

Representing Health, Tradition, and Modernity in Online Herbal Drink Advertisements: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Asep Samsudin^{*,1}, Rindya Santi Utami², Gullit Tornado Taufan³, Degita Danur Suharsono⁴

^{1,3,4}*Language, Communication, and Tourism Department,
Politeknik Negeri Jember, Indonesia*

²*Universitas Jember, Indonesia*

**Corresponding email: asep_samsudin@polije.ac.id*

Abstract

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This study aims at investigating how meanings are constructed through verbal and visual semiotic resources on online herbal drink advertisements. Despite being known as traditional drinks which are associated with cultural heritage and natural health alternatives, the advertisement of herbal products has transformed as the digital environment keeps developing and changing how products are promoted. To answer the research problems, a qualitative research design using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) with reference to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics was conducted. Research data were collected from two video advertisements on YouTube: Qunol Turmeric and Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup. The two videos of these two products were selected because of the similarity in their main ingredient. The results show that the verbal sources of the videos emphasize health benefits, product efficacy, authenticity, and consumer trust through testimonials and promotional discourse. The visual sources of the videos reinforce their meaning through color symbolism, product imagery, celebrity endorsement, ingredient visualization, and lifestyle representation. The advertisements construct a hybrid discourse that integrates traditional herbal knowledge with contemporary health and wellness culture. The results of this study contribute to the growing body of multimodal discourse studies by focusing on how digital advertising shapes meaning, identity, and perception among consumers.

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1. Introduction

Technological developments have impacted various aspects, including the advertising industry. Today's digital world allows companies to promote their products interactively through various platforms that combine language, texts, images, sounds, and motions (Machin, 2016). In this regard, various social media platforms, video-sharing apps, and e-commerce have become channels used to send persuasive messages to potential consumers (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2022). Today, digital advertising no longer relies solely on textual information. Messages to consumers are conveyed through the interaction of various semiotic resources, which are expected to influence audience perceptions and their purchasing behavior (Bateman et al., 2017).

Traditional herbal drinks are a product category that has experienced significant growth with the rise of digital marketing. Herbal drinks have been consumed for centuries by people from many cultural backgrounds. Historically, traditional drinks have been accepted as part of traditional medication, natural healing practices, and cultural heritage. The growing public interest in natural health products has contributed to the demand for herbal drinks, especially in the post-pandemic period, when people have become more aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy immune system to prevent disease (Ghodture et al., 2025). Recent studies indicate that natural, organic, and culturally authentic products are more favorable (Rahman, 2021).

As the popularity of herbal products increases, manufacturers start to adopt modern strategies to advertise and promote their products. Despite the fact that traditional herbal beverages are associated with ancient wisdom, modern healthy lifestyle does not neglect it as irrelevant necessities. As a result, the brands start to contextualize their marketing strategy to meet the current trends on digital consumer environments (Cao & Mohamed, 2025). Nowadays, advertisements often do not only present the traditional ingredients of the products but the modern packaging, celebrity endorsements, and appealing visual designs simultaneously.

Advertising discourse does not only function as a promotional means but also as a social practice that constructs meanings, identities, and cultural values (Fairclough, 2015). In this case, the important aspects including ideological messages dealing with health, wellness, consumption, and lifestyle are communicated through verbal and visual resources as the strategic part of product promotion. The meanings conveyed in advertisements are resulted by the combination of textual and visual components, sound effects, and other sociocultural aspects (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Such multimodal representations influence how audiences interpret products and construct social realities.

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) provides practical tools for examining digital advertisements. Machin (2016) explains that MCDA broadens the traditional discourse analysis by considering the interactions between different semiotic modes in the constructions of meaning in the social contexts. Furthermore, the Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday demonstrates how language functions ideationally,

interpersonally, and textually, while the frameworks of visual communication deal with the meanings related to representation, interaction, and composition (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). By considering these perspectives, the verbal and visual resources of the advertisements could be analyzed on how persuasive advertising messages are conveyed.

Recent studies on digital marketing and multimodal communication focus mainly on consumer behavior, digital marketing effectiveness, and health communication (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This leaves a gap regarding the linguistic and semiotic mechanisms in the representation and promotion of herbal products. Thus, this study aims at addressing the gap by aiming at: 1) examining the use of verbal and visual semiotic resources in online herbal drink advertisements and 2) analyzing the social and cultural representations constructed through online herbal drink advertisements.

