

## A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Online Soft Drink Advertisements

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Received 16/10/2021	Abstract
Received in revised form 21/12/2021	The objectives of this study are to investigate verbal and visual semiotic resources employed as well as the cultural aspects embedded in the online soft drink advertisements. The data of this study was selected from the U.S. official soft drink brand Coca-Cola Instagram account (@cocacola), and a total of 58 advertisements were analyzed. Three analytical frameworks were employed to analyze the data. First, Nilsen (1979)'s phonetic devices framework was used for verbal resources analysis. Second, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006)'s and Harrison (2008)'s social semiotics frameworks were adapted for analyzing visual resources. Third, Hofstede et al. (2010)'s cultural dimensional model was employed to discuss the cultural aspects in the advertisements. The analysis of the verbal resources in the advertisements reveal two types of phonetic devices: alliteration and assonance. For the visual analysis, the advertisements tend to use the brand's color, red, instead of a logo to make the brand memorable. The representative participants (RP)' positions and gazes also give the sense of
<b>Keywords</b> cultural dimensions; multimodal critical discourse analysis; online soft drink advertisements; phonetic devices; social semiotics	

	equality between the viewers and the brand. Most of the advertisements use visual resources that complement the verbal resources in order for the advertisements to be coherent as well as being able to convey the embedded cultural aspects. Two cultural aspects out of six were found: masculinity and indulgence. In addition, the study also found religious aspects embedded in the data.
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## Introduction

### Rationale and Background of the Study

Carbonated drinks have been a popular type of soft drink for a long time, and the soft drink market is unsurprisingly a competitive market. According to Statista (2020), soft drinks are the biggest segment of non-alcoholic drinks, in which carbonated drinks made up more than half of the soft drink market worldwide in 2019. Moreover, Coca-Cola was also one of the most valuable brands in the soft drink industry in the same year and had been for many years before that (Forbes, 2019). Advertising plays an important role in promoting and making brands become valuable as good advertising language makes effective advertisements, which change the readers of the advertisements to become the purchasers, eventually (Aaker, 1991).

Effective advertisements usually employ some kinds of language play in which linguistic features are made playful. Language play is often found in everyday life and in every language. For example, many people blend the word 'paw' with other words when they are talking about dogs, such as 'It's pawsome.' (It's awesome.). However, the characteristics of language play can vary, depending on the language users' gender, social status, social norm, age, etc. (Crystal, 2001). One of the most obvious contexts in which language play is often found is in advertisements. Most of advertisements usually involve some kind of language play, as Crystal (2001) stated "*language play is part of the essence of advertising*" (p. 94) since the strange and sometimes ungrammatical words or structures in language play can catch people's attention. For example, the ending '-er' in 'back-er than ever' was found in one Coca-Cola advertisement promoting a limited Coca-Cola 'retro' collection that brought back the original type of a can and its original taste that the brand produced in

1985. The ‘-er’ suffix was used to indicate that this retro collection really brought back the original taste and packaging of Coca-Cola.

However, it can be noticed that most advertisements contain not only verbal cues but also visual cues. Therefore, it can be assumed that visual cues somehow make the advertisements more interesting and effective when they are combined with verbal cues. Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1989) called these different types of cues “*semiotic resources*”. Humans usually use multiple semiotic resources or modes of communication at the same time to communicate effectively (Fairclough, 2015, Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Jewitt, 2009). Logically speaking, multimodality in advertisements can maximize the intended meaning and eventually make advertisements easier for readers to interpret (Aaker, 1991; Cook, 2001; Crystal, 2008, Kuswandini, 2018; Moriarty et al., 2018; Zhou, 2018). Therefore, the multimodality in advertisements is analyzed in the present study to investigate how the multimodality makes the advertisements effective. The use of multiple resources in advertisements not only conveys persuasive messages but also reflects cultures. de Mooij and Hofstede (2010) mentioned that consumers’ interests or familiarities should be considered in order to produce good advertisements that catch their attention. Therefore, cultural aspects embedded in the advertisements are also investigated in this study.

A number of researchers have conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of various types of advertisements (Bi, 2019; Hu & Luo, 2016; Kuswandini, 2018). However, these studies investigated only visual resources drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) social semiotics framework. Moreover, Bi (2019) studied vintage print advertisements which were very different from today’s advertisements, while Hu and Luo (2016) and Kuswandini (2018) studied online airline advertisements and concluded that the airline selected particular choices of words and visual cues to give the viewers the sense of privilege they would get when they flew with the airline. Anyhow, none of them investigated verbal resources of advertisements on social media. Recently, advertisements broadcasted online on social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram have become more famous and influential since they can effectively reach the target consumers wherever they are at a relatively low cost compared to television and print advertisements (Nathaniel et al., 2017). Therefore, the present study is interested in studying the discourse of online advertisements. It aims to bridge these gaps by

analyzing both verbal and visual semiotic resources in advertisements launched on social media.

