

Self-representation of Private Universities in Lahore through Captioned Facebook Wall-Posts: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Waqasia Naeem¹, Afshan Quyyum², Sidra Haroon³

¹Associate Professor, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan.

²PhD Scholar, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan.

³PhD Scholar, School of English, Minhaj University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Correspondence: sidra.haroon@umt.edu.pk³

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The study aimed at analyzing self-representation of private universities in Lahore through captioned Facebook wall-posts. Research objectives of the study included analyzing multimodal features of the captioned Facebook wall-posts of the selected private universities in Lahore, analyzing how private universities are self-representing themselves on social media through their wall-posts and identifying the multimodal features which are common in Facebook wall-posts of both the selected universities.

Methodology: This study was qualitative in nature, three different models to analyze the data, Systemic Functional Linguistics (2005), Multimodal analysis (2007), and Self-representation in social media (2017).

Findings and Conclusion: This study concluded that universities use different multimodal features to represent their identities in the social media platforms. The private universities in Lahore employ a range of discursive strategies to shape their identities on social media platforms, these strategies include the use of language, images, and visual design elements to convey specific messages and create desired impressions among their target audience. The universities utilize a combination of persuasive techniques, such as showcasing campus facilities, highlighting academic achievements, and promoting extracurricular activities, to present themselves as reputable educational institutions that offer a comprehensive and enriching experience to students.

Keywords: Facebook Wall-posts, Self-representation, Multimodality, SFL.

Introduction

The question of representation of identity in educational communication and ‘public space’ is one of the focal altercations, especially in this era of digitalization. The question of how people construct their social identities or they can construct identity building through social media platforms is difficult.

Also, how personal identity can become collective, especially institutional identity, in online practice is often initiated by sociocultural understandings of communication. For communication purposes in

Article History

Received:
March 20, 2023

Revised:
June 10, 2023

Accepted:
June 13, 2023

Published:
June 17, 2023

everyday life, people represent themselves by levels from individuals to collaborative, with selected features and design on social framework.

Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx (2011), tried to explore identity construction process through a phenomenological underpinnings state that humans do not possess one but multiple identities leading to self-negotiation for the sake of unity.

Turner (2014) argues that groups living in organizations both sometimes try to collaborate and sometimes try to compete with others, which involves power dynamics, social capital, or financial resources throughout an ever changing and overlapping social structure. In this sense, identities can be either personal or social built upon and reconstructed for both purpose and context of communication.

Identity is not static, but dynamic. People can represent their identities through speech, symbols, materials that reflect the inner characteristics, thoughts, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, etc. Individual identity refers to consensus about one's personalities, values, obligations to others as a group, and social belonging, selected material possessions and geographic self-identification space (Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx, 2011).

Education as a social learning practice is a continuous and a dynamic process in which Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx (2011) state that the interaction of identity and self-presentation in a certain culture, contextual platforms and challenges to construct social identities should be the focus for future research using multiple methodologies.

Wenger (2008) takes practice, meaning, identity and community as a whole. Thus, learning involves doing, experiencing, acquiring and belonging to transform the individual identity to the collective identity of the community in which they experienced social action and social practices.

Universities are no longer an academic arena, but also market for business competition, as Bunzel (2007) & Mark (2012) comments in their work. Marks (2012) also notes that the educational institutions had to compete more strongly after school level with their competitors and generally make it very challenging to survive amongst local and international universities.

Roggendorf (2008) state that the ideology of higher education resulting from free trade and the beginning of competition, the higher education sector influenced public representation of the universities.

Using public space to create meaning in an academic institution through captioned official social media posts is one of the most effective areas of communication with people for the construction of collective social identity.

Jaroenrat (2010) and Obee (2012) they concluded that, students have use social media sites to prepare for universities and new jobs. Therefore, web pages, instant messages and social networks are important communication tools for the universities.

This research examines universities' official social media captioned posts as multimodal texts that use image, text, visual effects and typography to create and represent a comprehensive brand identity to diverse educational consumers. It explores the university brand as a multi-layered semiotic artefact.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of social media platforms in shaping and representing the identities of the educational institutions, very limited research has been conducted on the use of captioned Facebook wall-posts as a means of constructing and representing institutional identities in Lahore.

