

ARTICLE

Linguistic Strategies and Public Engagement in Environmental Discourse: A Systemic Functional Analysis of the Saudi Video *From Ambition to Action*

Menna Mohamed Salama El-Masry^{ID}

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities in Al-Kharj, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Riyadh Region 16273, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the goals of the Green Saudi Initiative (GSI) are communicated through multimedia, with a specific focus on the promotional video *From Ambition to Action*. Besides, it explores how verbal, visual, and musical modes interact to construct ecological values, evoke emotional engagement, and promote pro-environmental behavior among diverse audiences. Grounded in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework of inter-semiotic relations, the analysis examines how ideational meanings, interpersonal positioning, and textual coherence are realized across multiple semiotic resources. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between language and image, interpreting how these modes complement, enhance, or expand one another in the layered construction of environmental meaning. The study reveals how the video strategically employs cohesive multimodal strategies—such as metaphor, emotional tone, and symbolic imagery—to enhance its persuasive impact, establish national identity, and align ecological messaging with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and global sustainability goals. In doing so, it highlights the potential of multimodal discourse to foster public understanding, inspire emotional resonance, and encourage behavioral transformation. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of environmental communication and offer practical insights for the design of more effective educational and advocacy campaigns tailored to the cultural and ecological context of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Inter-Semiotic Relations; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Environmental Discourse; Multimodality; Green Saudi Initiative

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Menna Mohamed Salama El-Masry, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities in Al-Kharj, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Riyadh Region 16273, Saudi Arabia; Email: mennaalmasry@yahoo.com or mm.elmasry@psau.edu.sa

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 15 April 2025 | Revised: 20 April 2025 | Accepted: 22 April 2025 | Published Online: 25 April 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i5.9527>

CITATION

El-Masry, M.M.S., 2025. Linguistic Strategies and Public Engagement in Environmental Discourse: A Systemic Functional Analysis of the Saudi Promotional Video *From Ambition to Action*. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(5): 271–285. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i5.9527>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The increasing exploitation of natural resources, driven by contemporary models of mass production, technological advancement, and global consumption, has led to alarming levels of environmental degradation. Over the past five decades, scientific research has underscored the urgency of addressing these multidimensional environmental challenges through coordinated international action and sustainable development practices ^[1,2]. Achieving sustainability now relies not only on technological innovation and effective policy but also critically on public awareness and education ^[3].

Environmental awareness is widely recognized as a vital strategy for encouraging sustainable behavior. As noted in ^[2], individuals are becoming more concerned about ecological issues, and at the same time environmental consciousness is increasingly considered a benchmark of societal progress. However, fostering ecological responsibility requires more than general awareness; it demands personal commitment, education, and communicative strategies that motivate behavioral change ^[4]. Environmental education plays a central role in this transformation, equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge, values, and sense of agency to adopt environmentally responsible practices ^[5].

In response to global sustainability imperatives, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia launched the Saudi Vision 2030 strategy, which places sustainability at the heart of national development goals ^[6]. As part of this strategic vision, the Green Saudi Initiative (GSI) was introduced in 2021 to combat climate change, protect biodiversity, and promote environmental consciousness among citizens ^[7]. The GSI seeks to plant 10 billion trees, increase protected areas to 30% of the country's total land, and reduce carbon emissions by 278 million tons annually by 2030 ^[8].

To engage the public and raise awareness, the GSI leverages multimedia communication strategies, including promotional videos like *From Ambition to Action*. These videos aim to inspire ecological values, encourage civic participation, and mobilize support for environmental action through a combination of visuals, music, and narrative language. This research investigates the effectiveness of such multimodal content in communicating the GSI's environmental objectives. It employs **Halliday's Systemic**

Functional Linguistics (SFL) and **Martinec and Salway's** model of inter-semiotic relations to analyze how the verbal script interacts with visual and musical elements to construct meaning, evoke emotional responses, and shape public perceptions of environmental responsibility.

1.1. Objectives of the Research

This research aims to explore how the ecological values and objectives of the Green Saudi Initiative are communicated through the interplay of verbal, visual, and musical elements in the *From Ambition to Action* video. The research also investigates how visual and verbal modes interact to construct meaning, drawing on Martinec and Salway's framework of inter-semiotic relations. Moreover, it examines the role of background music in shaping the emotional tone and enhancing the persuasive appeal of the video. Furthermore, the study applies Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004) to analyze how ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings are realized in the video's verbal script. Ultimately, the research seeks to generate insights that can inform the development of more effective multimodal strategies for environmental awareness campaigns within the Saudi Arabian context.

1.2. Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, this study is guided by a series of interrelated research questions: (1) How are the ecological values and objectives of the Green Saudi Initiative communicated through the interaction of verbal, visual, and musical elements in the *From Ambition to Action* video? (2) In what ways do the visual and verbal modes interact to construct and expand meaning, according to Martinec and Salway's (2005) framework of inter-semiotic relations? (3) What is the role of background music in shaping the emotional tone and enhancing the persuasive effect of the video? (4) How are ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings realized in the video's verbal script, as analyzed through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004)?

2. Literature Review

Existing research on environmental awareness tends

to follow two major strands. The first focuses on assessing public awareness of environmental challenges and sustainability efforts, often using survey-based methods. The second emphasizes the role of media and digital platforms in enhancing environmental awareness, particularly through multimodal communication. While many of these studies contribute valuable insights, few offer a qualitative, linguistically grounded analysis of how multimedia content communicates ecological values. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the inter-semiotic construction of meaning in a promotional video using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Martinec and Salway's framework.