In short, this study aims to investigate multimodality and the embedded cultural aspects in online soft drink advertisements. The findings of the study yield many benefits. First, they provide a better understanding of the discourse of advertising to see how the verbal and visual resources in advertisements affect or persuade the target readers. Also, this study can provide a guideline for companies to create catchy and interesting online advertisements.

## Research Questions

The present study has two research questions:

1.2.1 What are the verbal and visual semiotic resources employed in online social media soft drink advertisements?

1.2.2 What are the cultural aspects embedded in the online social media soft drink advertisements?

## Literature review

This section presents the theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks of the present study: advertising, multimodal critical discourse analysis, phonetic devices, social semiotics, and cultural dimensions.

## Advertising

Advertising is generally known as a way to promote products or services to the masses by giving information to the viewers as well as persuading them to purchase the product. Even though the main goal of advertising is to persuade the target viewers to buy products, Cook (2001) and Danesi (2015) suggested that advertisements also reflect people's mindsets, social, and ideological positions. These ideologies are conveyed through both verbal and visual resources simultaneously, and the viewers usually perceive the messages being conveyed based on their own experiences. Fairclough (1989, pp.2) called this experience-based assumption as a "common-sense assumption". The advertising language also has a similar common-sense assumption or power ideology embedded.

Advertisements launched on different channels use different resources and techniques due to their nature in order to carry the meanings and catch attention. For example, radio advertisements can only rely on the verbal resources and voice of the radio host while TV advertisements rely on moving pictures (video) and sounds as much as verbal resources. The most recent and popular advertising channel is online social media (Nathaniel et al., 2017). Statista (2020) reported that the most popular social media in 2019 was Facebook, followed by Instagram. However, due to the limitation of access to American Coca-Cola's Facebook page, the present study chose Instagram as the source of information. Due to the nature of Instagram which is a photo-sharing application, photos or pictures can carry messages through multiple resources such as mood and tone of the pictures, actions and captions. To capture all the messages an advertisement conveys, every semiotic resource available, including verbal and visual semiotic resources, should be taken into consideration when analyzing advertisements. As a result, recent advertising-related research, including the present study, has been focusing more on multimodality.

### **Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)**

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) was developed from Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis. While Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis focus on the relationship between patterns of the verbal language or a single source of meaning and its context (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Harris, 1952; Paltridge, 2012; and van Dijk, 2009), MCDA takes into account other sources of meaning since meanings are not purely made with verbal language but with a combination of multiple modes of communication such as pictures and colors simultaneously. Moreover, MCDA aims to elaborate power, ideology, values, beliefs, and identities embedded in the language and other semiotic resources. Jewitt (2009) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explicated that conveying messages through multiple semiotic resources maximizes the intended meanings in a certain group of people or society, based on the common-sense assumption of the people in each setting. In other words, the relationship between form and meaning of meaning-making resources at a certain time in a certain setting is not random.

Due to the multimodal nature of advertisements, this study employs the MCDA approach. Both verbal and visual resources in online soft drink advertisements were analyzed in order to fully understand the intended meanings and their relationship or contribution to the society. Phonetic devices adapted from Nilsen (1979)'s linguistic taxonomy was employed to analyze the verbal resources, and social semiotics proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) was used to analyze the visual resources. Anyhow, Harrison (2008) later summarized Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)'s social semiotics and proposed a clearer guideline for analysis. The present study adapted Harrison (2008)'s framework that shows the summary of Kress & van Leeuwen's social semiotic framework as it is easier to understand and see the whole picture of the framework. The details of phonetic devices and social semiotics frameworks are presented in the next section.

### **Phonetic Devices**

The linguistic taxonomy proposed by Nilsen (1979) was ideal for analyzing persuasive writings since it is based on linguistic units and is comprehensive and not confusing. He identified five levels of language analysis: phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Each level represents a distinct concentration, beginning with the smallest unit of language (i.e., sound) and progressing to the largest unit of language (i.e., text). However, the preliminary study of the present study has found that phonological features are the outstanding characteristics of the verbal resources in the online soft drink advertisements. Therefore, the verbal semiotic resources in the advertisements were analyzed only in terms of phonetic devices.