Aim of the Study

Aim of the study is to find out how selected private universities represent their identities through their captioned Facebook wall-posts using multimodal analysis.

Research Objectives

The study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To investigate modality features of official captioned Facebook wall-posts of selected private universities in Lahore.
2. To identify multimodal features which are common amongst Facebook wall-posts of the selected private universities in Lahore.
3. To interpret self-representation of selected private universities of Lahore through their captioned Facebook wall-posts.

Research Questions

Following are the research objectives of the study:

1. What modality features are used in captioned Facebook wall-posts of selected private universities in Lahore?
2. What multimodal features are common amongst Facebook wall-posts of the selected private universities in Lahore?
3. How the selected private universities of Lahore represent themselves through their captioned Facebook wall-posts?

Significance of the Study

This study will be helpful in making the reader understand how social media posts are being used to self-representation on social media in order to compete with their rivals and attract more students. Apart from that, this research will also be helpful in providing deeper understanding of the role of social media platforms in shaping institutional identities and it will also provide insight for the universities to effectively construct and represent their online identities.

Delimitations

Due to limited time and resources, this study is delimited to official captioned social media posts of Facebook only by the 4 selected private universities in Lahore. The source of the data comprises of English posts only posted in spring 2023.

Literature Review

Media discourses had always been of great interest for the discourse analysts but gradually there is coming a shift from media discourse to electronic social media texts. Discourse analysts are now taking interest into analyzing electronic social media texts as well as all those electronic social media texts play a vital role in identity construction.

Although electronic social media texts consist of variety of texts types starting from posts to comments and even clicking the 'like' button, but the foci of this research is captioned social media posts by the universities due to the fact that Increasing complexity of universities official captioned social media posts emerging as a new media is not caused solely by proliferation of communication modes in view of technological advancement, but also through a cumulative effect of its interaction with and impact on each other.

Modern multimodal texts "[...] foreground visuality, not just by using images, but also by using composition (layout), typography and colour" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 74). Multimodality relies on the assumption that meaning was created through various means and modes.

Bezemer (2012) states that the framework of multimodality is based on meaning making multi-sensory communication which include verbal, visual and kinetic modes. Kress (2010) states meaning making

through multi means of visual tools is meant to “to present, to realize, at times to (re-) contextualize social positions and relations, as well as knowledge in specific arrangements for a specific audience” (p.139).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), visual texts that were created using the grammar of a language based on SFL were comparable to verbal texts because they allowed viewers to read represented information that was a result of the writer’s mental construct and cultural context. Actions and eye contact carried out functions similar to verbs in spoken communication. Image sizes, colours, and angles could all convey messages identical to what is said verbally. While the arrangement of the images represented the writers' intentions, the framing showed how the information was connected. Theme-Rheme, Topic-Comment, and Given-New are the information structures of visual design that relate to the semiotics of space and place. Different linguistic cultures have diverted the left-to-right orientation. Another code for expressing what was ideal and real was the vertical dimension. However, with non-linear text, the audience consciously made their own selections regarding from where to start the reading process.

Furthermore, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, approach takes into account the textual, ideational (experiential), and interpersonal components of languages. Specifically, the following formula describes the three functions of the functional structure, which also provides a baseline for understanding Theme-Rheme, Given-New and internal structures of language, when trying to understand meaning through multiple modes.

Coming to another important notion of this research, Identity has always been a complex phenomenon (Varien and Potter 2008:15). Identity is also not unitary in its very nature but "a many-faceted phenomenon" (Edwards, 2009). Identities are also dependent on other entities particular social contexts (Varien & Potter, 2008: 16). The learning system's transfer stage may have an impact on how social perceptions of an individual alter.

Apart from individual identity, there exists social identity as well. According to Berg, De Fina, and Schiffrin (2011), social identity was defined as placing people in membership groups, participating in favourite groups, comparing our group to others, and defining our identity from that of other groups. But one important thing that is to be noticed is that identity is not restricted to humans only, even organizations create their identities. Organizational identity, according to Kulvisaechna (2009: 44), refers to the social phenomena in which interactions among members of the institution and their relationships with outside communities produced identity.