2. The Literature Review

Recent studies on digital advertising focused on how persuasive meaning within online environments is constructed based on multimodal communication. In this case, digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok play important roles as the media for advertisers to promote their products by integrating linguistic, visual, audio, and motion in a single space which results in the transformation of advertisement strategy (Bateman et al., 2017). This multimodal transformation demonstrate the changes in communication practices from the traditional one in which meaning is not produced solely through language but multiple semiotic aspects (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

The results of recent studies on digital marketing suggest that online advertisements influence consumer engagement significantly especially for younger audiences who actively use social media (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2022). In this case, Lou and Yuan (2019) explain that emotional appeal, visual aesthetics, and credibility strategies including the influencer endorsements and testimonials are the aspects that strengthen the persuasive potentials of digital advertising. With appropriate strategies, the expectation of increased trust and enhanced consumer intention to purchase the products can be achieved.

When focusing on health-related advertising, recent studies show that there is a growing trend in the promotion of natural and organic products. The consumers who experienced pandemic era tend to behave positively towards their preference for healthy products that promise immunity enhancement, detoxification, and natural healing (Ghodture et al., 2025). Herbal-based products are known as alternatives to modern medicines and favored by society for wellness and preventive healthcare practices (Rahman, 2021).

Regarding the discourse perspective, it is important to note that advertising is not simply a commercial tool for promotional purposes. It is also related to ideological construction. Discourse contributes to shaping social reality through the representation of

knowledge, identity, and relations of power (Fairclough, 2015). In the context of advertising, language is used strategically for constructing product value, normalizing consumption practices, and influencing perception of the audience.

In multimodal discourse studies, meaning in advertising is constructed through the interaction between textual and visual elements. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020), visual element plays important role in influencing how audience interprets images through representation, interaction, and composition within the visual structures. Color, gaze, framing, and composition contribute significantly to how intended meaning is developed to complement the linguistic messages of the advertisements.

Recent studies on MCDA have also explored how digital media play important role in constructing cultural representation. As noted by Cao and Mohamed, (2025), today's advertising industry has considered hybridity, in which traditional cultural elements are combined with image of modern lifestyle. The hybridity shows the adaptation of cultural products advertised to global consumers with more re-contextualized meanings aligning with modern consumption values.

Despite the development, there are only limited studies that focus on the advertisements of herbal drinks as multimodal texts. Previous studies tend to concentrate on consumer behavior or general health communication, while less attention has been given to how herbal products are linguistically and visually constructed in digital advertising discourse. This study addresses this gap by examining how herbal drink advertisements construct meanings related to health, tradition, and modernity through multimodal resources.

2.1. Frameworks of multimodal critical discourse analysis

This study adopted Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) as its main analytical framework. MCDA integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with multimodal semiotic theory to examine how meaning is constructed across different communicative modes in social contexts (Machin, 2016).

Fairclough's three-dimensional model is employed as the macro-analytical structure, consisting of textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 2015). The textual dimension focuses on linguistic features such as lexical choice, modality, and persuasive expressions. The discursive practice dimension examines production, distribution, and consumption of advertisements in digital platforms. The social practice dimension analyzes broader ideological and cultural meanings embedded in advertising discourse.

In addition, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is used to analyze verbal elements through three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The ideational function represents experiential meaning, the interpersonal function constructs social relationships, and the textual function organizes information flow within discourse.

For visual analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework is applied. This framework examines representational meaning (what is depicted), interactive meaning (relations between image and viewer), and compositional meaning (information value, framing, and salience) (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

The integration of these frameworks enables a comprehensive analysis of how verbal and visual resources interact to construct meaning in herbal drink advertisements. This approach also allows the identification of ideological representations embedded in digital advertising discourse.

3. Method

This study employs qualitative research design using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to examine online advertisements of traditional herbal drinks. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for studies that aim to interpret meaning, representation, and social context in media discourse (Dörnyei & Griffee, 2010).