Surjani and Dangi^[9], for example, examined sustainability-oriented advertising in India through a mixed-methods approach combining content analysis and surveys. Although their focus was on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) rather than national green initiatives, their emphasis on the persuasive role of media is relevant. However, unlike the present study, they did not explore how meaning is created across different semiotic modes (e.g., visual-verbal interaction). What aligns with the current research is their recognition of how media messaging can shape sustainable behavior—yet this study advances the analysis by exploring how that messaging is linguistically and visually constructed.

Similarly, Daoud et al. explored how digital marketing strategies influence environmental awareness^[10], demonstrating the impact of content engagement and strategic message design. Their work supports the broader understanding that multimodal communication (including visual and textual elements) plays a vital role in shaping ecological consciousness. However, their use of quantitative modeling (PLS) contrasts with the present study's qualitative orientation, which seeks to uncover how meanings are semantically and visually layered through inter-semiotic relations.

Khayat et al. and Khan both measured environmental awareness in Saudi Arabia through large-scale surveys^[4,11], revealing significant demographic trends. These studies are particularly useful in framing the sociocultural context of this research, especially regarding public familiarity with Vision 2030 and green initiatives. However, neither en-

gages with the semiotic or communicative strategies used to foster that awareness. This study diverges by focusing not on public awareness levels per se, but on how promotional media—like the *From Ambition to Action* video—constructs and conveys messages designed to raise such awareness.

Del Moral Pérez et al. and Verma & Grover offer insights into how specific stylistic and emotional elements—like narrative tone, imagery, and social media engagement—affect environmental campaigns^[12,13]. These findings resonate with this study's interest in emotional resonance and viewer engagement, particularly through music and imagery. However, the current research builds on this by providing a detailed linguistic and inter-semiotic analysis, showing how such elements function together to convey meaning.

Severo et al. and Yadav further highlight the generational and cross-cultural dimensions of environmental awareness, emphasizing the communicative power of digital media^[3,14]. While these works suggest the importance of tailoring messages to different audiences, they do not delve into the semiotic composition of those messages. In contrast, the present study applies Halliday's metafunctions and Martinec and Salway's taxonomy to examine precisely how verbal and visual elements co-construct environmental discourse.

Finally, Iqbal, Akram, and Haroon stress the educational role of media in closing gaps in environmental knowledge^[5]. While the present study does not directly assess educational outcomes, it shares their concern for media's potential in promoting ecological understanding—albeit through an analytical focus on message construction rather than audience reception.

In summary, while much of the literature focuses on measuring awareness or evaluating media impact through surveys and statistical models, few studies analyze how multimedia content functions semiotically to promote environmental consciousness. This study fills that gap by engaging critically with how language, image, and music interact to construct ecological meanings in a national campaign video, offering a linguistically informed perspective on environmental communication strategies within the Saudi context.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative, multimodal discourse analysis approach to examine how environmental values and messages are constructed and communicated through the *From Ambition to Action* promotional video produced under the Green Saudi Initiative (GSI). Rather than measuring public awareness quantitatively, the research focuses on the semiotic composition of the video itself, analyzing how different modes—verbal, visual, and musical—interact to promote environmental consciousness and behavioral intention.

The analysis is guided by two main theoretical frameworks. First, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is applied to the video's verbal script^[1], focusing on how language realizes ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings that contribute to the ecological narrative. Second, the visual and verbal interaction is analyzed using Martinec and Salway's framework of inter-semiotic relations^[15], which categorizes the logical and functional relationships between image and text. This dual-layered framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of how multimodal elements co-construct meaning and support the video's persuasive and informative goals.

The video *From Ambition to Action* is selected for its national relevance, its alignment with Vision 2030 objectives, and its role in communicating GSI priorities to the Saudi public. The *Ambition to Action* video, produced by the Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture as part of the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI), highlights the country's sustainability efforts and environmental awareness.

It can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNPQP08-jNk>.

The data consists of the full transcript of the verbal content, synchronized with the corresponding visual scenes and musical cues. The analysis proceeds in two stages: first, a clause-by-clause examination of the script using SFL to identify patterns in meaning-making; and second, a scene-based multimodal analysis of visual-verbal relations using Martinec and Salway's typology. This section analyzes three key segments from the video: the declaration of net-zero targets (0:00–0:25), the emphasis on reducing emissions and involving youth (1:39–2:17), and the depiction

of afforestation initiatives in desert areas (2:43–3:05). This method provides an in-depth exploration of how ecological values are communicated through strategic combinations of language, image, and sound, offering insight into the effectiveness of such multimedia content in fostering environmental engagement.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), developed by Michael Halliday, is a linguistic theory that views language as a social semiotic system, and this means that it serves as a tool for creating meaning within social contexts rather than just a set of grammatical rules. Halliday's framework suggests that language performs several functions at once and is structured around three main metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual^[1]. These metafunctions work together to organize how meaning is conveyed in communication.

The ideational metafunction deals with the content or ideas that a speaker or writer conveys. It focuses on how both external and internal experiences are represented through language. A key component of this metafunction is the transitivity system, which explores who is doing what to whom, where, when, and how. In essence, the ideational metafunction helps us understand what is being discussed and how experiences are represented linguistically. According to Halliday^[1], the clause is the primary unit for representing ideational meaning, as it is structured around three essential components: processes, participants, and circumstances.

