Her findings indicate that specific colour schemes—such as blue, yellow, and white—were deliberately chosen to evoke emotional responses like peace, purity, and warmth. Furthermore, positive facial expressions in beverage advertisements were often used to suggest that product consumption could lead to emotional satisfaction. Helde's work underscores the subtle ways in which advertisers use visual elements and colour to communicate values and influence audiences.

Taken together, the studies underscore the strategic use of multimodal elements—such as images, language, colour, and metaphor—in beverage advertising to establish brand identity, trigger emotional engagement, and embed cultural or ideological messages. They illustrate how advertisements serve not only persuasive functions but also operate as vehicles for communicating broader social meanings.

Previous research in the Ghanaian context, such as Torto (2016), examined advertising discourse through a qualitative analysis of a newspaper advertisement for Castle Milk Stout published in the *Daily Graphic*, one of Ghana's major national newspapers. Grounded in Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Model, the study focused on the descriptive features of English used in the advert—specifically sensory details, figurative expressions, grammatical modifiers, and picturesque vocabulary. While offering valuable insights into how language alone can be used to construct mental imagery and persuade consumers, the study was limited to textual analysis and did not account for the role of other semiotic modes such as visual imagery, colour, and layout.

Similarly, Azidor Wonder (2021) adopted a multimodal perspective in his analysis of billboards in Ho, highlighting language diversity and applying Jakobson's communicative functions. While Azidor Wonder focuses on billboards in the linguistic landscape and emphasises language diversity and Jakobson's communicative functions, the present study concentrates on beverage advertisements and uses Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) visual grammar to examine how brand identity, emotional appeal, and ideology are constructed through multimodal resources. While his study offers useful insights into multimodality in public signage, it appears to give limited attention to the ways visual elements contribute to persuasive meaning-making. The present study seeks to extend this line of inquiry by exploring how beverage advertisements may employ multimodal resources—guided by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) visual grammar—to construct brand identity, evoke emotional responses, and potentially convey ideological messages. The existing literature indicates a gap in Ghanaian advertising research concerning the interplay between linguistic and visual elements in meaning-making. This study aims to contribute to filling that gap by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) visual grammar to examine how multimodal resources might be employed to construct brand identity, evoke emotional appeal, and convey ideological meanings in beverage advertisements.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, which, as noted by prominent scholars (Creswell, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), seeks to deeply explore, understand, and interpret social phenomena within natural settings. The selection of a qualitative design allowed for a detailed analysis through text and image descriptions rather than numerical data (Kyei & Afful, 2021; Duut & Kyei, 2021; Jujugenia, Kyei, & Nanglakong, 2021). Additionally, the study followed a nonlinear approach, focusing on text analysis that uncovers different shades of meaning. As Neuman (2000) explains, qualitative research is particularly effective in identifying subtle nuances, as it allows researchers to synthesise diverse information.

4.2. Data

The study analysed various billboard advertisements for alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages displayed in Ghana. Given that the advertisements were already publicly accessible, data collection was straightforward. Billboard selection criteria included image clarity, multimodal elements, and representational diversity. Researchers selected prominent locations in major Ghanaian cities—such as Sunyani, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Accra, and Kumasi—where beverage billboards are commonly erected. From these locations, 50 advertisements were initially collected, and 20 were chosen based on quality and multimodal features.

4.3. Sample and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was employed, which, as Afful (2005) notes, allows for the selection of samples that meet specific research criteria. This approach enabled the researchers to focus on beverage advertisements with multimodal features, particularly those showcasing alcoholic and non-alcoholic products. Advertisements of non-beverage products or those with overly textual formats were excluded. Only those that were visually clear, with the necessary textual and multimodal elements, were selected, resulting in a final sample of 20 advertisements.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was guided by strategic site selection, with photographs taken at notable roundabouts and interchanges across Ghana. The chosen sites—such as the Sunyani Technical University roundabout, Santasi Roundabout in Kumasi, the Central Business District in Koforidua, and Circle in Accra—are high-traffic areas where advertisers target their audience to maximise visibility and recall. By covering different cities, researchers ensured a representative sample of popular beverage advertisements in Ghana, including brands like Malta Guinness, Alomo Bitters, Coca Cola, and Joy Daddy Bitters.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyse and discusses the data based on multimodal perspective using the Kress and Van Leeuwen theory of reading images. Each advert was analysed comprehensively to answer the research question. The first advertisement was by Angel Group Companies on their product called Adonko Bitters. This is one of the known bitters in Ghana and the advertisement mainly seeks to establish recall and communicate vital information to the target viewers.



Figure 1: Adonko Bitters

As viewers engage with the billboard, their attention is likely drawn to the most prominent features of the advertisement, particularly the large image of the two actors positioned on the right side, which occupies a significant portion of the visual space. This area is referred to as the "given region" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), where information is typically well-accepted. Notably, the image possesses a high modality, rendered in 25 mm quality, with the actors almost facing one another. The female actor is depicted holding the product, while the male actor appears poised to receive it. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), this configuration represents a "demand" for the viewer's attention, implying that the advertisement seeks to capture the audience's focus on the product being promoted.

