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A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR APPROACH TO MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF TEA ADVERTISEMENTS IN AZERBAIJAN

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Ключевые слова: системно-функциональная грамматика, мультимодальность, рекламный дискурс, реклама чая, Азербайджан, визуальный семиоз

Tea occupies a relatively dense symbolic position in everyday life in Azerbaijan, linked to domestic hospitality, ritualised sociality, and the material culture of recognisable importance to the region such as the armudu glass, samovar, jam plate, and patterned tablecloth. When tea is, therefore, advertised in Azerbaijan, the commercial text enters an already saturated semiotic field. The advertiser is not simply describing a product, but rather organising a repertoire of culturally sedimented signs into a discourse that makes the product look either familiar, trustworthy, intimate, or prestigious within the mind of the consumer. This is precisely why it is analytically productive to adopt a systemic functional multimodal perspective: a lexicogrammatically-based reading of tea advertising would not be able to account for how thermal affect is staged through color, how interpersonal closeness is enacted through gaze and distance, or how national belonging is negotiated through domestic settings, typography, or the design of the slogan [1].

Systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA), by contrast, takes advertising to be the orchestration of semiotic resources (rather than the modulation of a verbal message by means of decorative images) and regards its meaning as emerging from the patterned relationship between wording, image, composition, and cultural artefacts [2].

A distributed view of persuasion has gained ground in advertising research as well [3]. Visual rhetoric, intertextuality, metaphor, framing, the advertisement format, and the affordances of other senses play a role in naturalising values and guiding the interpretation of messages [4]. Research on food and beverage advertising shows how such multimodal patterns draw on different semiotic resources to mobilise taste, health, pleasure, nostalgia, family and moral value rather than relying on propositional assertions or representations in any one mode [5].

Despite the importance of this scholarship, the Azerbaijani tea advertising corpus has not been the focus of sustained linguistic investigation in the indexed academic literature on multimodality, which is largely nonspecific, pedagogical, or not corpus-based. The study of tea advertising in marketing literature is aimed at describing the campaigns, rather than analysing

them [6]. This article combines a theoretical analysis of systemic functional multimodality with a small corpus to put forward not a market survey of tea advertising in Azerbaijan but an explanation of how a semiotic grammar of tea branding is constructed, how it draws on particular national and domestic cultural resources and how other branding competes within the same field of tea branding.

THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Systemic functional grammar (SFG) is particularly well suited for multimodal analysis because it sees meaning-making as metafunctional, in Hallidayan terms, construing simultaneously experiential, interpersonal, and textual meaning in discourse. The same holds true of the relationship between language and imagery, where both are considered semiotic resources contributing meaning to multimodal texts [1]. With regard to advertising, O'Halloran notes that the words and pictures do not generally act independently. A slogan, a picture of the product, a field of color, the spatial distribution of those appearing on the screen, and the like work together to construct for the viewer the nature of what is happening, who is taking part, and how the viewer should respond.

Representational meaning identifies what kinds of participants, processes, qualities and contexts are being selected. In advertising discourse, this is the level of meaning that determines whether the product is represented as an object of utility, pleasure, care, status or belonging. Work on food advertisements has identified metaphor, sensory projection, and object-person analogies as common techniques in increasing desirability [7]. The representational work of tea advertisements goes beyond the cup, to memory, domestic ritual, seasonal atmosphere, and ethnocultural symbolism. Emotional appeals are therefore not only a part of the verbal messages, but part of the advertisement's scenic world [8].

Interpersonal meaning (address, attitude) and advertisement relations are constructed between viewer and advertisement through gaze, camera distances, point of view, evaluative and social-engagement language. The details are presented in close-up, at table-level. The steaming tea in the cup draws in represented proximity. There is a family scene that looks away, creating a certain kind of desirable intimacy for the viewer. Alternatively, consider a front-facing packaging of a product that makes use of an abbreviated lexicon of English qualities to treat the viewer not as a social participant but as a rational consumer of a luxury.

Research in both digital and print advertising has consistently shown how (and why) such choices are important for how a text is read: as intimate, authoritative, playful, aspirational, or instructive [9]. Compositional meaning deals with salience, information value, framing and intermodal organization. Such compositional relations suggest that packaging and promotional claims are understood relationally rather than verbally [10], supporting Chen and Cheung's (2022) finding that, contemporarily, digitally situated advertising is predicated upon tightly packed multimodal ensembles in which spectacle, interface and semiotic density jointly produce persuasion. Taken together, these studies support an analysis of Azerbaijani tea adverts as multimodal bargains between commodity display and cultural memory. The overarching analytic task becomes to trace how the corpus distributes domesticity, heritage, seasonality,

premium distinction and everyday comfort between representational, interpersonal and compositional meanings.