A process represents the action or state in a clause. Halliday identifies various types of processes, each reflecting a different aspect of experience. Material processes describe actions or physical events, while mental processes refer to states of consciousness, such as thinking or perceiving. Relational processes involve linking a subject to an attribute or identity, often representing states of being. Behavioral processes refer to physiological or psychological behaviors, like laughing or breathing. Finally, verbal processes are related to communication or speech acts. Participants are the entities involved in these processes—such as the actor, who performs the action, or the goal,

who receives it. Circumstances offer additional contextual information, such as when, where, and why something occurs.

The interpersonal metafunction concerns itself with how language facilitates interaction between speakers and listeners or writers and readers. It examines elements like attitude, judgment, modality, and speech functions (commands, questions, etc.). This metafunction highlights how language positions the speaker socially and emotionally in relation to others, determining the stance or authority of the speaker and their engagement with the audience.

The textual metafunction is focused on the organization of language into cohesive and coherent messages. It looks at how the structure of language elements contributes to the flow of information in a text, focusing on aspects like theme-rheme structures, cohesion, and the overall arrangement of information. This metafunction helps us understand how a message is structured and presented to ensure it is clear and meaningful to the audience.

What sets Halliday's model apart is its ability to connect grammar with meaning and social context. It shows how linguistic choices shape the interpretation of a message based on its communicative function. Halliday's theory is widely used in fields such as discourse analysis, educational linguistics, media studies, and critical linguistics, particularly when analyzing texts for their social, political, or ideological implications^[16]. This comprehensive framework is particularly valuable for understanding how language works to construct meaning in different contexts, offering deep insights into how speakers or writers use language to influence, inform, and engage their audiences.

4.2. Martinec and Salway's Inter-Semiotic Framework

Martinec and Salway offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between language and imagery within multimodal texts^[15]. Their system of image-text relations is grounded in a synthesis of previous semiotic theories—most notably Barthes' concepts of anchorage and relay—and Halliday's systemic functional model of clause relations^[17], particularly the notions of projection, expansion, parataxis, and hypotaxis. Their model is especially useful for examining how meanings are co-constructed in contemporary and traditional media

formats where visual and textual elements co-occur^[18,19].

The framework comprises two principal subsystems: Status and Logico-Semantic Relations. The Status system classifies the hierarchical relationship between image and text, determining whether one element is dependent on the other or whether they stand on equal footing. If one mode (e.g., image) functions to elaborate or clarify the other (e.g., text), the relationship is unequal—suggesting a dependency. Conversely, if both text and image contribute independently to the overall meaning or if they complement each other symmetrically, their status is considered equal. Within this equal-status category, Martinec and Salway distinguish between independent relations (where neither element modifies the other) and complementary relations (where both contribute meaningfully without hierarchy). This distinction allows for a deeper analysis of the dynamics between image and text in multimodal texts^[15].

The second component of the model, Logico-Semantic Relations, is adapted from Halliday's work on linguistic clause complexes. This subsystem categorizes the functional interplay between text and image as either elaboration, extension, enhancement, or projection. Within elaboration, two modes may either present information of equal generality (exposition) or differ in specificity (exemplification). In cases of exemplification, the relationship can be further nuanced—either the text provides a broader context for the image, or the image visually expands on the text's abstract idea^[20,21]. Enhancement involves circumstantial relations such as time, place, or cause, linking the image and text through ideational context. Meanwhile, projection concerns the representation of speech or thought. This can occur through locution, where exact words are visually echoed or presented, or idea, where the visual component represents a more abstract conceptualization of the linguistic content^[18].

Martinec and Salway's model offers a detailed and nuanced approach to analyzing how meaning emerges from the interaction of visual and linguistic modes. By distinguishing both the hierarchical and semantic nature of these relationships, the framework proves particularly effective for studying multimodal genres, including environmental campaign videos that seek to integrate affective imagery and persuasive language to shape public understanding and response^[22,23].

5. Discussing Results

The analysis in this study is structured into two main parts. **Part One** focuses on a linguistic analysis based on **Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFL)**, exploring how language in the promotional video *From Ambition to Action* is used to construct meaning, engage the audience, and convey the objectives of the Saudi Green Initiative. This section examines the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of the verbal script to understand how language works to communicate ecological values and influence viewer engagement. **Part Two** employs **Martinec and Salway's inter-semiotic framework** to investigate the relationships between language, visuals, and music in the video. It examines how these multimodal elements interact, complement, and enhance each other to convey the GSI's goals and promote pro-environmental attitudes. Together, these two components provide a comprehensive evaluation of the linguistic strategies and multimodal interactions in the video, highlighting their effectiveness in raising awareness and fostering engagement with environmental sustainability in Saudi Arabia.

5.1. Section 1: Applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

5.1.1. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction concerns how language construes the world of experience—what is happening, who is involved, and under what circumstances. In the *From Ambition to Action* video, the dominant process type is the material process, which represents actions and events that are concrete and observable. Examples include “reduce emissions,” “plant 10 billion trees,” “declare wildlife reserves,” “invest in innovation,” and “power the nation.” These verbs suggest a clear orientation toward action, progress, and transformation. The material processes are largely future-oriented, emphasizing planning, ambition, and commitment, which positions the Kingdom as actively reshaping its ecological future.

There are also relational processes that attribute qualities or identities, such as “The Saudi Green Initiative *is* our proclamation,” and “Saudi Arabia *is* acting to reduce emissions.” These statements function to establish identity

and define the nature of Saudi Arabia's relationship with climate action and sustainability, contributing to the project's legitimation and moral authority.