The term "phonetic devices" was used by Nilsen (1979) and Reece et al. (1994) to describe word creation processes that aim to modify or play with the sound or pronunciation of a word. It consists of six devices, namely alliteration, assonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia, clipping, and blending. Table 1 shows definitions and examples of each phonetic device

**Table 1***Phonetic Devices* (Nilsen, 1979)

Phonetic Device	Definition	Example
1. Alliteration	Repetition of initial consonant sound of words or phrases	<u>S</u> erving <u>s</u> quads in <u>s</u> tyle
2. Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds of words or phrases	<u>T</u> ag your <u>r</u> ide or <u>d</u> ie
3. Rhyme	Matching or a partial matching of sounds through repetition	<u>C</u> oca - <u>C</u> ola
4. Onomatopoeia	Words that represent the sound to which they refer	<u>P</u> ssst (fizzing sound)
5. Clipping	The shortening of words. Sometimes the clipped part of the word is replaced by apostrophe	<u>C</u> oke (Coca-Cola)
6. Blending	Combining morphemes, sometimes with letters elision	<u>S</u> taycation (stay+vacation)

### Social Semiotics

In social semiotics proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), meanings can be conveyed through non-verbal language as well as verbal language. The framework aims to analyze the meaning being carried by visual clues in pictures. Meanings are divided into three types of meanings, or metafunctions as Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) called, namely representational, interpersonal, and compositional metafunction. As mentioned, Harrison (2008) proposed a clearer guideline for analysis. This present study, thus, analyzed the visual resources in the advertisements based on Harrison (2008). Each function consists of different visual resources. Each of them is elaborated in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Resources of each metafunction (Harrison, 2008, p. 65-68).*

Metafunction	Resources	
1. Representational	Structures	Processes
	<p>Narrative: Viewers imagine a story about the RPs by themselves.</p> <p>Conceptual: Viewers interpret who or what the RPs represent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action: The story is built from the RPs' actions</li> <li>• Reactional: The story is built from eyelines between RPs</li> <li>• Classificatory: RPs are considered as group members</li> <li>• Analytical: RPs are considered as parts of the whole concept/structure</li> <li>• Symbolic: RPs represent themselves and also symbolize some ideas</li> </ul>
2. Interpersonal	Feature	Feature Processes
	Gaze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand: RPs look at the viewers directly to create a strong involvement</li> <li>• Offer: RPs do not look at the viewers</li> </ul>
	Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimate: Head only</li> <li>• Close personal: Head and shoulders</li> <li>• Far personal: Upper half</li> <li>• Close social: Whole body</li> <li>• Far social: Whole body with space around the RP</li> <li>• Public distance: Torsos of several people</li> </ul>
3. Compositional	Horizontal perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front: The RP belongs to the viewer's group</li> <li>• Oblique: The RP does not belong to the viewer's group</li> </ul>
	Vertical perspective (RPs - visual text and RPs – viewers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High: The RP looks down - more power</li> <li>• Medium: The RP has the same eye level – equal power</li> <li>• Low: The RP looks up – less power</li> </ul>
	Information value: RPs'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given/New: RPs on the left</li> </ul>

Metafunction	Resources
	<p>placements suggest different information roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal/Real: RPs on the top half are ideal while RPs on the bottom half are real</li> <li>• Center/Margin: RPs in the center are important while others are subservient</li> </ul>
	<p>Salience: The way the RPs catch viewer's attention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size: Big RPs show great salience</li> <li>• Focus sharpness: RPs that are not focused show less salience</li> <li>• Tonal contrast: High contrast area suggests more salience</li> <li>• Color contrast: strong saturated colors have more salience</li> <li>• Foreground/Background: An RP in the foreground has more salience</li> </ul>
	<p>Framing: The connections between RPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framelines: lines in the pictures suggest the connections between the RPs.</li> <li>• Pictorial framing devices: RPs are connected</li> <li>• Empty spaces: RPs are separated</li> <li>• Colors: more continuity in colors suggests stronger connections</li> <li>• Visual shapes: More continuity in shapes suggests stronger connections</li> </ul>

## Cultural Dimensions

Even though MCDA and the two frameworks mentioned in 2.3 and 2.4 provide approaches to interpret messages that advertisements carry via multiple resources, they cannot reveal sufficient information, so Jewitt and Oyama (2001) suggested employing other related theories as they put:

*“In studies of the use of semiotic resources, visual social semiotics can only ever be one element of an interdisciplinary equation which must also involve relevant theories and histories.” (p. 138).*

As mentioned, people usually perceive messages being conveyed based on their personal experience, meaning that people from different places have their own world view. To enhance the potential of advertisements, creators should consider using available semiotic resources in local contexts as well. Therefore, understanding local contexts and cultures is vital. To fully understand how the advertisements create an impact on viewers, this study, consequently, employed Hofstede et al.’s (2010) cultural dimensions as another framework to analyze cultural aspects embedded in the advertisements.

Hofstede et al. (2010) noted that within the larger culture of any country, various subcultural groups co-exist. Variations across different groups can be found along each value continuum. Hofstede et al. (2010) proposed six cultural dimensions: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism and Collectivism (IDV), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Masculinity and Femininity (MAS), Long-term versus Short-Term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus restraint (IVR). Figure 1 describes the interpretation of the index of each dimension.

## Figure 1

*Cultural Dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010)*

Low Index	Dimension	High Index
Equality	1. PDI	Inequality
Collectivism	2. IDV	Individualism
Risk tolerant	3. UAI	Risk intolerant
Collaborative	4. MAS	Competitive
Short-term oriented	5. LTO	Long-term oriented
Normative repression	6. IVR	Free satisfaction

## Research methodology

### Research Design

The present study aims to investigate how the verbal and visual resources in online soft drink advertisements work together to form meanings and what cultural aspects are embedded in the advertisements. Therefore, this study is conducted qualitatively.