The Angel Group of Companies aims for recognition and recall from these consumers in future campaigns. The camera angle is nearly symmetrical, and the positioning of the actors slightly

above the viewer enhances their authority over the drink, which is situated on the far left of the billboard without completely overshadowing it. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that when subjects are portrayed above the viewer, it conveys a sense of dominance. The actors' attire, which incorporates white, black, and vibrant colours, blends seamlessly with the green background, creating an effect where their legs appear to merge with the billboard's surface. In the African context, the colour white is often associated with purity and cleanliness, which is a predominant aspect of the billboard's colour palette, likely intended to evoke a sense of natural quality for the audience.

The semiotic resources in this advertisement include the actors, the product bottle, a heart symbol, and the colour scheme. The actors are given significant information value, capturing the advertiser's intended message that the product brings joy and is widely loved. The green colour not only highlights the main ingredient—natural herbs—but also emphasises the drink's appeal to the target audience. The heart symbol, rather than the word "love," signifies the advertisers' awareness of the affectionate feelings consumers have towards Adonko Bitters. This sentiment is reinforced by the inscription at the bottom of the advertisement that reads "made of natural herbs." The ethical message, which is commonly recognised, is positioned at the top right corner of the billboard, indicating that it is of lesser importance to the target audience. This is further elucidated by the representation of the actors, who are adults, thereby appealing to consumers aged 18 and older.

The second most prominent element of the billboard is the slogan, "I LOVE ADONKO BITTERS" (FDA/DK, 16-105), presented in gold capital letters, which connects the linguistic text to the placement of the actors. The size and central positioning of the slogan create a logical reading pathway from the image to the text (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). This slogan conveys multiple meanings, and the presence of the love symbol surrounding the actors further emphasises that Adonko Bitters is a product for lovers.



Figure 2: Star beer

Star Beer is one of the many products of the Guinness Ghana Brewery Limited. Based on the compositional meaning, figure 2 is a foregrounded three bottles of Star Beer clasped together with an accompanying verbal message which reads "**GHANA'S NEW STAR! GREAT LOOK, GREAT TASTE. MORE REFRESHING!**" In the background is an image of the Ghana flag at the extreme ends of the billboard. Other features of the data are the brand name, logo symbolised by a star, which signifies strength and royalty, and the slogan, which says "STAR-The nation's favourite beer". The image is represented from the frontal angle,

which portrays an attitude of boldness. Also, the vertical angle representation of the image connotes height and superiority.

The colours used in the advert are blue, which is interspersed with white. This may be attributed to the fact that the advertisement for the alcoholic drink portrays the colour of the packaging on the bottle. The prevalent colours are blue, white, and gold. The colour white also highlights the whole message, representing strength and vigour. The drink, the accompanying verbal message, and the brand trademarks are all presented in gold, which represents royalty. On the *compositional meaning of the advert*, the placement of the message "**GHANA'S NEW STAR! GREAT LOOK, GREAT TASTE. MORE REFRESHING!**" at the top of the billboard portrays the message as ideal or idealised, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) Description of Visual Semiotics.



Figure 3: Guinness

Figure 3 presents an advertisement for a Guinness product, effectively engaging the viewer with the direct message, "TIME FOR A TASTE OF BLACK: 17:59 CALLING." This line not only emphasises the product's name but also includes a temporal element, indicating the historical significance of Guinness, as denoted by the year "1759," the year it was first brewed at St. James's Gate in Dublin, Ireland. The reference to time suggests urgency, encouraging viewers to seize the moment to enjoy the product, symbolised by a hand gripping a Guinness bottle. This imagery communicates that the time has come to indulge in the drink.

The absence of celebrities or role models in this advertisement highlights a more personal appeal to the audience, creating a direct line of communication without the mediation of external figures. This choice allows the ad to address the viewer directly, fostering a sense of inclusion and engagement with the brand.

The concept of distance in the advertisement is crucial, as it influences how viewers perceive their relationship with the depicted participants. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) outline various shot distances, from intimate close-ups to public long shots, each establishing a different social dynamic. In this advertisement, the images are presented in a long shot, showcasing the Guinness bottle at a distance, which creates a sense of detachment rather than closeness. This choice of framing may suggest a more contemplative or casual engagement, as opposed to the intimate connection often fostered by close-up shots.

The layout and placement of elements within the advertisement also carry significant meaning. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) explain that the arrangement of participants and their relationships to one another and to the viewer bestows them with specific informational values,

such as those associated with the left and right sides, top and bottom, and centre and margins of the image. In this ad, the dominant use of black and gold text occupies much of the visual space, with the product itself receiving comparatively less emphasis. This suggests that the textual message is of primary importance, serving as the central focus for viewers.