Mental processes, which reflect inner experiences such as thinking, feeling, or perceiving, also appear, albeit less frequently. For instance, phrases like “we believe,” “we know,” and “we want” express collective cognition and desire, which function to build emotional resonance and align the audience with the video's values.

The participants in these processes vary but are largely collective agents, including abstract entities like “Saudi Arabia,” “the Kingdom,” “the Saudi Green Initiative,” and inclusive pronouns such as “we” and “our youth.” These agents are consistently framed as active and capable, reinforcing national unity and shared responsibility. Occasionally, nature itself is personified or becomes a participant, as in “the Arabian leopard... is back,” suggesting a return or recovery attributed to human intervention. In addition to collective participants like “Saudi Arabia” or “we,” the video features prominent individual participants who serve both experiential and symbolic roles within the ideational structure. These individuals include Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, environmental ministers, energy sector leaders, and scientific experts. Their appearances are not incidental—they carry distinct process roles and contribute to the construction of agency, authority, and expertise in the Green Saudi Initiative (GSI). Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for instance, functions as a primary Actor in material processes. His declaration—“The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to reach net zero by 2060”—positions him as the initiator of national action. This utterance is not merely rhetorical; it defines him as a central figure in policy enactment and vision-setting. His appearance is strategic—it consolidates national authority with environmental ambition, grounding the initiative in the highest level of governance. Likewise, ministers and project leaders frequently appear making statements like “We are up to the challenge” or “We are reducing our CO₂ emissions.” These utterances emphasize collective agency but also reflect the institutional actors (i.e., the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment) as engaged in goal-directed actions—typical of material processes.

When speakers assert that the GSI “is our proclamation of what we value” or “Saudi Arabia is acting to reduce

emissions,” these are relational processes. They construct identities and value alignments for the nation and its leaders. By tying personal identity (as in the case of the prince or youth leaders) to national action, the video frames climate policy as both a personal commitment and a shared cultural value. For example, when a young speaker says, “This is an agenda driven by a youth that wants to live better days,” it connects mental processes (“want”) to a broader material goal (environmental change), embedding subjective experiences into the video’s action logic.

Statements like “We believe that we can lead the green transition” and “We know what we are protecting” involve mental processes (belief, knowledge). These are often spoken by expert figures or officials, such as engineers and environmental scientists. Their inclusion enhances epistemic authority, reinforcing the idea that the GSI is grounded in scientific expertise, not just political ambition. The video uses these mental processes to convey intentionality and motivation, vital for constructing legitimacy. By having credible individuals articulate what they believe, know, or feel, the initiative becomes personalized, rationalized, and emotionally accessible to viewers.

The circumstances—additional details about time, place, manner, cause, or accompaniment—play a crucial role in contextualizing these processes. Temporal circumstances such as “by 2060,” “in 12 short months,” and “by 2030” stress the urgency and planning involved. Locative circumstances, including “in a country with the world’s third lowest rainfall,” “across deserts, mountains, and mangroves,” and “a third of the country,” situate the initiative within Saudi Arabia’s unique geography and environmental challenges. Manner and cause are emphasized through phrases like “with God’s gift, we have the sun” and “driven by a youth that want to live better days,” which add spiritual and generational motivation to the environmental effort.

5.1.2. Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction in the *From Ambition to Action* video plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between the speakers and the audience, conveying authority, commitment, and emotional engagement. Throughout the video, attitudinal language is carefully chosen to build trust and inspire collective action. Expressions such as “We are up to the challenge” and “We have to do something

about it” serve to highlight positive judgment, casting the Kingdom as a responsible, morally motivated actor ready to lead global environmental change. Emotional appeals—like references to species extinction or the aspirations of Saudi youth—evoke affective responses that aim to foster empathy, hope, and a sense of urgency among viewers.

Modality, a key aspect of interpersonal meaning, is deployed strategically to convey degrees of obligation, certainty, and possibility. High modality expressions such as “We must act now” and “We have to do it together” underline the urgency and necessity of the initiative, leaving little room for doubt. In contrast, medium modality statements like “Saudi Arabia can lead the green transition” suggest confidence in the nation’s capability without appearing forceful, maintaining a persuasive yet inclusive tone. This range in modality allows the video to balance assertiveness with encouragement, drawing viewers into a shared vision rather than dictating it.

Speech functions further enhance the interpersonal dynamics of the video. The dominant use of the declarative mood establishes an authoritative tone by presenting policies and goals as statements of fact, such as “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to reach net zero by 2060.” Occasional imperatives—“We must act,” “We have to do it now”—intensify the persuasive force, functioning as calls to action. Rhetorical questions are also employed to engage the audience reflectively, prompting them to consider the ethical implications of inaction and the legacy they wish to leave behind.

In sum, the interpersonal metafunction in this video constructs a persuasive and emotionally resonant voice that blends authority with inclusiveness. Through attitudinal language, carefully modulated modality, varied speech functions, and strategic pronoun use, the video cultivates an ethos of leadership, a pathos of care and urgency, and a strong sense of social alignment—all essential for motivating public engagement and pro-environmental behavior.

5.1.3. Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction in the *From Ambition to Action* video is strategically constructed to organize the message and maintain coherence across multimodal elements. At the heart of this metafunction is the effective use of Theme-Rheme structures. For instance, the video opens

with the clause, “*I announced today that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims to reach net zero by 2060.*” Here, the Theme (“*I announced today*”) sets a temporal and personal framework, while the Rheme introduces the ambitious national goal. Similarly, other thematic elements like “*The Saudi Green Initiative is our proclamation...*” emphasize declarations and commitments, with subsequent Rhemes providing explanations or elaborations. These consistent thematic structures help guide the viewer through a narrative that unfolds logically and purposefully.