DATA AND METHOD

The data set comprised nine Azerbaijani advertising constructs of tea products that were publicly accessible through official branded channels, campaign archives, and public-facing advertising websites. The data was collected in March 2026, through purposeful sampling. The criteria for the selection of the data included the materials being recognised as tea-related advertising texts in the Azerbaijani tea market, composed of linguistic and visual elements amenable to multimodal document analysis, and containing more than one of the branding orientations (national-customary, domestic, festive, premium). The dataset contained promotional materials for Azerçay, Beta Tea, Final Tea, and Berqa Tea. These four brands were selected because they were among the most visible and easily accessible tea brands in Azerbaijan public advertising in the timeframe of the data collection. For each artefact, 3 stages of coding were completed: identifying five representational variables.

The second stage analysed interpersonal choices in relation to mode of address (direct/indirect), social distance, affect and viewer role and the third stage analysed compositional choices in relation to centre-periphery relations, colour selection, verbal compression, salience effects and dominant text-image relations. The coding scheme was guided by the data-driven framework of systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis and prior advertising research that operationalized multimodal metaphor, visual rhetoric, and intertextual persuasion [7].

Table 1. Corpus of Azerbaijani tea advertising artefacts analyzed in the study

№	Brand / item	Visible verbal cue	Dominant multimodal orientation
1	Azerçay TVC	Doğma çay	National belonging + domestic familiarity
2	Azerçay image campaign	Həyatımızın hər anına şahid	Everyday continuity + family routine
3	Azerçay winter/charity item	Soyuq əllər, isti ürək	Warmth + care + moral affect
4	Beta Tea Earl Grey TVC	Earl Grey	Premium taste + restrained elegance
5	Beta Azerbaijan campaign	Azərbaycan çayı reklam filmi	National authenticity + brand localization
6	Final Tea holiday item	Novruz bayramınız mübarək	Festive collectivism + ritual hospitality
7	Final Tea product-led visual	Selected quality tea	Packaging salience + premium assurance
8	Berqa Tea commercial / pack visual	Berqamot ətirli çay	Aroma + sensory appeal

9	Azerçay event promotion	Doğma çay	Experiential branding + public cultural memory
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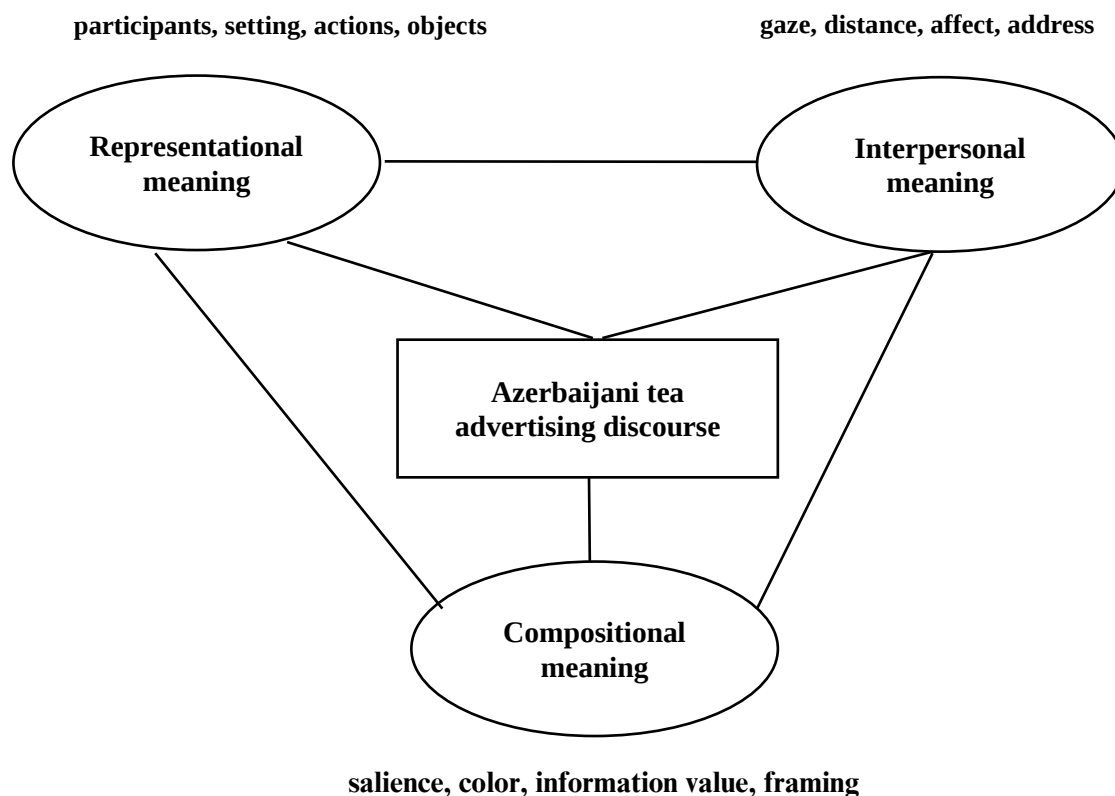
Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of publicly accessible official campaign pages and promotional channels.