The black and gold colour scheme conveys a sense of sophistication and premium quality, reinforcing the brand's image. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the positioning of elements—from given to new information (left to right), ideal to real (top to bottom), and centre to margin—contributes to the overall messaging strategy. The prominence of the text indicates that the ad prioritises conveying a strong, clear message to the audience, showcasing the brand's identity while maintaining a harmonious visual structure.

In conclusion, Figure 3 of the Guinness advertisement skillfully combines visual and verbal elements to create an effective message that directly engages viewers. The choice of imagery, distance, and layout reflects a thoughtful approach to advertising that enhances the product's appeal while fostering a connection with the audience. The ad's emphasis on textual information over imagery highlights the importance of the message being conveyed, ensuring that viewers grasp the essence of what it means to enjoy a “taste of black” at the iconic time of 17:59.



Figure 4: Alvaro

Alvaro is one of the non-alcoholic products of the Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited. Alvaro is a natural malt-based soft drink. It is packaged in a stylish embossed green bottle with an emotive and contemporary metallic labelling, giving it a sophisticated and outstanding look. Figure 4 shows five people beaming with smiles with their heads almost together, looking at the viewer with a suggestive eye. They form half vector of the ad while the other half is taken by the product that is being advertised, Alvaro. It is very easy to identify the goal in this picture. However, from the picture, we can recognise that three big bottles are placed at the far right of the billboard while the actors occupy the far left. This was carefully done as if the company was attempting to persuasively tell audiences that when you drink Alvaro, you will be happy all the time, and you will feel alive.

Another interesting point to note in this picture is the mild company's tagline, 'ALVARO, NATURALLY YOU.' This is written in a small font size, which is also in white. Again, it is to show that a consumer of this drink will be refreshed naturally. Moreover, the picture is foregrounded, thus directing viewers' attention to it, imposing the wording

“*NATURALLY REFRESHING*” on the group of actors who are shot at a long distance. In using a long-distance shot in an ad, it is assumed that the picture will be noticeable to viewers. However, it must be observed that long-distance shots reduce the intimacy that is established between the represented participants and the viewers.

The represented participants in the advertisement showcase the age group who are targeted by the product. Both genders are represented, meaning the drink is appropriate for both males and females. Also, the three bottles of the drink are equal in size and shape, meaning they are in the same class with no differences in size or shape. The colours used in the ad are mainly green, depicting freshness, youth, and newness. The words ‘*Naturally refreshing*’, and ‘*Alvaro, naturally you*’, connotes that the drink is the product that is refreshing and it is made for the viewer. All the represented participants are smiling, restating the refreshment that comes from the drink.

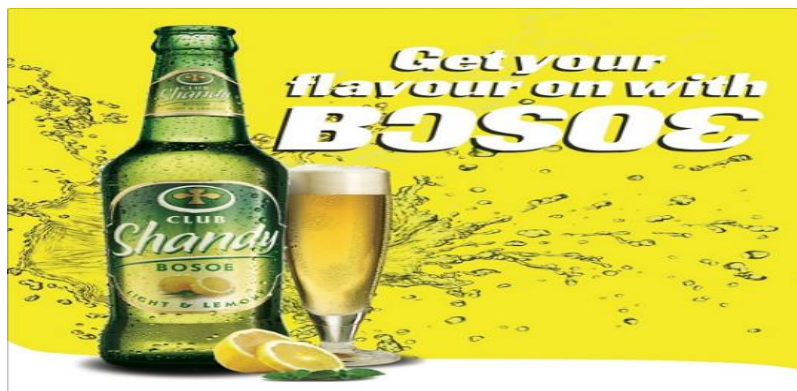


Figure 5: Club Shandy

Club Shandy, affectionately and locally called ‘Bosoe’, meaning enjoyment, is one of Accra Brewery Limited’s products introduced in the early 1990s. The use of colour in Figure 5 helps support a certain level of uniformity throughout their account. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) have found that textual cohesion can also be promoted by ‘colour coordination’, rather than by the repetition of a single colour. The various colours of the post have the same degree of brightness and saturation. In terms of colour, there is a lot of yellow and green in the images. The colour contrast between the cool white (Text) and green is impressive: a strongly saturated splash of water behind the drink creates an intensive and anxious atmosphere. The colour contrast contributes greatly to the accomplishment of the construction of the hidden message.

Another element of the billboard is the linguistic text “*GET YOUR FLAVOURS ON WITH BOSOË*” which is the slogan of the billboard. It covers the entire ‘real’ zone of the billboard (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The word ‘BOSOË’ is in all capital white letters with the phrase ‘*GET YOUR FLAVOUR ON*’ on top of it with small letters. The text connects with the viewers’ gaze to the drink, which is also made visible by the contrast of green and gold. The design and its strategic use of colours create a clear reading path for the viewer, which conveys the intended message. The use of the word ‘bosoe’ relates the drink to the local music and dance, where such drinks are usually served. Labelling the product as ‘bosoe’ brings it to the Ghanaian dialect, Twi, where the meaning of the product’s name will be easy to relate to by the audience.