Pronoun use is another significant element that constructs cohesion. Repeated use of inclusive pronouns such as “*we,*” “*our,*” and “*us*” (e.g., “*we have to do it now,*” “*our objective is to preserve our planet*”) creates a shared sense of responsibility and unity between the government, citizens, and global audience. The use of “*we*” rather than “*the government*” or “*Saudi Arabia*” repeatedly reinforces the collective identity and positions the speakers as aligned with the public. In addition, lexical cohesion is achieved through the repetition of key vocabulary associated with climate action and sustainability, such as “*climate change,*” “*emissions,*” “*energy,*” “*biodiversity,*” and “*future generations.*” This repetition not only anchors the viewer’s attention but also reinforces the video’s primary environmental themes.

Cohesive devices and logical connectors further ensure smooth transitions between segments. For example, causal connectors such as “*therefore,*” “*as a result,*” and “*because*” are used implicitly to tie achievements to ambitions: “*We have changed our mode from being a hydrocarbon producer to an energy producer,*” links past practices to current transformation. Contrastive structures also help organize the information effectively, as seen in “*While Saudi Arabia is well known for its vast natural resources, many are unaware of its diverse ecosystems.*” This contrast highlights new, less-known environmental narratives to complement the familiar. Lastly, temporal structuring is evident in lines like “*There’s only been 12 short months since the Saudi Green Initiative was launched, the efforts are already bearing fruit,*” which serves both a chronological function and emphasizes progress. These temporal markers, paired with forward-looking statements (“*our objective is to preserve our planet*”), frame the video as a journey from present challenges to future achievements. Together,

these textual features—theme-rheme choices, cohesive pronouns, repetition, connectors, and multimodal alignment—establish a coherent and persuasive narrative that enhances the communicative power of the promotional video.

5.2. Section 2: Applying Martinec and Salway’s (2005) Inter-Semiotic Framework

This section examines three selected scenes from the video, which include: the announcement of the net-zero targets (0:00–0:25), the focus on emission reduction and youth engagement (1:39–2:17), and the afforestation efforts in arid regions (2:43–3:05).

5.2.1. Scene 1: The Announcement of the Net-Zero Targets (0:00–0:25)

This opening scene of the video, composed of four sequential images, establishes a strong inter-semiotic relationship between the verbal and visual modes. In **Figure 1**, the viewer sees Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman delivering the Kingdom’s environmental commitment. His formal attire, the national flag behind him, and the stately background work inter-semiotically with the verbal caption “that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aims...” to signal authority, seriousness, and national intent. This image visually asserts the participant (the speaker) as the symbolic “sayer” in Hallidayan terms, while Martinec and Salway’s framework helps us interpret this as a projection relation—the spoken message projects mental intent, supported by a dominant visual status. The verbal text cannot fully stand alone without the anchoring presence of the prince, whose



Figure 1. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announcing Saudi Arabia’s bold vision for a sustainable future through the Green Initiative.

identity lends gravity to the utterance. Thus, the visual mode leads, and the verbal supports.

Figure 2 shows the sun rising behind mountainous terrain, accompanied by the minimal verbal fragment “To many,” which functions like an ellipsis—inviting the audience to reflect on perceptions of possibility and impossibility. Here, the image dominates semantically and emotionally, symbolizing hope and new beginnings. The logico-semantic relation is expansion (enhancement): the sunrise visually enhances the implied message of potential change and growth. The ideational meaning is existential, suggesting the emergence of a new reality through metaphorical representation. The sun breaking through darkness connotes Saudi Arabia’s journey toward climate consciousness, a theme expanded upon in the following shots.



Figure 2. The beginning of Saudi Arabia’s environmental transformation under the Green Initiative.

Figure 3 features goats marching in single line across sand dunes, reinforcing national and environmental symbolism. Accompanied by the verbal statement “seeking to lead the world,” the image and text work in equal



Figure 3. Forging a path through the sands—Saudi Arabia’s journey to global environmental leadership starts at home.

status—each relies on the other for full interpretive meaning. Visually, the goats represent traditional endurance and collective effort, while the textual process verb “seeking” indicates a material goal-oriented action toward leadership in climate initiatives. The intersemiotic relation here is elaboration: the camels’ movement across the harsh landscape concretizes the abstract ambition of global leadership in green transition. Together, they produce a cohesive ideational metafunction, where the natural environment is not only a backdrop but a participant in the journey.

In **Figure 4**, the relationship between the visual and verbal modes is best described by Martinec and Salway’s concept of equal status with elaboration. The image shows a close-up of hands gently cupping a collection of green seeds, while the subtitle reads, “in green transition.” Here, the text presents an abstract concept—“green transition”—which might remain vague or general without further context. The visual mode elaborates on this abstraction by providing a concrete, sensory example: the green seeds act as an embodiment of growth, renewal, and the early stages of transformation. Conversely, the image of the seeds on its own is interpreted in a variety of ways, but the verbal phrase anchors its meaning specifically within the discourse of environmental change and progress. Thus, both the visual and verbal elements are essential for full comprehension, each expanding and specifying the meaning of the other. This exemplifies Martinec and Salway’s elaboration relation, where image and text are mutually supportive and of equal status in the meaning-making process.



Figure 4. Seeds of change—nurturing sustainability at the grassroots of Saudi Arabia’s green transition.