Organizational identities are often communicated to demonstrate that institutional members are typically convinced of their organization’s significant attributes that made them unique from other organizations and these attributes are not temporary but consistent through time in a variety of settings.

Identities are not of corporate organizations but of educational institutions as well. In the current competitive scenario, educational institutions need to have a dynamic and rational identities which is particularly important to attract students in the competitive environment. Online networking is one of the finest means in creating identities in the contemporary scenario.

There have been a number of researches which talk about how online means like websites, webpages wall-posts etc are being used by the educational organizations to construct identities. In a study Saichae's (2011:96) explored the websites of twelve American institutions to determine institutional representation with reference to the decision-making process, and it was found that the institutions tried to reflect their identity by showing university activities, life at campus etc. L. Mafofo & F. Banda (2014) stated in their research that universities use their homepages to self-represent them as powerful, competitive and attractive brand. In a research, Nasti, C., Venuti, M., & Zollo, S. A. (2017) concluded based on their multimodal analysis of UK universities websites UK universities take the students as consumers to whom a full array of facilities, services and possibilities are offered. Febrianti, Y. (2020) concluded in a research that universities try to create their brands through their advertising posters and films. According to Vijitjaroen's (2013) research of graduate students' perspectives at a Thai university, social media platforms

like Facebook use institutional colour to construct their identities among users. Furthermore, in another study Universities in America and Europe tried to demonstrate their worries about ethnicity in their online websites (Brunner & Brown, 2007).

In this limited pool of research on identity construction by universities through online media, official captioned online wall-posts are not an explored to a very great extent, making it a gap in the literature which this research is endeavoring to fill.

Theoretical Framework

This research has been conducted by viewing the issue through the lens of multimodal analysis. Multimodality revolves around inherent features of any communicative instance which involves multiple semiotics like language, layout, colours, size, typography etc simultaneously. For the current study Kress (2010) modality model was used, which Kress (2010) says “Using three modes in one sign - writing and image and colour as well - has real benefits”. Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Color is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message” (p. 1). Whereas to analyze the identity representation of the universities through their social media posts Rettberg (2017) ‘Self-representation in social media.’ was used as foundation which states that “Visual self-representation includes selfies, of course, but also other images and icons that we use to express ourselves, such as the photos we choose to share on Facebook or the layout we choose for a Tumblr log. Written self-representations can be blogs or online diaries, but also the many written status updates we share on sites like Facebook, Twitter or in comments on Instagram. The third mode I will discuss is quantified self-representation, which is becoming increasingly common as phones become step-counters and apps give us more and more opportunities to represent our lives through numbers and graphs. Quantified self-representation can mean extensive and deliberate self-tracking, as we see in the quantified self-movement, or it can be 2 something as simple as swiping right to add a filter to a Snapchat image showing the temperature where we are or the speed at which we are moving. Often the three modes overlap in social media, as with a Snapchat image that includes numerical information. A selfie with overlaid text uses both the visual and written modes of self-representation, and emoji can be understood both as part of an alphabet and as visual communication”. Finally, to analyze language structures of the captions, Halliday (2005) model of systemic functional grammar was employed which takes into account interpersonal, ideational and textual metafunctional aspects of language.

Research Methodology

Nature of research and research design

This research is exploratory in nature and qualitative research design has been used to conduct the study.

Population and Sample of the study

Population of this study consisted of private universities of Lahore.

Sample Size

The sample of the study consisted of two private universities of Lahore only.

Sampling Technique

These two private universities were selected on the basis of the frequency of their Facebook wall-posts during the spring 2023 semester. Three Captioned wall-posts of each university were randomly selected for the analysis purpose. It was also made sure that the captioned Facebook wall-posts are taken from verified Facebook pages of the selected universities and only those posts were selected which were made public by the selected universities.

Ethical considerations

As the selected Facebook wall-posts were posted on verified Facebook pages and made public by the selected universities, thus no official consent was taken from the subject universities before analyzing the captioned wall-posts, however it was made sure that no such Facebook wall-post be taken for analysis which might offend any religious, ethnic or political group.

Analysis Technique

The current research has combined Multimodal analysis of Kress (2010), Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday (2005) and Rettberg (2017) Self representation in social media to analyze how selected private universities in Lahore are using captioned Facebook wall-posts to construct their identities in the general masses.