Figure 6: Joy Dadi Bitters

Figure 6 features a represented participant—a woman sitting on a chair and holding a glass of Joy Dadi Bitters—interacting with the viewer. Her relaxed posture and gesture suggest a recommendation of the product. The transitivity pattern reveals that Joy Dadi Bitters is the actor, while the woman, enjoying the drink, is the goal. The advertisement’s effectiveness lies in the interplay between verbal language and imagery. The slogan “True Bitters of the Land” is positioned at the bottom right, while the term “Adwumawura” describes the product’s benefits and qualities.

The advertisement exhibits prominence through its vibrant colours across the background, text, and product, with varying font sizes. The use of frames indicates the relationship between images (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). A larger upper frame contains the woman’s image, while a smaller frame below supports the text. The abstract background conveys ideologies of individuality and consumerism (Fairclough, 2003).

The advertisement employs a long shot, allowing viewers to appreciate the characteristics of Joy Dadi Bitters. The information value is organised according to dimensions of visual space: the ideal (top right) and real (bottom) aspects. The image of the participant and the product bottles conveys the “ideal” sensations consumers can expect, while the text provides “real” practical information. The language complements its visuals with positive adjectives like “true,” emphasizing the product’s benefits. The prominent image of the woman dominates the advertisement, establishing a strong connection between the visual and verbal elements. This relationship aligns with Barthes’ (1977) concept of relay, where the text enhances the message conveyed by the image.



Figure 7: Malta Guinness

Figure 7 presents two types of participants: represented participants and interactive participants. The represented participants, who are males socializing with the audience, hold Malta Guinness, the advertised product. They engage in a communication act, with the audience listening to their message. The ad utilises both verbal language and imagery to attract viewers, showing the represented participants enjoying Malta Guinness and conveying smiles and social interaction.

The verbal text “fuel your greatness” highlights the product's qualities and is strategically placed near the images to enhance the interaction between verbal and visual modes. The product is positioned alongside the represented participants to emphasise its physical appeal, while the phrase “let’s go” visually complements the advertisement. Prominence is achieved through various factors, including colour choice, image placement, and font sizes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The images of the youths, who model the product, are located at the top, while the product image sits at the bottom. The catchy headline is large and white, and the brand slogan is also prominent. The equal size of the images and texts reflects their interconnectedness. Using young, non-alcoholic drinkers as representatives is advantageous, portraying a positive image. Framing indicates whether images are cohesively presented (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The advertisement features two unequal frames: the upper frame showcases the represented participants, while the lower frame contains the product and supporting text. This larger upper frame emphasises consumer satisfaction. The ad employs a close shot, allowing viewers to connect more intimately with the participants and the product. Mayer’s (2008) “spatial contiguity” principle supports this design, suggesting that related images and words should be placed near each other.

The represented participants are depicted against a contextualised background, representing the real world, while the product is shown against an abstract background (Edwards, McEnteggart & Barnes-Holmes, 2022). The advertisement follows the ideal/real dimension, where the participants’ joyful expressions and attire represent the ideal, while the product and accompanying text represent the real aspects at the bottom. The linguistic elements in the ad include nouns, pronouns, interjections, and adjectives, such as “fuel,” “your,” “let’s go,” and “greatness.”



Figure 8: Malta Guinness

Figure 8 effectively highlights the relationship between the represented participants, which include a young man and Malta Guinness, a non-alcoholic beverage from Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited. The composition is arranged so that viewers naturally move from the image to the text, reading from right to left. The vibrant colours and the young man's smile convey the message that Malta Guinness fuels greatness, while his gaze towards the product and indirectly towards the viewer creates a sense of connection and engagement.

The advertisement's linguistic components communicate an interactive message that invites the viewer to consider the benefits of the product. The use of the imperative mood emphasises a call to action, encouraging the viewer to "fuel your greatness." This interaction suggests that Malta Guinness is portrayed as the key to a bright future, underscored by the bright colours used in the advertisement. The young man's gesture of pointing and gazing at the Malta Guinness reinforces the product's importance in achieving this greatness.

The verbal component "HIGH IN VITAMINS B1, B2, B3 & B6" communicates factual information about the product, enhancing its appeal. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), information located in the bottom region of an advertisement typically conveys factual and truthful data. The statement about vitamins provides viewers with valuable information regarding the nutritional benefits of Malta Guinness, alongside the energy it offers. The marginal information, dependent on the central message, subtly invites viewers to purchase the product after processing the advertisement from right to left.