### Data Selection

The data of the present study were 58 online Coca-Cola advertisements purposively selected from the official Instagram advertisements of Coca-Cola (@cocacola). Coca-Cola was the chosen brand because it was the most valuable soft drink brand in 2019 and many years before that, according to Forbes (2019). Originally, there were 68 advertisements posted on the USA Coca-Cola Instagram (@cocacola), but 10 of them were excluded because they couldn't meet the selection criteria as follows.

a. The samples must be multimodal. In other words, the advertisements must contain both verbal and visual resources.

b. Only the still advertising pictures were taken into consideration. It should be emphasized that advertisements on Instagram come in both still and moving pictures, but moving pictures are excluded since the scope and the frameworks of the present study were more suitable for the analysis of still picture only.

c. The samples were published on Instagram in 2019 since Coca-Cola was the most valuable and trustworthy brand in 2019 according to Forbes (2019). In addition, the year 2019 was chosen because the aim of the present study was to study the recent advertisements, and 2019 was when the authors started the preliminary study.

### Analytical Frameworks

Three analytical frameworks were employed. First, the phonetic devices adapted from Nilsen's (1979) linguistic taxonomy was used to analyze verbal resources. Second, social semiotics, which was originally proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and later reorganized by Harrison (2008), was adapted to analyze visual resources. Third, Hofstede

et al.'s (2010) cultural dimensions were integrated to analyze and interpret the cultural aspects embedded in the advertisements.

## Data Analysis Procedures

After the samples were selected, 10% of them were randomly chosen for the inter-rater to assess in order to reduce subjectivity and verify the representativeness of the data set. The 10% proportion of data was suggested by Campbell et al. (2013) and O'Connor & Joffe (2020) as a typical proportion for multiple coding. A coding guide with analytical frameworks, the coding system, and examples were provided for the inter-rater. The analysis of verbal and visual resources followed these procedures:

a. The verbal resources were coded according to the phonetic framework adapted from Nilsen's (1979) linguistic taxonomy. The codes used in the present study are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Phonetic Devices Codes (Nilsen, 1979)*

Device	Definition	Example	Code
Alliteration	Repetition of initial consonant sound of a word or a phrase	- <u>F</u> riends and <u>family. - <u>H</u>ugs and <u>happiness.</u></u>	AL
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds of a word or a phrase	- I <u>a</u> m <u>a</u> mazed.	AS
Rhyme	Matching or a partial matching of sounds through repetition	- <u>N</u> ew <u>y</u> ear, <u>n</u> ew <u>y</u> ou	RH
Onomatopoeia	Words that represent the sound to which they refer	- <u>P</u> sssst (bubbly soda)	ON
Clipping	The shortening of words	- <u>C</u> oke (Coca-Cola) - The whole <u>f</u> am is smiling (family)	CL
Blending	Combining morphemes, sometime with letters elision	- <u>S</u> tay <u>c</u> ation (stay+vacation)	BL

b. After the verbal resources were investigated, the visual resources were coded based on the social semiotic framework. The coding system was as follows:

**Table 4**

*Social Semiotics Codes* (Harrison, 2008, p. 65-68).

Metafunction	Resource	Code
Representational	Structure	Process
	Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action</li> <li>• Reational</li> </ul>
Interpersonal	Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classificatory</li> <li>• Analytical</li> <li>• Symbolic</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NA</li> <li>• NR</li> <li>• CC</li> <li>• CA</li> <li>• CS</li> </ul>
Interpersonal	Feature	Process
	Gaze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand</li> <li>• Offer</li> </ul>
	Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimate</li> <li>• Close personal</li> <li>• Far personal</li> <li>• Close social</li> <li>• Far social</li> <li>• Public distance</li> </ul>
	Horizontal perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front</li> <li>• Oblique</li> </ul>
	Vertical perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High</li> <li>• Medium</li> <li>• Low</li> </ul>
	System	Element
	Information value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given</li> <li>• New</li> <li>• Ideal</li> <li>• Real</li> <li>• Center</li> <li>• Margin</li> </ul>
	Salience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size</li> <li>• Focus sharpness</li> <li>• Tonal contrast</li> <li>• Color contrast</li> <li>• Foreground/Background</li> </ul>
	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framelines</li> <li>• Pictorial framing devices</li> </ul>
		-

Metafunction	Resource	Code
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empty spaces</li> <li>Colors</li> <li>Visual shapes</li> </ul>	