In the opening scene of the Green Saudi Initiative video, music consistently plays a supporting, enhancing role in relation to the visual and verbal modes, in line with

Martinec and Salway's concept of unequal status with enhancement. The music never leads the meaning but amplifies the emotional tone of each scene: it adds solemnity and authority to the Crown Prince's announcement, instills optimism and hope as the sun rises, conveys determination during the camels' march, and brings intimacy and care as green seeds are cradled in the hands. In every instance, music enriches the mood, making the narrative more impactful and emotionally resonant without introducing new content.

5.2.2. Scene 2: The Focus on Emission Reduction and Youth Engagement (1:39–2:17)

Scene 2 of the video centres on the themes of emission reduction and the active involvement of youth. Images 5 to 10 vividly illustrate this narrative, blending striking visuals with purposeful captions to highlight Saudi Arabia's ambitious efforts to cut emissions and transition toward a more sustainable future.

In **Figure 5**, the visual presents a senior Saudi official, Abdulaziz bin Salman AL Saud, delivering a message about reducing emissions “by 278 million tons, by 2030.” According to Martinec and Salway's model, the relationship between image and text here is best understood as enhancement (circumstance: source). The text provides a specific quantitative target for emission reduction, establishing the core informational content of the scene. The image, meanwhile, enhances this message by offering crucial contextual information—it shows who is making this important announcement, thereby lending credibility, authority, and a sense of national leadership to the verbal commitment. The presence of the official does not exemplify the reduction itself, but instead situates the statement within its social and institutional context, making the message more trustworthy and impactful.

In **Figure 6**, the scene shifts to a landscape of wind turbines turning at sunrise, with the accompanying caption, “Saudi Arabia believes in a sustainable future.” Here, the relationship between image and text is best described as elaboration (exemplification). The verbal mode articulates a broad aspiration toward sustainability, while the visual mode provides a concrete example of this aspiration being realized through renewable energy infrastructure. The wind

turbines and the hopeful atmosphere of the sunrise serve as visual evidence that the belief in sustainability is not just rhetoric, but is manifesting in visible, practical ways. Thus, each mode supports the other, with the image giving life and specificity to the general ideal expressed in the text.



Figure 5. Strategic leadership in action—affirming Saudi Arabia's commitment to reducing carbon emissions by 278 million tons by 2030.

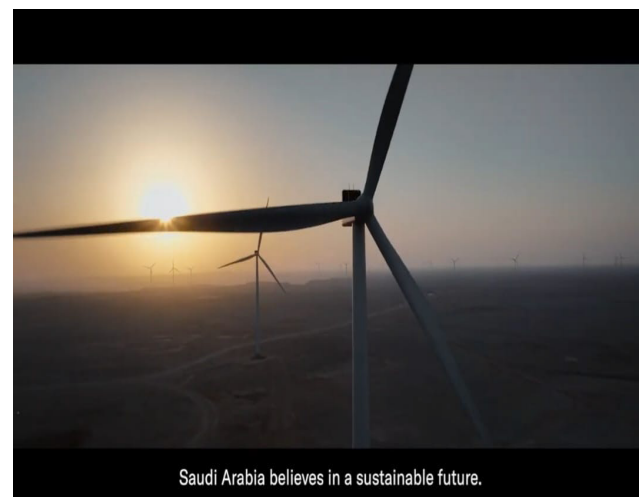


Figure 6. Turning ambition into energy—wind power propels Saudi Arabia toward a cleaner, sustainable future.

In **Figure 7**, a wide shot of a modern Saudi city appears with the text, “The Kingdom is acting to reduce emissions.” This pairing exemplifies equal status, elaboration as well. The cityscape visually conveys urban progress and ongoing development, elaborating on the text's claim of active, real-world engagement with environmental goals. The verbal and visual elements work together to construct an image of determined national action.



Figure 7. Saudi Arabia redesigns urban spaces to reduce emissions and promote sustainability.

Figure 8 features a radiant sun and sky with the phrase, “such as clean hydrogen and synthetic fuels.” The image–text relationship here is also equal status, elaboration. The open, bright sky symbolizes innovation and the promise of clean energy, while the text specifies exactly what types of solutions are envisioned. The modes collaborate to move the narrative from the abstract (clean energy) to the concrete (hydrogen, synthetic fuels). **Figures 9** and **10** depict a man and a boy gazing over a lush, cultivated landscape, accompanied by the caption, “that want to live better days and nights.” According to Martinec and Salway’s framework, the relationship between image and text here is best characterized as enhancement (circumstance: participant/location). The text articulates a broad, universal hope for a better future, while the image situates this hope in a specific context, showing who aspires to this dream and where they imagine it unfolding. The visual mode grounds the aspiration in the reality of generational continuity and connection to the land, providing circumstantial detail that makes the abstract message of hope concrete and personally meaningful.

Throughout these scenes, music consistently occupies an enhancing role in an unequal status relationship with the image–text ensemble, as outlined by Martinec and Salway. The music does not lead or elaborate the informational content but works to intensify and amplify the emotional, atmospheric, and persuasive qualities of each moment. Whether solemn and authoritative during official announcements, expansive and uplifting in scenes of renewable energy and cityscapes, or intimate and warm in family-focused visuals, the music adapts to the narrative’s mood, deepening the audience’s engagement. In every case, the music acts as a supporting mode that enhances the primary meaning jointly constructed by the visual and verbal elements, helping to ensure that the message of ambition, action, and hope is not only understood but also felt at a visceral, emotional level.