The advertisement's compositional meaning is further enhanced by the salience of the information presented. The use of white in the verbal mode makes the text stand out against the vibrant background. Yellow is the dominant colour in the advertisement, symbolizing brightness, youth, joy, and positive feelings. This choice complements the young man's happy expression, suggesting that Malta Guinness is the source of his happiness and vitality. Overall, the advertisement artfully combines visual and verbal elements to convey its message effectively, creating an inviting atmosphere that encourages viewer engagement and product recognition.



Figure 9: Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola drink is an internationally acclaimed non-alcoholic drink. Coca Cola was first produced by Dr. John Styth Pemperton in the United States of America and has since been enjoyed in over 200 countries worldwide. In Ghana, it is produced by the Coca Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited, located in Accra.

A cursory look at the advertisement in Figure 9 portrays the product, the world map, and the hand holding the drink as the represented participants. In terms of representational meaning, it is clear that the advertiser is communicating about the brand as a world-acclaimed drink that is held in high esteem. This is seen in the sky-like background that is employed to juxtapose the Coca-Cola drink in the foreground over the world map. This, therefore, confirms the verbal message that Coca-Cola is the friendliest drink on earth. The text-image relationship is that of the text making a claim and the image buttressing it. Moreover, the hand holding the drink firmly with the Coca-Cola on the bottle facing the viewer and the world map following affirms that Coca-Cola is accepted as a world-class drink.



Figure 10: Fanta

Figure 10 has a very straightforward representational meaning captured in the product can, colour, and emoji that are used as representational participants. The use of the dominant orange colour symbolises energy, enthusiasm, creativity, and determination (Ademilokun & Olateju, 2015). This implies that Fanta drink is a creative product with no artificial flavor, unlike other similar products of its kind. Moreover, the representation of the orange fruit both at the top and at the bottom of the Fanta product, as well as at the opposite extreme left side of the advertisement, communicates to the viewer the natural fruit that is used to produce the drink. The gaze of an emoji represents an inanimate human with a smiling and direct gaze at the viewer. The designer likewise uses verbal mode as anchorage to elaborate on the peculiar feature of the product, which is “*No artificial flavour*”. The use of the assertive expression “*No artificial flavour*” reiterates the visual message that expresses the natural flavour of the product, which is the orange flavour. However, instead of the designer stating it contains only natural flavour, the producer chose to use the denial expression to affirm the natural flavour content of the drink.



Figure 11: Takai

Figure 11 is an advertisement of Ghana Industrial Holding Company- GIHOC Distilleries Co., LTD. The advertisement, as part of its representational participants, is made up of a lady, the bottles of Takai (the product), and the logo of the company. The participants are represented in a conceptual manner where each individual participant communicates a message towards the overall goal of the advertisement: to advertise the Takai product. The shot of the lady is clearly a close medium shot, which covers from the waist level to the top. The fact that the lady covers over half of the advertisement space implies the participant is regarded as the key message to the viewer. In this sense, the lady engages the viewer in an interactive meaning in that the direct gaze speaks of demanding goods and services from the viewer. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the direct gaze demands goods from interactive participants to either imagine the message in the advertisement or associate with the character in the image. The smile on the face of the participant signifies social affinity, identification, and emotional appeal to the viewers. The direct gaze demands that the viewer imagine the moment of the participant with the Takai drink. As argued by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the participant's gaze (and the gesture, if present) demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her. In this line, the relaxation moment of the participant is depicted in her lying down posture and holding the drink of Takai as if to say the drink is making her relaxation worthwhile. Figure 11 also used a young lady as the represented participant. The posture of the lady connotes a person who is enjoying the drink. This is somewhat unusual since young women of African descent are not readily given to alcoholic drinks. The advertisers are, therefore, appealing to the young women that they can also enjoy alcoholic drinks without any problem, since there is the traditional view that alcoholic drinks are usually consumed by men only.



Figure 12: Alomo Bitters

Figure 12 is an advertisement by Kasapreko Company LTD, which brews Alomo Bitters and other beverages. In this billboard, the represented participants, who are the two males and two females, and the image of a hand, likely to be a man's hand, immediately draw a viewer's attention to the ad. There are also other represented participants, which are the eight bottles of Alomo Bitters and the logo of the company. From Figure 12, it can be deduced that there is a transactional reaction between the foreground man and woman. The picture shows the two are enjoying themselves in a happy moment full of smiles and social affinity. The close personal distance between the represented participants signifies an intimacy relationship between the participants. This, as captured in the ideal zone, is suggestive that the product helps build intimacy between partners in a very intimate manner. Moreover, the smile and relax posture of the participants appeal to the viewers to see the Alomo Bitters product as the secret behind their happy relationship. The presentation of the primary represented participants in a romantic posture portrays the drink as the facilitator of that relationship. Both the secondary and primary represented participants are enjoying the moment as though in a jam with their partners. The male is seen to be making an attempt to kiss the lady, and this could be leading to the charging up that Alomo bitters offer users. The mood is therefore beyond normal because the participants are charged up by the drink.