Data Analysis

Analysis Procedure

The current research has combined Multimodal analysis of Kress (2010), Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday (2005) and Rettberg (2017) Self representation in social media to analyze how selected private universities in Lahore are using captioned Facebook wall-posts to construct their identities in the general masses. Multimodal elements were analyzed on the basis of ‘layout’, ‘font style’, ‘font size’, ‘font color’, and images used in the wall-posts which included ‘actors’, ‘process type’, ‘goal’, ‘event/phenomena’ and finally type of graphics used. From SFL perspective, ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctional dimensions were used to analyze features of the captions. Additionally, field, mode and tenor were also analyzed to identify the communicative purpose of the captions of Facebook wall-posts. Finally, to understand the identity construction Rettberg (2017) ‘Self-representation in social media’ was employed which included ‘visual, written and quantified self-representation’ in social media.

Figure 1: *Captioned Facebook post 1*



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

At text level the theme of the caption is personal pronoun, specifically second person pronoun 'You' whereas rheme of the sentence is 'studying at the Number 1 ranked university in Pakistan', this very order of theme-rheme is reflective that the writer wants the reader to consider himself or herself as privileged for being part of an institute which is ranked as 'number 1'. Another important feature to note in this caption is that it is following the Given and New information pattern, where already known information that the students are studying is mentioned earlier whereas the New information that the institution, they are studying in is ranked as 'Number 1' is mentioned in the second part of the sentence. This Given-New order is again there to make the reader realize his or her current status and what positive change has occurred related to his or her current status. Then again Given information is mentioned 'private sector universities' which is to make the reader know that this rank is with reference to private sector universities only. Furthermore, who ranked this university as 'Number 1' has been mentioned in the last part of the caption, and it is also worth noting that it has been passivized 'named by Times Higher Education UK', this passivization is reflective of ideological stance that for the reader 'You' it is of lesser importance as to who ranked the university as number 1 but this is of more importance that university has been ranked as number 1 by a reputed institute. This caption is written in compound sentence, which are generally easier to understand and increase the readability of the post. Finally, the caption ends with a hashtag 'UMT my first choice', where UMT is the theme and 'my first choice' is the rheme of the hashtag, this hashtag is phrase-like in its very structure making it more axiomatic in nature. Another interesting thing to notice in this hashtag is 'my'. Despite the fact that 'my' is a personal pronoun apparently referring to the writer of this wall-post this is an inclusive 'my', which means that this 'my first choice' is not simply the first choice of the writer of the wall-post but also of all the anonymous readers of it as well, and even of those who have not gone through the post yet they are part of the institute.

Despite the fact that this wall-post is of an academic institution but considering the field of the Facebook wall-post, it is non-academic in nature. Tenor of the wall-post reflects that the writer of this Facebook wall-post as if the writer of it is in close affinity with the reader and making the reader feel proud on being part of an institute which is considered as number 1. Another interesting thing to notice regarding mode of the wall-post is that despite the fact it is written text, yet it resonates like spoken words. The way writer has addressed numerous anonymous readers as 'You' makes it look like a personal conversation with someone close to the writer.

Analysis Level 2 Multimodality

Font style and font size of the caption is medium but quite visible and legible. Emoticon of a golden trophy has been added at the end of the phrase 'ranked number 1 university'. This indicates that the university is cherishing its success. One important aspect to note is that the phrase 'private sector universities' has been added at the end of the post inside brackets which is a key feature of non-restrictive clause, thus making it look like a less important information that this rank is relative to private sector universities only and this ranking does not include government sector universities, despite the fact that it is an important piece of information. Hashtag has been added at the end of the caption, though the same phrase 'UMT my first choice' could have been added as part of the caption, yet the writer has written it as a hashtag to make it more prominent, making it part of long-term memory of the reader. As far as mode of the Facebook wall-post is concerned, it is more visual in nature than written. Though caption has been added before the image, yet image has reserved more space, in terms of size, on the webpage. In the very frame of the image of this Facebook wall-post, three flags of different countries have been shown, which is indicative of the environment of the university, that it does not only welcome Pakistani students, but it also welcomes international students with warm hearts and it is striving to build healthy working relationship with other countries as well. Major part of the frame of this image is filled by a building of the university, which is there to make the reader of this Facebook wall-post realize the grandeur of the infrastructure of the university. Apart from focusing on a building of the university, manifestations of

nature like clouds, sky and trees are also part of the frame of this image, which is reflective of the eco-friendly and eco-sustainable environment of the university. In the same frame, a girl has been backgrounded, probably because the social actor like students in case of a university is not the focus of this post. This post is an endeavor to make the students realize, that this institution has all what a student needs, namely a good rank, good infrastructure, an eco-sustainable environment and last but not the least desire to have good working relations with other countries.