Figure 8. Advancing clean hydrogen and synthetic fuels for a climate-resilient Saudi Arabia.



Figure 9. Empowering youth to dream of a brighter, greener future through the Saudi Green Initiative..



Figure 10. Planting hope together.

5.2.3. Scene 3: The Afforestation Efforts in Arid Regions (2:43–3:05)

The sequence from 11 to 15 begins with **Figure 11**, where viewers encounter a sweeping view of green crops flourishing inside a modern greenhouse. The accompanying text, “Perhaps the most ambitious objective,” presents an abstract statement filled with possibility and scale. Here, the relationship between image and text is best described as elaboration, specifically exemplification. The image

gives tangible form to the ambition implied in the text, providing a visual anchor for the otherwise abstract claim. The lush, orderly rows of crops serve as an immediate and concrete example of what “ambitious objective” might look like in practice, demonstrating the kind of innovation and scale that characterizes the initiative’s aims.



Figure 11. spearheading sustainable agriculture as one of Saudi Arabia’s most ambitious climate objectives.

This logic continues seamlessly in **Figure 12**, where the text clarifies, “is the widespread afforestation of Saudi Arabia,” paired with a view of young saplings meticulously prepared for planting. In this case, the image and text share an elaboration relationship as well, with the visual mode supplying a real-world instantiation of the afforestation project described in the verbal mode. The image does not simply illustrate the text; rather, it exemplifies and specifies it, grounding the ambitious target of afforestation in visible, ongoing action. Together, the modes deliver a message that is both visionary and concrete.



Figure 12. Nurturing a greener tomorrow—supporting the Kingdom’s bold vision for widespread afforestation across Saudi Arabia.

A subtle shift occurs in **Figure 13**, which features a close-up of a Saudi official, Adel Al-Jubeir, and the statement, “the resources are big.” Here, the image–text relation moves away from elaboration and aligns with

enhancement, specifically as circumstance or source. The text puts forth a broad assertion about resource availability, while the image supplies the contextual details—the “who” and “where”—necessary to interpret and trust the statement. The official’s presence imbues the verbal claim with authority, situating the resources within the institutional and personal context that gives the message its weight.



Figure 13. Strategic insight—highlighting the vast resources driving Saudi Arabia’s sustainable transformation.

In **Figure 14**, we see a hand conducting field research among water reeds, captioned, “Groundbreaking research.” This pairing returns to the elaboration relation. The verbal text labels the activity as innovative research, and the image exemplifies this by offering a direct, observable instance of scientific engagement. Viewers are not only told about research—they are shown what it looks like, bridging the gap between abstract acclaim and physical action. The collaboration between modes ensures that the significance of the research is not just asserted but made vivid and credible.



Figure 14. Advancing environmental science to restore ecosystems and inform sustainable policy.

Figure 15 depicts a gloved hand holding a young plant, roots and soil exposed, set against a natural landscape. The accompanying text, “will enable suitable native species to be...,” is unfinished but hints at ecological restoration. The relationship here is also one of elaboration, with the image serving as a vivid exemplar of the environmental process alluded to in the verbal mode. The visual and textual elements work together to communicate both the purpose and the practice of the initiative, offering a narrative of hope, care, and ecological renewal.



Figure 15. Reviving nature—planting native species to restore biodiversity and strengthen Saudi Arabia’s ecological resilience.

Threaded throughout this sequence, the music plays a critical yet secondary role, embodying the principle of enhancement within Martinec and Salway’s model. The score adapts fluidly to the shifting moods of the visuals and text: swelling with inspiration as the video depicts ambition and innovation, then softening to convey intimacy and care during scenes of scientific research and planting. Music does not introduce new information or alter the fundamental narrative; rather, it amplifies the emotional resonance, intensifies atmosphere, and fosters a sense of unity and forward motion. In every instance, the music enhances the primary meaning established by the interaction of image and text, ensuring the Green Saudi Initiative’s story is not only understood on a rational level but also deeply felt.

6. Conclusion

This research set out to examine how the *Green Saudi Initiative* (GSI) communicates its environmental objectives through a rich multimodal ensemble in the promotional video *From Ambition to Action*. By combining Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004) with Martinec and Salway’s (2005) model of inter-semiotic relations, the study provides a comprehensive account of how verbal,

visual, and musical elements interact to produce meaning, inspire emotion, and mobilize pro-environmental attitudes.

The analysis of the verbal script through Halliday’s three metafunctions revealed a carefully crafted narrative:

Ideationally, the script is dominated by material processes that foreground action, commitment, and future-oriented transformation. Relational and mental processes further establish identities, values, and collective intentionality, with both individual (e.g., the Crown Prince, ministers) and collective (e.g., “we,” “our youth”) participants constructing agency and national unity. Circumstances of time, place, manner, and cause provide contextual richness, situating Saudi environmental ambition within both a local and global frame.

Interpersonally, the video adopts an authoritative yet inclusive stance. Strategic choices in attitudinal language, modality, and speech function build trust, convey urgency, and motivate shared action. The use of declaratives, imperatives, and inclusive pronouns weaves a social fabric that positions the viewer as an integral part of the national mission.

Textually, cohesion is achieved through theme–rheme organization, repetition of key terms, use of cohesive pronouns, and logical connectors. These features ensure that the verbal mode is both logically organized and emotionally resonant, guiding the viewer through the narrative arc of challenge, action, and anticipated success.