Data were collected from ten online video advertisements retrieved from YouTube platforms. The selection of advertisements was based on purposive sampling techniques, focusing on relevance to herbal drink products, multimodal composition, and accessibility to public audiences (Campbell et al., 2020). Among the collected data, two advertisements, Qunol Turmeric and Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup, were selected as representative cases for detailed multimodal analysis. The two videos were chosen as they were uploaded on the official YouTube channels of the manufacturers, Qunol and Moni. In addition to Qunol Turmeric advertisement, it was chosen because the video featured a famous figure in skateboarding.

Data collection involved documentation of video content, transcription of verbal narration, and capture of key visual frames. Each advertisement was segmented into verbal, visual, motion, audio, and semiotic categories to facilitate systematic analysis.

Data analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model combined with MCDA principles. First, textual analysis identified lexical choices and persuasive language in verbal components. Second, visual analysis examined representational and compositional elements such as color, imagery, and framing. Third, discursive practice analysis explored how advertisements construct meaning through interaction between producers and audiences in digital platforms. Finally, social practice analysis interpreted ideological meanings related to health, culture, and consumerism.

Trustworthiness was ensured through systematic coding, cross-comparison of multimodal elements, and consistent interpretation across datasets. Ethical considerations were maintained by using publicly available video content and ensuring proper academic citation of sources.

Table 1. Corpus of Online Herbal Drink Advertisements

<i>Advertisement</i>	<i>Platform</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Main Theme</i>	<i>Selection Criteria</i>
Qunol Turmeric (TonyHawk) 	YouTube	2023	15. sec	Joint health supplement	Rich verbal and visual interaction
Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup 	YouTube	2019	49. sec	Lifestyle herbal beverage	Strong multimodal composition

Table 2. *Video Advertisements on herbal drinks*

<i>Semiotic Mode</i>	<i>Analytical Focus</i>	<i>Analytical Framework</i>
Verbal	Lexical choices, modality, persuasive expressions	Halliday (Ideational–Interpersonal–Textual)
Visual	Participants, gaze, color, framing	Kress & van Leeuwen
Motion	Camera movement, transition, animation	MCDA
Audio	Background music, narration, sound effects	Social semiotics
Context	Production and cultural meaning	Fairclough CDA

Table 3. *Multimodal Analysis of Qunol Turmeric Advertisement*

<i>Analytical Dimension</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Ideational Meaning	“Healthy joints”, “inflammation support”	Constructs turmeric as a functional health supplement.
Interpersonal Meaning	Celebrity testimonial (Tony Hawk)	Builds credibility and audience trust.
Textual Meaning	Sequential narration + product emphasis	Guides viewers toward product efficacy.
Representational Meaning	Skateboarding scenes	Represents active and healthy lifestyle.
Interactive Meaning	Close-up shots and direct narration	Creates viewer engagement.
Compositional Meaning	Orange color dominance	Symbolizes vitality, health, and energy.

Discursive Practice	YouTube commercial	Targets health-conscious consumers.
Social Practice	Wellness ideology	Normalizes herbal supplementation.

Table 4. *Cross-case Analysis*

<i>Analytical Aspect</i>	<i>Qunol</i>	<i>Monin</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Verbal strategy	Testimonial	Lifestyle narration	Different persuasive approaches
Visual strategy	Celebrity	Ingredient visualization	Different visual focus
Colour	Orange	Golden yellow	Health symbolism
Cultural representation	Scientific credibility	Culinary tradition	Cultural hybridity
Ideology	Functional health	Lifestyle consumption	Wellness consumerism

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 *Qunol Turmeric Advertisement*

The Qunol Turmeric advertisement presents a multimodal construction of health, credibility, and physical performance through the integration of verbal testimony and visual endorsement. The verbal narrative is delivered by a well-known athlete who emphasizes long-term physical strain due to skateboarding and positions the product as a solution for joint health and inflammation support. The lexical choice such as “superior absorption” and “trusted brand” constructs scientific legitimacy and product reliability (Ghodture et al., 2025).

From an ideational perspective, the advertisement constructs health as a physical condition requiring supplementation. The athlete’s body becomes a site of medical discourse where turmeric is framed as a functional remedy. Interpersonally, the use of a celebrity figure creates authority and credibility, influencing audience trust through identification with expertise and experience (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Visually, the advertisement employs dynamic skateboarding scenes, close-up shots of the athlete, and product-focused framing. The color orange dominates the product packaging, symbolizing energy, vitality, and health stimulation. The composition positions the product as central, reinforcing salience and attention capture (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020).