Analysis level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

This Facebook wall-post contains two levels of self-representation in social media namely visual and written out of three which includes quantified self-representation as well according to Rettberg (2017). At the written level, this very wall-post has a caption, which is denotation of the wall-post, but has a connotative meaning as well. This very caption is an attempt to represent the image of the university as number 1, along with a piece of backgrounded information that it is ranked as number 1 among private universities. Visual self-representation is done through the image, which includes flags of different countries, a building of the university. This very image is reflecting the magnificence of the infrastructure and its working relations with international students and universities. No explicit quantified self-representation element like any filter etc has been added to the picture, not colour change was made, this is again important and indicative of the fact the writer of the post probably thinks that the university is perfect in its very being, thus no filters are required. All this is collectively suggesting that the university is trying to represent itself as 'best' in all its facets. It is also worth noting that name of the ranking agency 'Times Higher Education UK' has been mentioned which is another important aspect of identity that this selected university is not only locally recognized but also internationally recognized as well.

Figure 2: Facebook wall-post 2



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

Starting at the textual level, this text 'Home of Leaders and Best' is a phrase which sounds like a title given to the university. In this particular phrase 'Home' is acting like the theme of the phrase, whereas 'Leaders and Best' is the rheme of it. Considering the choice of the words used in the phrase 'Home' is used which reflects a place which is inhabited and has a comfortable environment. Then 'Leaders and

Best' both the words have been capitalized making it look like proper nouns reflecting that these are not ordinary ones at all but of some prestige. Apart from this, plural form 'Leaders' have been used in the text which shows that it is not just one leader which this university has produced but a number of important figures. Then again like the previous wall-post by the same university, a hashtag has been added in the caption 'my UMT'. Here, 'my' is an inclusive 'my' which is there to build association of all the readers with UMT. At the ideational level, the mentioned phrase along with the hashtag represents the mental image of the writer of the post regarding social actors of the university. 'Home' shows that the writer is taking this university like a personal living space which is congenial. Furthermore, whosoever is part of this institution has the leadership quality in them and they are the pre-eminent figures. At interpersonal level, mode of the caption is spoken like. Reading the caption makes the reader feel that the writer is in conversation with the reader and comes up with the utterance 'Home of Leaders and Best', making it resonant in the mind like a praise well deserved.