The verbal mode in the right region of the real zone presents an insightful message, which is the logo of the advertisement "*CHARGE UP WITH ALOMO BITTERS*". However, a detail analysis of the verbal mode in relation to the visual message confirms the aphrodisiac message that is implicitly captured in the advertisement. This is because the man and woman in the foreground of the ideal zone communicate a message of romance since the posture signifies the man in motion to kissing the woman. The secondary participants, though not explicit, suggest a similar posture between the represented participants. Combining the visual implicit meaning with the verbal mode explicit meaning can be explainable by Barthes' idea of relay in image-text relationship, where the text extends the message that is presented by the image. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argued that secondary represented participants normally shown in the background can be removed without affecting the representational meaning, but the compositional meaning will be affected. Moreover, the indirect gaze from the represented participants to the interactive participants suggests an offer of information. As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) present it that indirect gaze has a visual function of offering goods and services (information) to the viewer. In this case, viewers are expected to decode the meaning that is embedded in the represented participants, which is romance.

The colours of the advertisement demarcated the billboard space into two parts: the top and the bottom. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the vertical structure of visual composition communicates the ideal and the real dichotomy. As noted earlier, the top region represents the ideal zone; in other words, what is supposed to happen. The bottom region communicates the real zone. It is logical to conclude that the product is real, its discriminating feature of enhancing intimacy in a relationship, and the fact that the product has added a new look but the same quality are all real and true. The logo of the company, which is a tree, is presented in the margin region of the ideal zone. This implies the logo is well known and therefore, it is not emphasised in the advertisement. The ethical considerations that are not emphasized are presented in the margin region with the visual of a pregnant woman and the 18+ number to indicate that the product is not suitable for minus. The advertisement clarifies

this visual message with the expression, “*Drink Responsibly*”. Therefore, viewers are encouraged to drink the product responsibly by not drinking when pregnant or underage.



Figure 13: Guinness

This advertisement is also another product by Guinness Ghana Company Ltd. The advertisement has two salient representative participants, namely Michael Essien, an international footballer, and the Guinness product that is being advertised. The other background participants are a mass of audience in a cheering mood for the player as he is portrayed to kick the ball. Guo and Feng (2017) studied advertisements of the 2014 Brazil World Cup. The researchers discovered that when a designer chooses the participants who are very famous in the hearts of people, and he or she is a representative people, the producer will easily get his profit and persuade people to believe that the products are better than other products at the same level. From the argument of Guo and Feng (2017), it is obvious that Guinness is drawing a positive association from the image of one of the best Ghanaian midfielders with international reputation to communicate the message of Guinness as a product that leads consumers to greatness.

The framing of the advertisement classifies represented participants into two: the prominent participant Michael Essien at the top, and the cheering fans at the bottom. In between the cheering fans at the bottom is the Guinness product. In essence, the designer portrays that the ordinary viewer can become a star if he or she reaches for Guinness.

Concerning colour, it is evident that the designer used moderate colour saturation, which establishes higher modality. The black colour of the bottom is sharply contrasted by the bright shine of the top. Moreover, the background gives authenticity to the setting of the advertisement as being stadium. The contextualization, appropriate black and white colours, as well as the framing of the content into prominent and less prominent represented participants, make the advertisement achieve more visual modality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Guo and Feng (2017) argued that the foreground and background of the regional environment are combined together to reflect the representational environment. The representational meaning is just a functional description of the product. In order to leave a good impression on the viewers. The designer must put the shared information into the advertisements. The speaker and the listener must communicate in the voiceless; if so, the producer will easily get his profit and persuade people to believe his products are better than other products at the same level.



Figure 14: Alomo Root Wine

Figure 14, the Kasapreko Company Ltd seeks to communicate a simple message through their advertisement: the new product Alomo Root Wine. The designer, therefore, adopted centre and margin regions of visual composition. In other words, the represented participant that is salient to attract the attention of the viewer is the Alomo Root Wine product. The product is placed at the centre to communicate it as the central offer of the advertisement from which all other information is ancillary (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). Visual of the product communicates the new look of Alomo Root Wine to the viewer in a very straightforward manner. The product is foregrounded and salient in terms of the size of the frame and the region of placement. The background colours reflect the colour of the main raw materials used to produce the beverage, thus the roots. This is anchored by the land and the plant, with its roots showing, but the leaves coiling around the product. This further states that the product is purely herbal wine made of precisely the root and leaves of plants.

The visual communication of Alomo Root Wine has a new look, and being a root wine is relayed by the marginal verbal mode. The left verbal mode reads: “*ALOMO ROOT WINE*,” which complements the messages in the image of the roots of the plants going down. The words are written with a special font type and in white colour to make them salient from the background colour. The verbal message of the root wine also connotes the idea that the Alomo Root Wine is claimed to be a drink of the land; that is, a wine produced in Ghana for Ghanaians. On the right side, the word “NEW” is given special treatment to make its information value salient. This affirms that it is a new product from the camp of the Kasapreko Company Ltd. The expression at the bottom: “Relax, chill, and unwind with the root” emphasises the benefits of taking Alomo Root Wine, which are relaxation, enjoyment, and naturalness.