The combination of motion and testimonial discourse strengthens persuasive impact. The athlete’s physical activity visually reinforces the claim of product effectiveness. The advertisement constructs a discourse of embodied credibility where lived experience validates product claims.

4.2 *Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup Advertisement*

The Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup advertisement develops and delivers the meaning through visual appeal, practicality, and lifestyle representation. The verbal discourse emphasizes taste, relevance to modern life, and multi-functionality. Expressions such as “golden hue,” “spiced earthy notes,” and “modern flavor trend” show that the product is align with contemporary lifestyle consumption (Rahman, 2021).

Ideational meaning is constructed through the transformation of turmeric from traditional medicine into modern healthy product. Interpersonally, the advertisement adopts a conversational tone, creating accessibility and consumer familiarity. This strategy aligns with digital marketing practices that emphasize engagement and relatability (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2022).

Visually, the advertisement highlights syrup pouring which is commonly demonstrated in the advertisements of common drinks such as tea, coffee, and cocktails. The golden-yellow color dominates visual aspect of the advertisement, symbolizing richness and natural authenticity. Ingredient visualization (cinnamon, sugar, herbs) reinforces naturalness and transparency.

Compositional arrangement emphasizes product versatility through sequential scenes. The framing constructs a lifestyle narrative where the product is embedded in daily consumption practices. This reflects cultural hybridization, where traditional ingredients are recontextualized into global consumer culture (Cao & Mohamed, 2025).

4.3 Cross-Case Interpretation

Both advertisements construct a hybrid discourse combining traditional herbal knowledge with modern consumer culture. Qunol emphasizes biomedical credibility and physical performance, while Monin emphasizes lifestyle, taste, and cultural adaptation. Both rely on multimodal reinforcement where verbal claims are strengthened through visual representation.

The advertisements construct herbal drinks not only as health products but also as identity markers associated with modern wellness culture. The results of the study provide information regarding how ideal consumers will engage digitally due to their lifestyle orientation.

Table 5. Findings

<i>Advertisement</i>	<i>Verbal Meaning</i>	<i>Visual Meaning</i>	<i>Ideological Representation</i>
Qunol	Joint health, trust, efficacy	Athlete, orange colour, close-up	Biomedical health discourse
Monin	Taste, versatility, trend	Golden colour, ingredients, beverages	Lifestyle and cultural hybridity

The findings reveal that online herbal drink advertisements construct persuasive meanings by integrating verbal and visual semiotic resources to represent health, tradition, and modernity. As demonstrated in both advertisements, verbal expressions

related to health benefits are consistently reinforced by visual elements such as product imagery, colour symbolism, celebrity endorsement, and lifestyle representation. Rather than functioning solely as commercial messages, these advertisements operate as multimodal texts that shape consumers' perceptions of healthy living and cultural identity. This finding supports previous studies arguing that digital advertising increasingly relies on the interaction of multiple semiotic resources to influence audience interpretation and purchasing behaviour (Bateman et al., 2017; Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2022). However, the present study extends previous research by demonstrating that herbal drink advertisements combine traditional cultural values with contemporary visual communication strategies to construct persuasive meanings within digital media environments.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, the advertisements normalize the consumption of herbal products by representing health maintenance as a desirable everyday practice. Lexical expressions such as *healthy joints*, *superior absorption*, *natural flavour*, and *immune support* construct health not merely as a physical condition but as an individual responsibility that can be achieved through commercial products. This finding is consistent with Fairclough's (2015) argument that discourse actively constructs social practices and ideological meanings rather than simply reflecting reality. In the present advertisements, the persuasive discourse encourages audiences to associate herbal drink consumption with responsible self-care, illustrating how commercial discourse participates in shaping contemporary health ideologies.