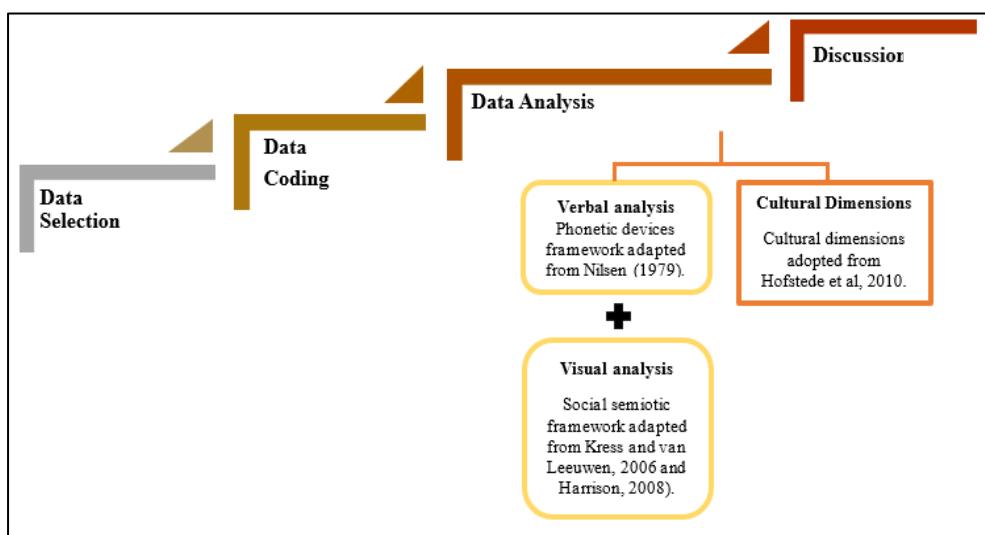
Salience was not coded but salient resources were specified based on the components' sizes, focuses, tones, colors, and placements. Description of each element has been provided in 2.4.

c. The investigated verbal and visual resources were then incorporated with Hofstede et al. (2010)'s cultural dimensions to optimize the interpretation.

In summary, the present study was carried out to investigate the multimodality of online soft drink advertisements. Coca-Cola online commercials uploaded on its USA official Instagram account in 2019 were the samples of the study. Based on Nilsen (1979)'s linguistic taxonomy, the verbal resources in the advertisements were coded and evaluated with phonetic devices. Following that, visual resources were examined using Harrison (2008)'s framework which was adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The advertisements' cultural features were then explored based on Hofstede et al. (2010) 's cultural dimensions. Figure 2 summarizes the entire research processes of the current investigation.

## Figure 2

### Research Procedures



## Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of verbal and visual resources analysis in Coca-Cola advertisements based on phonetic devices and three metafunctions of social semiotics. Due to the limitation of space, only four advertisements with obvious semiotic resources and cultural aspects were chosen as examples. It should be noted that the visual resources had more details than verbal resources because the nature of the advertisements had more visual resources. After that, cultural aspects found in the study are discussed.

### Verbal and Visual Resources

#### Example 1



Example 1 shows alliteration in the verbal resources. It is the repetition of initial sound or letter to make the line catchy or easier to remember. In Example 1, the initial sound /m/ in the word 'make' (/meɪk/) is the same as that in the word 'me' (/miː/). In addition, the words 'jump' (/dʒʌmp/) and 'joy' (/dʒɔɪ/) also show the repetition of the initial /dʒ/ sound. Devis et al. (2016) and Dubovičienė & Skorupa (2014) suggested that the overlapping of the sounds in alliteration could increase the accessibility of those words, which means the viewers tended to process the word easier and faster.

In terms of visual resources analysis, Example 1 portrays a woman (RP) wearing a hijab, long sleeves shirt, and a long skirt on a skateboard jumping off a rail while she is reaching out to grab a Coca-Cola bottle. The way the RP dresses leads to an assumption that she is a Muslim woman and is doing something that is not common among her gender and religious group. However, these visual resources correspond to verbal

resources 'you make me jump for joy'. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the RP sees Coca-Cola as something very joyful that makes her break the social expectation and jump off the skateboard for such appealing joy.

The interpersonal metafunction can be seen from the RP's gaze, distance, and perspective. In Example 1, the RP shows an offering look because she is not looking at the viewer. On the other hand, she is having a demanding gaze toward the Coca-Cola bottle because she is looking directly at the bottle. Her far social distance shows that she is only a part of the whole wide world that is waiting to be explored. Moreover, the viewers see the frontal angle of the RP which means the RP belongs to the viewers' social group in some way. In addition, the vertical perspective between the RP and the bottle shows that she has more power than the bottle, and she intends to get it.

It can be noticed that the use of colors in Example 1 is simple. Only red, black, and beige were used to illustrate the advertisement. Despite the simplicity of the colors, that advertisement can catch viewers' attention. The three simple colors also suggest the connection between the RP and Coca-Cola. Moreover, the Coca-Cola bottle is in the middle which suggests that it is the nucleus of the conveying information. The verbal resources 'you make me jump for joy' is at the ideal position. Therefore, it can be assumed that the advertisement is convincing viewers to do what they want and have fun with life.