The diversity of brand type, campaign role and product positioning in the dataset permits testing whether the same market relies on a single semiotic formula, or on a set of partially differentiated formulas. This small dataset, however, indicates a more structural distinction between campaigns centred on family and culture and those focusing on product and quality premium images.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 summarises the logic of analysis guiding this article. The model treats Azerbaijani tea advertising discourse as a product of the interaction of representational, interpersonal and compositional meanings. This means that an artefact is simultaneously an image of the participants and action, a mode of viewer alignment, and a visual-verbal arrangement of salience, framing, and information value in a specific scene.

Figure 1. Systemic functional multimodal model used for the analysis



Source: Developed by the author on the basis of the metafunctional logic of SF-MDA.

A first pattern across the corpus is tea's strong representational couple with domestic and collective social life. Six of the nine items take a collective social scene as their focus, rather than the product itself. The guests are arranged around the tea act as family members, as guests and as imagined co-presences, rather than as anonymous consumers, and so tea is represented as a social relation first and a product second. The persuasive logic resembles that employed more generally in tea advertising in Díez-Arroyo (2021), where the promotion concerns emotional and cultural associations rather than technical qualities.

Table 2. Descriptive coding results across the corpus (N = 9)

Coding category	Frequency	Interpretive implication
Traditional tea objects (armudu glass, tray, samovar-like service)	8	Tea is anchored in culturally recognizable material practice
Domestic or festive shared setting	7	Consumption is framed as social ritual rather than isolated purchase
National/local belonging verbalized or strongly implied	5	Brand legitimacy is tied to cultural authenticity
Warm amber-red-gold palette	8	Visual affect is built through warmth, continuity, and appetite appeal
Direct gaze by participant	2	Most items prefer affiliative invitation over explicit demand
Medium or close visual distance	7	Viewer is positioned in tactile proximity to the tea scene
English prestige/quality lexicon	3	Premium branding depends more on distinction than communal intimacy
Product-centered minimalist composition	4	Higher-end or product-led ads foreground package authority

Source: Author's coding of the corpus.

The structure of Table 2 shows, in short, that culturally coded material objects and warm compositional choices are not secondary to the corpus, but common shaping structures of the genre. In contrast, ostensibly premium discourse is a minority strategy, surrounded by a grammar of shared domesticity and hospitality; thus, the corpus is semiotically cohesive, but not homogeneous.

BRAND DIFFERENTIATION, CULTURAL MEMORY, AND PERSUASIVE STRATEGY

A more fine-grained examination of the whole corpus reveals that the brands position differently in relation to cultural memory within the Azerbaijani tea segment: Azerçay appears to use high-density cultural indexing modes more consistently than the others. The signs are so tightly enmeshed with national familiarity, collective memory, and recognisable rituals of service that it is hardly a local brand image. It is a move to position the brand as coextensive with tea culture itself, which, from a multimodal perspective, is meaningful because it reduces

the semiotic distance between product and practice. Beta Tea and some Final Tea materials run with lower density but with stylized cultural indexing. Meta doesn't remove local signals but reduces contextual interference and improves design control. In the package, the logo, and the quality descriptor, culture becomes less a total environment than a legitimating backdrop to the consumer's choice. The product becomes the focus. This strategy is particularly effective for brands wishing to combine Azerbaijani market belonging with an international tone of refinement.

Table 3. Contrastive multimodal tendencies across two dominant branding orientations

Analytical dimension	Culture-centered orientation	Premium-centered orientation
Primary persuasive goal	Belonging, trust, familiarity	Quality, distinction, refinement
Typical setting	Home, family table, festive gathering	Reduced background, pack-led display, stylized close-up
Dominant verbal register	Affective, local, affiliative	Condensed quality lexicon, often partially English
Key visual objects	Armudu glass, tray, samovar, sweets, tablecloth	Package front, cup, logo, flavour descriptor
Interpersonal strategy	Invitation into a shared scene	Recognition of premium product authority
Compositional pattern	Context-rich frame with product embedded in scene	Product-centered salience with controlled visual clutter
Cultural memory load	High and explicit	Moderate, stylized, selectively activated

Source: Synthesized from the empirical analysis.