The multimodal characteristics of both advertisements further demonstrate that persuasive communication is achieved through the interaction between language and visual design. In the Qunol advertisement, the appearance of a well-known athlete, dynamic skateboarding scenes, and the dominant orange packaging create a discourse of physical strength, credibility, and product effectiveness. These visual strategies reinforce the verbal testimonial, allowing audiences to perceive the product as scientifically reliable and personally trustworthy. Similarly, the Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup advertisement employs ingredient visualization, sequential preparation scenes, and vibrant golden colours to construct authenticity, freshness, and lifestyle attractiveness. These findings support Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) proposition that representational meaning, visual salience, and compositional arrangement play central roles in guiding audience interpretation. The analysis also indicates that visual resources do not merely complement verbal messages but substantially strengthen persuasive meanings within digital advertising.

Another important finding concerns the representation of cultural hybridity. Although turmeric has traditionally been associated with natural medicine and cultural heritage, both advertisements reconstruct its meaning within contemporary consumer culture. The Qunol advertisement frames turmeric as a scientifically supported health supplement for maintaining physical performance, whereas the Monin advertisement

repositions turmeric as a fashionable ingredient suitable for coffee, tea, cocktails, and other modern beverages. These findings are consistent with Cao and Mohamed (2025), who argue that digital advertising increasingly integrates traditional cultural symbols into global consumer culture. Nevertheless, the present study further demonstrates that this hybridization is achieved through multimodal interaction, where verbal narratives, visual composition, colour symbolism, and lifestyle imagery jointly reconstruct traditional herbal products as modern wellness commodities. Consequently, the advertisements preserve the cultural identity of herbal ingredients while simultaneously adapting them to contemporary market expectations.

The comparison between the two advertisements also demonstrates that different persuasive strategies can produce similar ideological representations. Qunol primarily relies on biomedical authority through celebrity endorsement and health-related claims, whereas Monin emphasizes sensory experience, product versatility, and lifestyle appeal. Despite these different communication strategies, both advertisements ultimately construct herbal drinks as symbols of healthy living, self-improvement, and modern identity. This finding suggests that multimodal advertising does not merely promote products but also shapes broader cultural meanings concerning wellness, consumption, and identity formation within contemporary society. Such findings contribute to the growing literature on Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis by illustrating how multiple semiotic resources simultaneously construct ideological meanings in digital advertising contexts.

Online advertisements such as those analysed in this study may serve as authentic learning materials through which students learn to interpret how language, images, colours, layout, and visual composition interact to construct persuasive meanings. Employing MCDA in English classrooms may therefore encourage students not only to improve their language skills but also to critically evaluate the ideological messages embedded in digital media. Such pedagogical applications are consistent with recent perspectives on media literacy, which emphasize the importance of developing students' critical awareness of multimodal communication in contemporary digital environments (Serafini, 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study examined how verbal and visual semiotic resources are employed in online herbal drink advertisements using the framework of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The findings demonstrate that persuasive meanings are constructed through the integration of verbal elements, including health claims, testimonial discourse, and promotional language, with visual resources such as color symbolism, celebrity endorsement, product imagery, and compositional arrangement. These multimodal resources work together to communicate messages of product credibility, wellness, and consumer trust.

The analysis further reveals that online herbal drink advertisements represent a hybrid discourse in which traditional herbal knowledge is recontextualized within contemporary consumer culture. While the Qunol advertisement emphasizes biomedical credibility and physical performance through celebrity endorsement, the Monin Golden Turmeric Syrup advertisement promotes lifestyle appeal, culinary versatility, and sensory experience. Despite these different persuasive strategies, both advertisements position herbal drinks as symbols of healthy living, modern lifestyles, and cultural continuity. These findings extend previous MCDA research by demonstrating how verbal and visual semiotic resources jointly construct ideological meanings of health, tradition, and modernity in digital advertising.

The study also highlights the usefulness of MCDA as an analytical framework for examining digital advertisements because it enables researchers to explore the interaction between linguistic and visual modes within broader sociocultural contexts. Although the present study did not investigate audience responses directly, the findings provide valuable implications for media literacy and academics, especially in EFL context by offering authentic examples for developing students' critical understanding of multimodal communication.

This study is limited to two purposively selected YouTube advertisements; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all herbal drink advertisements or digital advertising contexts. Future research may investigate a larger corpus of advertisements across various digital platforms or examine audience interpretations through interviews, classroom implementation, or reception studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of multimodal advertising discourse.

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