In addition, this advertisement was in the 'together is beautiful' campaign which was launched during the Super Bowl 2019 to celebrate the beauty of difference and togetherness as American people would gather together to watch or even join in the football game which is one of the most popular games among Americans regardless of religion or race (Coca-Cola, 2019).

## Example 2



Example 2, similar to the previous example, shows alliteration in the verbal resources which is the repetition of the initial sounds 'sp' (/sp/) in the words 'speak' (/spi:k/) and 'sparkle' (/spa:kəl/).

In addition, Example 2 shows three words in three lines written on a dark background that seems to be sparkling from the little white dots. These visual resources are representational. They also cohere with verbal resources 'speak up and sparkle'. The word 'sparkle' does not only support the visual resources but also gives the viewer a clue about the product, Coca-Cola, because soda pop is a sparkling drink.

Even though the RP in this picture is not human, the RP's position can be considered as offering gaze as Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) suggested that the viewers are the subject of look while the RP is the object of the viewers' look in the pictures that do not contain any human RP. In terms of perspective, the RPs are clearly written in one dimension and at eye levels. Therefore, it can be considered as front (horizontal) and medium (vertical) perspectives. These perspectives indicate involvement and equality between the picture or producer and the viewers.

The compositional metafunction is very obvious in this example and can be analyzed in terms of information value and salience. The fact that the verbal resources are aligned center suggests that they are the main information in the picture. They are also so huge that they take up most space in the picture. The colors are highly contrasting. The verbal resources are red and are on a black background with little white dots that represent glitters around them. All these clues suggest that the RP 'speak up and sparkle' is a very important message being conveyed. To be more specific, the fact that verbal resources 'speak up' and 'sparkle' are written in red shows their connections. It can also be noticed that the verbal resources in Example 2 support the visual resources. Similar to the first example, Example 2 encourages viewers to express themselves and even guarantee that the results will be good. This advertisement is in the 'refresh the feed' campaign which is the strategy Coca-Cola used to build a brand characteristic as an inspirational, uplifting, and positive brand. The verbal and visual semiotics in Example 2, altogether, convey this positive energy to the viewers, convincing the viewer that drinking Coca-Cola will make them feel good.

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### Example 3



Example 3 shows assonance in the verbal resources 'I am amazed by your strength'. According to Nilsen (1979) assonance is a repetition or the use of similar vowel sounds. In this example, similar schwa /ə/ , as in 'am' (/əm/, weak form) and 'amazed' (/ə'meɪzd/). Similar to alliteration, assonance is used to grab attention of the viewers. Therefore, it helps the viewers process the words easier and quicker (Devis et al., 2016; Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014).

In terms of visual analysis, Example 3 is a conceptual picture since the RPs are verbal semiotic, "I am amazed by your strength". The word 'strength' in the picture was complemented by its font size.

In terms of interpersonal metafunction, the RP's position can be considered as offering gaze towards the viewer. This is because there is no direct gaze in the picture as the RPs are not human. Therefore, the RPs are the object of the viewers' look, similar to Example 2. Moreover, Example 3 shows depth or dimensions of the letters. Viewers see the letters in oblique angles which suggests that the RPs and viewers are in different groups. This visual interpretation corresponds with the verbal resources as it says that the viewer is stronger than most people which amazes the RP or the creator.

The compositional metafunction in Example 3 can be analyzed in terms of information value and salience. It is clear that the main and most important information here is the whole sentence "I am amazed by your strength". The sentence is written in red color which is obviously Coca-Cola color. The whole sentence is the most salient part of the advertisement because it is bold and big, suggesting what the creator is emphasizing as well as the strong connection between the words, especially the words 'amazed' and 'strength' which are relatively bigger and thicker than other words. This advertisement was launched on National Compliment Day 2019 and that is the reason why the verbal

resources aim to compliment the viewers as well as creating positive energy like in Example 2.

#### Example 4



Example 4 shows another example of assonance, repetition of vowel sound. The vowel /eɪ/ is used in the words 'may' (/meɪ/) and 'holidays' (/ha:lədɛɪz/). Moreover, the vowel /i/ is also found in the words 'be' (/bi/) and 'merry' (/meri/). In addition, the caption also shows the repetition of vowel /aɪ/ in the words 'smiles' (/smaɪlz/), 'shining' (/ʃaɪnɪŋ/), and 'brighter' (/bræɪtər/).

In terms of visual semiotics, the RP is shown in Example 4 as a Christmas tree with decorative balls that also resemble gas bubbles released from a red bottle on top of the picture. A large star is usually placed on top of a Christmas tree to represent hope that leads to Jesus Christ (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011). Because the Coca-Cola bottle replaces the star in this picture, it can be interpreted that Coca-Cola promises to provide viewers with hope and happiness. Furthermore, the red dots make the entire picture more fun and correspond to the spoken text 'May your holidays be happy and bright.'