The central division articulated in the discussion is summarised in Table 3. However, not all advertisements fall neatly into one type or another. On the whole, this scale can be interpreted in terms of a limited yet effective repertoire of multimodal strategies that are remixed across the branding dimensions. Cultural belonging and premium distinction are not necessarily polar opposites in this model, but rather semiotic resources that can be mixed in different proportions.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the function system of the Azerbaijani tea advertisement corpus from a systemic functional grammar perspective in multimodal discourse analysis. The results show that the corpus is organised around a persuasive grammar with an interconnected system of representational, interpersonal, and compositional meaning. In this way, tea becomes less a consumable than something associated with family, hospitality, and national-cultural affinity. Interpersonally, in a sense, the viewer is welcomed into warm scenes rather than presented with hard-sell address. Using colour, salience, and compact slogans is one of the most efficient ways to encode these meanings. Azerçay-type national campaigns privilege cultural memory and domestic sociality, while premium-coded products from Beta Tea, Final Tea or packaging-led promotions foreground product centrality and quality discourse

in less complex visual environments. These examples do not speak a different discourse; they articulate a continuum along which different mixtures of local identity and market difference are recombined.

Methodologically, the article points to systemic functional multimodal analysis's ability to advance the study of advertising in lesser-studied linguistic contexts, given its potential to offer a systematic approach to how words, images, objects and layout combine to create persuasive meanings. This is important for research into Azerbaijani media and discourse given that advertising of food and drink represents a site for examining cross-cultural mechanisms of assimilation, stylization and circulation of cultural value. Despite the methodological limitations imposed by the size and availability of the corpus, making our pilot model more tightly focused than an analysis at the level of the market would allow, the present study shows that Azerbaijani tea advertising offers a particularly illuminating case study of the use of cultural memory as a persuasive multimodal resource in contemporary branding.

Relevance of the article. The study of Azerbaijani tea advertisements within the framework of systemic functional grammar and multimodal discourse analysis demonstrates how national and cultural semiotic resources operate in advertising texts. Study reveals how tea is associated within the Azerbaijani advertising space with family intimacy, hospitality, everyday life, and cultural memory.

Scientific novelty. For the first time, Azerbaijani tea advertisements are analyzed using a small corpus within a systemic functional multimodal model, focusing on the interaction of interpersonal and compositional meanings. Differences between culturally oriented and premium-oriented strategies are systematically identified based on 9 advertisements from 4 brands.

Practical significance and application. The findings can be applied in academic research on advertising discourse, multimodal communication, and media studies, as well as in the development of visual-verbal strategies for local brands. The study offers an applied framework explaining the mechanism through which cultural symbols are transformed into branding tools in the Azerbaijani advertising market.

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V.T. Alkhanova

A systemic functional grammar approach to multimodal analysis of tea advertisements in Azerbaijan
Summary

This article examines nine tea advertisements from four Azerbaijani brands through the combined framework of systemic functional grammar and multimodal discourse analysis. The findings show that Azerbaijani tea advertising is largely organized around familial intimacy, hospitality, cultural memory, and national belonging, while premium-oriented advertisements more often rely on minimalist composition and a quality-focused lexicon. The study concludes that Azerbaijani tea advertising develops a hybrid discourse in which local cultural signs are combined with broader branding codes.

V.T. Alkhanova

Azərbaycanda çay reklamlarının multimodal analizinə
sistem-funksional qrammatik yanaşma
Xülasə

Məqalədə Azərbaycanın dörd çay brendinə aid doqquz reklam materialı əsasında sistem-funksional qrammatika və multimodal diskurs təhlilinin reklam mesajında verbal və vizual resursların qarşılıqlı təsirini necə izah etməyə imkan verdiyi araşdırılır. Təhlil göstərir ki, Azərbaycanda çay reklamları əsasən ailə yaxınlığı, qonaqpərvərlik, mədəni yaddaş və milli mənsəbiyyətin semiotikası ətrafında qurulur. Premium segmentə aid elanlarda isə daha çox minimalist kompozisiya və keyfiyyəti vurğulayan leksikadan istifadə olunur. Nəticə etibarilə müəyyən edilir ki, Azərbaycan çay reklamı lokal mədəni simvolların daha geniş brendinq kodları ilə birləşdiyi hibrid diskurs formalaşdırır.

В.Т. Алханова**Системно-функциональный грамматический подход к мультимодальному анализу рекламы чая в Азербайджане****Резюме**

В статье на материале девяти рекламных материалов четырех чайных брендов Азербайджана рассматривается, как системно-функциональная грамматика и мультимодальный дискурс-анализ позволяют описать взаимодействие вербальных и визуальных ресурсов в рекламном сообщении. Анализ показывает, что реклама чая в Азербайджане в основном строится вокруг семиотики семейной близости, гостеприимства, культурной памяти и национальной принадлежности, тогда как премиальные объявления чаще опираются на минималистичную композицию и лексику качества. В результате делается вывод, что азербайджанская реклама чая формирует гибридный дискурс, в котором локальные культурные символы сочетаются с более широкими кодами брендинга.

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