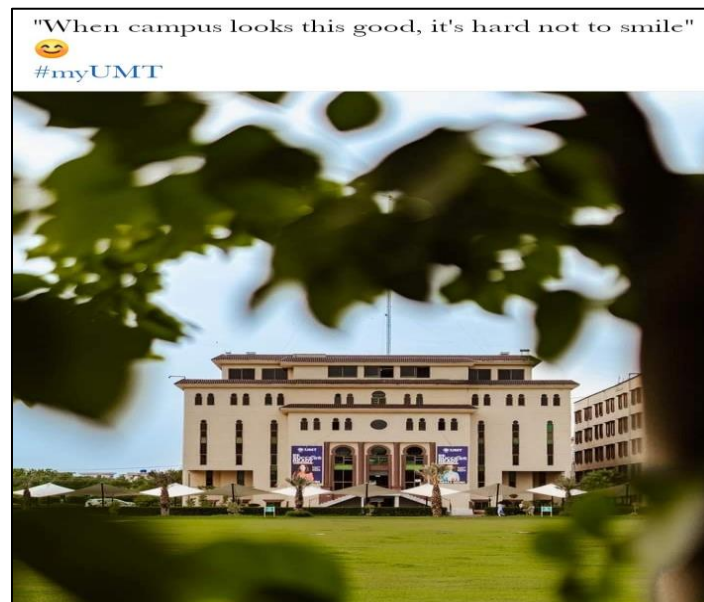
Analysis Level 2 Multimodality

Font style and font size used in the caption are quite legible. Instead of making an extended caption by embedding 'my UMT' into it, the writer has mentioned it as a hashtag right above the image frame, which has made it distinct from the rest of the caption, making it more personal in its very feel. Frame of the picture is majorly covered with a few buildings of the university. Then partly clouding bright blue sky is also covering a fairly big part of the frame. This particular image depicts metaphorically a nice landscape of the university. Another interesting thing to notice is that even in this image, like the earlier image, social actors like students, teachers etc. are not shown, not even backgrounded. Most part of the building has been backgrounded as well. Major focus of the image is the overall landscape and its beauty. Trees and an overhead shed are visible in the picture, which is reflective of the sheltering tendency of the infrastructure. Green-lot is foregrounded in the image along with some part of the building. It shows that this is not just the infrastructure which is commendable but this university is spacious as well.

Analysis Level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

This Facebook wall-post contains all the three levels of identity representation in social media namely; visual, written and quantified. At the written level, this caption contains phrase 'Home of Leaders and Best, and also a hashtag 'my UMT'. At visual level, the picture contains image of the buildings of the university, its green-lot, its passage-way which is covered with over-head shed and have trees at its sides. Sky has also covered a major area of the image frame. At quantified level, hue of the image has been filtered to make it look more attractive. All the three levels, collectively representing the 'self' identity of the university in social media platform. Firstly, the phrase "Home of Leaders and Best" constructs an identity of pride and excellence for the institution referred to as UMT. By using words like "leaders" and "best," the text positions UMT as a place that fosters success and nurtures individuals who are at the top of their fields. This creates a positive image and a sense of belonging for those associated with UMT, reinforcing the identity of the institution as a prestigious and high-achieving environment. Secondly, the use of the hashtag "#my UMT" further strengthens the identity construction by creating a sense of personal connection and ownership. In this case, the hashtag "#my UMT" suggests that the individual sharing this text feels a strong personal connection to the institution and identifies with its values and achievements. This further reinforces the identity of UMT as a prestigious institution and creates a sense of community among those who use the hashtag. Overall, the combination of language and hashtags in this text effectively constructs an identity of pride, excellence, and belonging for UMT and its affiliates. Considering the foregrounded parts of the image, Sky and the building, is reflective of the fact that infrastructure of this university is as magnificent and gigantic as the sky. Furthermore, add a lighter hue to the image to make it look fresher and more beautiful is another important thing in terms of self-representation in social media. This lighter tone of hue, is indicating that the writer is wanting the university to look attractive to the readers.

Figure 3: *Facebook wall-post 3*



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

Starting with the textual level, the structure of the sentences mentioned in caption is Adv+N+V+Det+Adj,Pron+be+Adj+not+infm+V. This is a compound sentence which is an easy-to-understand construction. Quotation marks around the sentence is reflecting the mode of the sentence, it looks as if this sentence has been spoken by someone which is being quoted further, thus making the mode as spoken. At interpersonal level, this sentence is reflecting writer's attitude towards the magnificence of the campus building. Whereas at tenor level, the relationship between writer and the reader looks quite intimate that one is at ease to share his/her feelings about the campus building with the other. Field of this text is praise of the campus building, which at ideational level is reflecting how gratifying it is to study at a campus which is very alluring. Considering the theme-rheme of this caption 'Campus' is the theme of the first clause whereas 'looks this good' is the rheme. But there is one interesting aspect, the rheme of the first independent clause is acting as the theme of the second independent clause. 'Looks good' is the theme and 'it's hard not to smile' is the rheme.