The use of colours contributes greatly to the overall naturalness of advertisements in what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) term as visual modality. Visual modality is the reality or validity of the visual display. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the modulation, differentiation, and saturation of colours affect the modality positively or negatively. Colour modulation is the representation of the different shades of the same colour. When there is overmodulation, the image looks unreal. The greater the number of colours, the less the modality. Colour saturation is the extent of sharpness of the Colour used in an image. It ranges from brightness to black and white. In terms of colour as a determiner of modality in visual

grammar, figure 14 is precisely well-balanced in terms of the use of colours, hence there is greater modality in the advertisement. As in the other ads, the Alomo Root Wine advertisement included the ethical component, but in this one, in a verbal format, which is “DRINK RESPONSIBLY. NOT RECOMMENDED TO PREGNANT WOMEN”. The overriding message of the advertisement, which is creating awareness about a new product in the market, is thus achieved through the visual and verbal modes.



Figure 15: Coca-Cola

This advertisement by the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana provides the viewer with a noticeable female representative participant who holds a Coca-Cola drink with a broad smile on her face. The representational meaning also includes the red colour in various shades and intermittent white in text parts to show salience. In Figure 15, the interactive meaning is clear that the represented participant is having a direct gaze with the audience, which suggests a demand for information, thus calling on the viewers to imagine the product's benefits. Moreover, the interactive meaning is established by the broad smile of the represented participant that is directed towards the viewer in order to establish social affinity, identification, and emotional appeal. The smile, coupled with the relaxed posture of the represented participant, appeals to the viewers to imagine the relaxation, satisfaction, and refreshment Coca-Cola offers consumers. Still in the interactive meaning, the designer closes a short shot which captures the shoulder level upwards of the participants. This made the participant establish a personal distance with the audience, and the viewers can easily see the hair, the smile, the gesture, among other details.

The advertisement also contains verbal mode that reiterates the refreshment portrayed in the visual. The verbal message reads: “*TASTE REFRESHMENT*”. This imperative mood offers the viewers information about what Coca-Cola can offer them: refreshment. Moreover, the slogan “*TASTE THE FEELING*” is right beneath the product name, and it is distinguished through the use of a circle to establish contrast and project the product name. Through the verbal component, the viewers can read the meaning from the visual that the represented participant is really refreshed.



Figure 16: Smirnoff

Smirnoff is another product from Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited. This advertisement has two representative participants, thus the woman and the Smirnoff product itself. The compositional arrangement of the participants from left to right provides a flow from the image of the woman who is connected to the product at the right through the verbal words “I choose Smirnoff. The ‘I’ is metaphorical because it refers to the represented participant who is literally assumed to be making her choice. In a deeper note, the ‘I’ stands for the viewer who is making a choice of Smirnoff over other beverages. The represented participant quickly engages the viewer in a direct gaze, which implies a demand for goods or services. It signifies the participant is communicating what she chooses and expects the viewer to equally choose Smirnoff product. The smile on her face, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), communicates social affinity and affection with the viewer. The viewer is invited to choose Smirnoff, the product that is advertised in the advertisement. The use of a woman as a represented participant tends to position the drink as the choice of women. It appeals to females who may like to make a similar choice. The statement tends to be too powerful, instructing the viewer indirectly on what to also choose. It therefore put the viewer in a place of making a choice, in this case, choosing Smirnoff.



Figure 17: Malta Guinness

This product is also from the production outfit of Guinness Ghana Breweries Ltd. The representational meaning is seen in the product, which stands out in the advertisement, and the two male and female participants who are in a celebration mood with a bottle of the product in each hand. The slogan of the advertisement is captured in the message: “*BURSTING WITH NATURAL GOODNESS*”. The verbal component is completed by the image of the product, which, by extension, is bursting with natural goodness. The designer communicates to the

interactive participants that Malta Guinness is a product that is bursting with natural goodness, and it is fit for their moments of celebration. The emphatic inscription at the bottom of the far left emphasises the drink as a soft drink with no alcohol content. The use of the word “*FEEL GOOD!*” beneath the represented male and female participants communicates to the viewer to feel good through using the product. This is widely depicted in the way the represented participants are dancing off their feet. The represented participants have been carefully pegged closed to the product, suggesting that they are deriving their happiness from the product; Malta Guinness.

The colour of the advertisement is predominantly the brand colours, which further communicates the brand trademarks to the viewer in a more subtle way. Effects that are added to draw the represented participants communicate how the designer combines creativity through the multimodal text to communicate the message that Malta Guinness is the product with natural goodness that is suitable for moments of celebration and enjoyment.