Martinec and Salway’s framework revealed that the **relationship between verbal and visual modes is fluid and context-dependent**, ranging from elaboration (where images exemplify or specify textual claims) to enhancement (where images provide circumstantial details such as participant, setting, or source). For example, images of afforestation efforts or renewable energy infrastructure serve to concretize broad policy aspirations, while the depiction of key figures—such as the Crown Prince or youth leaders—grounds verbal commitments in credible agency and humanizes the campaign.

Music emerged as a powerful but always secondary mode, operating as **enhancement** according to Martinec and Salway’s model. The musical score does not introduce new information, but rather amplifies the mood, emotion, and persuasive force of each scene. By adapting its tone to solemn, hopeful, or intimate moments, the music helps

transition the viewer from understanding to emotional investment, making the environmental message more memorable and compelling.

Ultimately, the *From Ambition to Action* video succeeds in its communicative mission because it leverages the synergistic potential of multimodal discourse. Each mode—language, image, and music—contributes unique resources, but it is their deliberate interconnection that produces a narrative both convincing and moving. The findings of this research not only elucidate the mechanisms by which environmental messages are constructed and received, but also offer practical insights for designing future campaigns: effective environmental communication requires not only accurate content, but also strategic multimodal orchestration that speaks to the mind, heart, and senses of its audience.

In sum, the Green Saudi Initiative's video stands as a model for impactful environmental messaging in the Saudi Arabian context and beyond, demonstrating that the integration of systemic linguistic analysis with intersemiotic theory can yield valuable frameworks for understanding and improving public awareness campaigns in the era of global climate action.

Funding

This work was supported by Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University grant number [PSAU/2024/02/30869].

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Further information can be provided by the author upon request.

Acknowledgments

The author extends her appreciation to Prince Sattam

bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the project number (PSAU/2024/02/30869).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

References

- [1] Halliday, M.A.K., Matthiessen, C.M.I.M., 2004. An introduction to functional grammar, 3rd ed. Arnold: London, UK.
- [2] Sarıkaya, R., Saraç, E., 2018. An analysis of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards environmental issues in terms of various variables. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*. 6(1), 99–109. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2018.060109>
- [3] Severo, E.A., Guimarães, J.C.F., Dellarmelin, M.L., et al., 2019. The influence of social networks on environmental awareness and the social responsibility of generations. *Brazilian Business Review*. 16(5), 500–518. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2019.16.5.5>
- [4] Khayat, R.O., Felemban, D.N., Altowairqi, T.K., et al., 2023. Measurement of Saudi society environmental awareness in relation to 2030 Saudi Vision and the Saudi Green Initiative. *Arab Journal of Scientific Publishing*. 6(56), 28–42.
- [5] Iqbal, A., Akram, H., Haroon, S., 2022. Exploring the role of media in creating awareness about the environment among university students. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*. 7(3), 208–226.
- [6] Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016. Vision 2030. Available from: <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/> (cited 12 April 2025).
- [7] Saudi Press Agency, 2021. HRH Crown Prince Launches the Middle East Green Initiative and the Green Saudi Initiative [in Arabic]. Available from: <https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&newsid=2298213> (cited 12 April 2025).
- [8] Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, 2022. Sustainable Development. Available from: <https://www.mewa.gov.sa/en/Ministry/initiatives/SustainableDevelopment/Pages/default.aspx> (cited 12 Apr 2025).
- [9] Surjani, J., Dangi, K., 2024. The role of advertising in advancing sustainable development goals: An exploratory study of strategies and impact. *Journal of Public Relations and Advertising*. 3(2), 32–50.
- [10] Daoud, M.K., Taha, S., Al-Qeed, M., et al., 2024.

- EcoConnect: Guiding environmental awareness via digital marketing approaches. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*. 8, 235–242.
- [11] Khan, U., Haque, M.I., Khan, A.M., 2020. Environmental sustainability awareness in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*. 7(9), 687–695. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13106/JAFEB.2020.VOL7.NO9.687>
- [12] Del Moral Pérez, M.E., Bellver Moreno, M.C., López-Bouzas, N., 2023. Pro-environmental advertising strategies of greatest impact among college audiences. *Index.Comunicación*. 13(1), 223–246. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33732/ixc/13/01Proenv>
- [13] Verma, R., Grover, P., 2022. Role of social media in the promotion of green school initiatives by government green schools in India. *Journal of Public Affairs*. 22(4), e2643. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2643>
- [14] Yadav, A.K., 2016. Role of media in promoting environmental awareness. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*. 1(1), 175–180. Available from: <https://www.ijtsrd.com/management/other/35/role-of-media-in-promoting-environment-awareness/dr-anil-kumar-yadav> (cited 12 Apr 2025).
- [15] Martinec, R., Salway, A., 2005. A system for image-text relations in new (and old) media. *Visual Communication*. 4(3), 337–371.
- [16] Eggins, S., 2004. *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*, 2nd ed. Continuum: London, UK.
- [17] Barthes, R., 1977. Rhetoric of the image. In: Barthes, R. (ed.). *Image-Music-Text*. Fontana: London, UK. pp. 32–51.
- [18] Machin, D., 2010. *Analyzing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*. SAGE Publications: London, UK.
- [19] Van Leeuwen, T., 2005. *Introducing Social Semiotics*. Routledge: London, UK.
- [20] Kress, G., van Leeuwen, T., 1996. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Routledge: London, UK.
- [21] Royce, T.D., 2007. *Multimodal Communication: A Reader*. Routledge: London, UK.
- [22] Jewitt, C., 2014. *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. Routledge: London, UK.
- [23] Forceville, C., 2016. *Multimodal Metaphor*. Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin, Germany.