In terms of interpersonal metafunction, similar to two previous examples, this picture does not have any human as RPs. Therefore, the RP's gaze is the same kind as the previous example, offering gaze. It corresponds with the verbal resources which are a blessing. In addition, the distance between the RP and the viewers belongs to society's closeness, giving the reader an immersed sense. Furthermore, the artwork is one-dimensional with a flat perspective, giving the viewers a sense of equality.

The advertising in Example 4 is uncomplicated in terms of the color scheme. There are just four colors used: beige, black, green and red. Because red is the color of Coca-Cola, the red bottle is associated with the brand. As a result, it makes the brand more recognizable and distinguishable. Furthermore, calligraphy written on yellowish paper that resembles a Christmas card offers the viewers a sense of a blessing. The verbal resource is written at the bottom of the image, which is the true location, implying honesty. Additionally, the fact that green line that forms the Christmas connects the black and red balls together

From examples 1-4, it can be concluded that multiple semiotic resources, including verbal and visual resources, were utilized to compose the intended meaning in order to maximize the power of persuasion and viewer engagement in Coca-Cola advertisements. Each semiotic resource supports each other to form one powerful message. Even though there were many semiotic resources involved in each advertisement, the brand made them very simple yet clear and concise by using illustrations or graphics designs instead of actual people as RPs. Moreover, only a few basic colors, such as white, black, and red, were used in the advertisements. Another interesting point is that the advertisements did not explicitly promote Coca-Cola as the logo did not appear on the advertisements. Coca-Cola uses the red color to create the brand's identity, so that the viewers know right away that they are reading a Coca-Cola advertisement.

## **Cultural Dimensions**

The advertisements in this present study come from the USA Coca-Cola official Instagram account. While the headquarter of Coca-Cola is in the USA, the brand is a global brand that sells the drink around the world. As a result, it is logical to assume that the majority of advertisements might be based on American culture addressing mainly American as well as other global citizens. Cultural dimensions, as defined by Hofstede et al. (2010), were used to describe the cultures depicted in Examples 1-4.

## ***Masculinity and Femininity***

Hofstede et al (2010) stated that a masculine society is goal-driven, competitive, and assertive while a feminine society values quality

of life. In other words, the goal of a masculine society is to be the best while the goal of a feminine society is to be favored. American society, according to Hofstede, is a masculine society in which people strive to be the best. Coca-Cola advertisements in this present study clearly convey the masculine characteristic to the viewers. Viewers are persuaded to go for what they want regardless of gender role expectations. They are encouraged to stand up for themselves and to bring out their full potential. The advertisements both reflect and reinforce the “can-do” mindset. Interestingly, it seems Coca-Cola uses this American brand of masculinity as a foundation for advertisement creations. The brand supports free speech and competitiveness which are obviously the American characteristics.

Hofstede et al. (2010) also mentioned that there are differences between genders within the same culture which is a gender gap or gender discrimination between women and men. In masculine cultures like America the gender gap is relatively bigger compared to feminine cultures. Example 1 clearly shows masculinity through both verbal and visual resources. The verbal resources ‘you make me jump for joy’ reflect the goal-driven and assertive personality. It can be seen that the RP who looks like a Muslim woman is jumping on a skateboard to grab the bottle of Coca-Cola. This action does not meet the norm of gender role expectation as most women are expected to be reserved. However, the RP in Example 1 is assertive as she has the courage to jump out to grab the bottle of Coca-Cola, which is compared to joy or happiness in this picture. Example 1 further convinces the viewers that it would be fun, and nothing is wrong with such action. This could be Coca-Cola’s attempt to narrow down the gender gap as well as to raise awareness of gender and race equalities. This assumption is in line with Danesi (2015) who stated that advertisements promote social issues as well as commercial products.

### *Indulgence*

Aside from masculinity, American culture may also be discussed in terms of indulgence, which refers to the extent to which members of the society attempt to restrain their natural urges. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), American culture is regarded as an indulgent one, which means that American cultural norms allow individuals to enjoy their lives and pursue their desires. As a result, Americans tend to work hard and

play hard. This is seen in Examples 1, 2, and 4. Example 1 depicts the RP wanting the Coca-Cola bottle so badly that she leaps out of the skateboard to get it because Coca-Cola symbolizes joy or happiness to her. Similarly, Example 2 encourages viewers to express themselves the way they want and even convince them that the results will be good. Finally, Example 4 demonstrates how a holiday such as Christmas makes people so joyful that their smiles shine brighter than the Christmas tree.

### ***Religious Belief***

In addition to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the present study found an extra cultural component embedded in the advertisements. Because Christianity has had such an impact on American culture, the American culture is tied to Christianity. This religious belief is expressed in both verbal and visual resources in Example 4. The verbal resource 'may your holiday be merry and bright' is a Christmas day blessing as it is placed beneath the Christmas tree that is portrayed by the liquid and bubble gas from the Coca-Cola bottle on top of the picture. Christmas is one of America's most important celebrations, and a Christmas tree is one of the festival's centerpieces. Coca-Cola positions itself as the beginning of the celebration and happiness by replacing the star, which represents hope, with a Coca-Cola bottle.