Figure 18: Beta Malt

In 2015, Accra Brewery Limited debuted Beta Malt. In this advertisement, the viewer's attention is drawn to the verbal messages: “mmmh! Rich and Tasty Beta malt.” The product is represented at the right with the word new written in a white background. The margins of the advertisement are occupied by the images of cereal, which is the essential ingredient for the production of the product. The colour is read with different shades that communicate warmth as well as the love the product offers. The represented participants engage the viewer in an indirect gaze, which, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), offers goods and services to the viewers. The viewer's attention is drawn to the information in the advertisement that Beta malt is new and tasty, with fortifying vitamins, minerals, and nutrients for a good boost, which makes it a perfect complement for on-the-go occasions.



Figure 19: Ruut Extra

Being Ghana's first cassava beer, Ruut Extra Premium Beer is brewed from the very best local raw materials sourced from around the country. The advertisement is straightforward in its representation of the participant to the viewer. The visual product of the Ruut Extra bottle and glass of Ruut Extra is presented to the viewer in the far right, the new region. The verbal component of the advertisement that occupies the left portion of the billboard communicates the benefit of Ruut Extra, which is to give consumers extra energy. The use of framing to demarcate the price of the product from the rest of the text helps the interactive participants to know the cost of the Ruut Extra drink. The product has high modality, thus truth value, because the saturation and differentiation of colours are well controlled in the advertisement. The compositional meaning gives the viewer a text-image viewing format where the text makes a point and the image relays it by presenting the product to the viewer. The product shot in a way that gives an indirect gaze at the viewer, which, in essence, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) is offers information to the viewer, which is that Ruut Extra is the only drink that offers extra energy to consumers. Finally, the drink contains the ethical messages where Drink responsibly applies to minus and pregnant women.



Figure 20: Club beer

First brewed in 1931, Club beer has been a national icon through the consistent use of the 'Adinkra' (Club) symbol. In this advertisement, the represented participant is precisely the Club product that is advertised. The advert is a promotional type. The product occupies the given region, which is the left part of the advertisement. This, in a way, tells the viewer

that he or she is aware of the club product. However, the designer communicated new relevant information to the viewer in the new region. The new information offer to the viewer is that the Club is running a promotion, which is dubbed in the logo of the advertisement: “Charlie” *ONE GHANA, ONE CLUB PROMO*. The verbal message addressed the viewers as friends through the use of the informal slang “Charlie”. Verbal suggests the product is now sold at one Ghana cedi, and viewers who will purchase stand to win a prize by sending the code in the lead to the number 1931 to claim their prizes. The designer adds that the viewer can learn more by contacting the club’s company. Through the compositional meaning of placing the participants in a horizontal structure of visual composition, the viewer is compelled to read the advertisement from left to right to understand the visual message of the club product offering a promotion to cherish customers. The colour of the advertisement is predominantly green, which speaks of freshness and coolness. The advertisement communicates the information about the club promo through proper coordination of the visual and verbal modes.

The word “Charlie” is informal slang used by the youth to address friends. The advertisement, therefore, using “Charlie” invites the viewer as a friend to participate in the drinking of the Club drink. The logo of the company is presented at the bottom, far left, with the name of the product right beneath it. The inscription at the far bottom of the advertisement, “Crisp and Refreshing,” provides the viewer with the benefit of the product. The choice of green colour signifies freshness, youth, and coolness. Moreover, the advertisement includes the ethical consideration through the symbol of a pregnant woman and 18+, meaning the product is not appropriate for pregnant women and people under eighteen years of age.

6. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to explore the semiotic resources and embedded ideologies in billboard advertisements for beverages in Ghana, employing Kress and Van Leeuwen’s Visual Grammar theory to uncover how meaning is constructed and communicated through multimodal elements. The findings reveal that advertisers strategically deployed semiotic resources such as celebrity images, logos, and product visuals to establish brand identity and consumer appeal. Gestures were used to express product benefits or emotional resonance, while symbols—including logos and world maps—served to reinforce brand authority and global connectedness. Colour emerged as a particularly powerful communicative tool. Beyond visual attraction, it served brand recall and conveyed culturally resonant meanings. For instance, Coca-Cola’s red and Guinness’s black were consistently used to strengthen brand distinctiveness, while colours like yellow and green symbolised energy, joy, freshness, and relaxation—appealing directly to consumer values and lifestyle aspirations. These findings underscore the centrality of visual semiotics in constructing persuasive advertising messages that align with Ghanaian cultural codes and consumer expectations. Theoretically, the study expands the application of visual grammar to African advertising contexts, illustrating how semiotic resources function not only to inform but to ideologically position brands within local and global discourses. Practically, the study offers valuable insights for advertisers seeking to enhance message impact: effective beverage advertising in Ghana hinges on an integrated use of visual and textual modes that resonate with culturally grounded meanings. Future research could build on this work by examining audience interpretations of these multimodal elements, thereby bridging the gap between advertising design and consumer reception, and deepening understanding of how visual persuasion operates within specific sociocultural contexts.

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