### **Conclusion**

In terms of multimodality in Coca-Cola advertisements, the results show that there were many semiotic resources used in one advertisement. These include verbal resources, which refer to words, phrases, or sentences in advertisements, and visual resources, such as the RPs' actions, colors, or other elements of the advertising pictures. Even though each element has its own characteristics, tight coupling of the verbal and visual semiotic resources composes powerful and memorable messages. It can be seen that every element was carefully chosen and put together with the target viewers in mind. In other words, semiotic resources available within the group of target viewers or the resources normally found in their culture were utilized in the advertisements so that they can comprehend and interpret the meanings being conveyed. This way, the target viewers can understand and interpret the advertisements easier as well as having good impressions of

the brand as de Mooij (2013) stated that customers should be central when creating advertisements.

As Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) suggested, advertisements do not only promote products and also build brand's image, it is obvious that Coca-Cola has been trying to build the image of the brand as the fun and positive brand. This can be seen from the positive encouragement the advertisements convey to the viewers. For example, the verbal resources "speak up and sparkle" in Example 2 encouraged viewers to be brave and speak out about whatever they want, promising that they would get a very good response if they did so. When the viewers look at the advertisement, they are likely to be convinced that drinking Coca-Cola could make them braver and happier. Most people want to be happy and loved and that is what Coca-Cola is trying to make the viewers or customers feel when seeing their advertisements. This runs parallel with Moriarty et al. (2018) who noted that advertisements also had to be able to make customers feel like they can relate to the products emotionally. In this case, the advertisements convinced viewers to break social norms, think out of the box, express themselves, and live their life with their full potential.

Coca-Cola clearly designed the advertisements to be simple but yet powerful. The advertisements were simple because only a few colors were used in each advertisement. The prominent color was obviously red. This might be because it is the color of the brand. Moreover, the use of illustrations instead of real people as RPs also made the advertisements simpler. Another interesting point is that Coca-Cola did not use a logo in their advertisements at all and yet it can be easily identified that the advertisements were Coca-Cola because, as mentioned, the brand's color was used instead of the logo. This way, the advertisements looked more intimate and less commercial.

Furthermore, the study found that most of the advertising pictures used hashtags in the captions to identify the campaign the advertisements belong under. In total, there were four advertising campaigns in 2019 which included 'Refresh the Feed', 'Together is Beautiful', 'Stranger things 3', and 'Kindness Starts with'. Moreover, hashtags about important days, such as New Year, Valentine's Day, and International Compliment Day, were also mentioned. Including the hashtags of these important days in the captions also made the advertisements appealing to people who were interested in the same hashtags.

Beside that, Coca-Cola also engaged groups of viewers who shared the same interest to see the Coca-Cola advertisement and eventually buy the product by collaborating with famous artists or influencers. Usually, people tend to support their favorite artists. Therefore, collaborations with artists or influencers are likely to make the artists' followers become Coca-Cola customers.

In short, one of the reasons Coca-Cola has always been the best-selling soft drink could be because the advertisements were created based on the shared values of the target group of viewers, which is American in this case, for example, goal-driven, out-spoken, assertive, and Christianity belief. The brand also made viewers feel supported and feel good when they get to do anything they want; therefore, they can do what they want without worries or fear of judgment from the society. It should be noticed that harmful facts that could happen from overconsuming the product were hidden, intentionally or unintentionally. Instead, Coca-Cola has been trying to make a connection between the brand and positive issues, such as fun, joy, happiness, etc. Moreover, the positive image of the brand is promoted through advertisements by raising social issues such as gender equality. As clearly shown in Example 1, the brand is trying to raise awareness of gender and race equality. All these messages were composed from both verbal and visual semiotic resources. Even though each semiotic resource has its own meaning or interpretation, when they were woven together, they created meaningful and powerful messages which could create big impacts on both the brand itself and the viewers, or even on society.

### Limitations and Suggestions

Due to time constraints, the present study could only investigate soft drink advertisements of only one brand, Coca-Cola, launched in 2019. Moreover, the frameworks employed in this study allowed the researchers to investigate only still pictures on one social media platform. In addition, it should be noted that this study was a qualitative study that collected data from only one year. Therefore, the results might not be generalizable.

The researchers would like to suggest those who are interested in conducting a multimodal critical discourse analysis of soft drink advertisements to investigate other brands' advertisements, such as Pepsi. In addition, investigations on other types of soft drink such as juice

or vitamin drinks would make interesting contributions to the field. Furthermore, the researchers recommend future studies to investigate other forms of advertisements distributed on different platforms such as videos on TikTok or YouTube.

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