Analysis Level 2 Multimodality

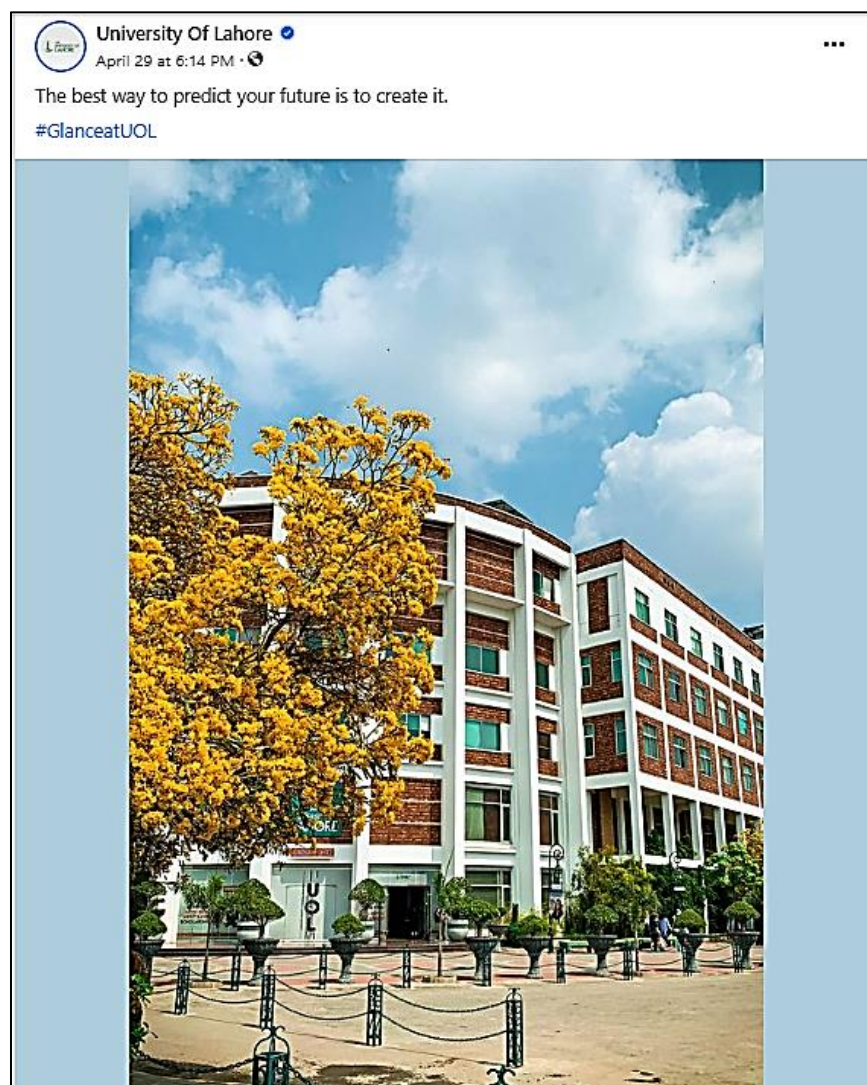
The font style and font size of the caption of this Facebook wall-post is legible. Hashtag 'My UMT' is again part of the caption, making it sound like a slogan and making it more visible than the rest of written content. Another important thing about the frame of the caption is that, there is a smiling emoticon in the caption, which is reflecting the emotions of the writer of this Facebook wall-post that he/she is delighted at the beauty of the campus building. Frame of the picture is majorly covered with leafy-branch which is working as picture-frame for the image. And inside the picture-frame of the leafy-branch, there is the campus building, grassy ground and sky. Again, all these things are highlighting the magnificence of the campus. Another interesting thing to note is the there are no social actors like students, teachers etc. shown in the image, like the previous Facebook wall-post.

Analysis Level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

This Facebook wall-post contains all the three levels of Rettberg (2017) model, namely: written, visual and quantified. At written level, this wall-post contains written text saying 'When campus looks this good, it's hard not to smile'. At visual level, the picture contains the image of the building of campus. But most prominent feature is the use of quantified representation. The image contains branches of the tree

which is acting as picture-frame for the image. Apart from the picture-frame of the image around the campus building, the peripheral part of the frame of the image has been blurred, making campus building look more prominent of in other words making campus building foregrounded. Hue of the image has also been slightly lightened, making it look brighter. Thus, campus image has been embellished with filters to enhance its glimpse.

Figure 4: *Facebook wall-post 1*



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

This piece of text is executing two types of relations; one is the relationship of the post with the post creators and the other relationship is between the post and its readers and viewers. Even a quick glance at the post while scrolling through the university's Facebook wall, one cannot unsee the post because of its positive impact created by the way the text is organized and put together. The lexicogrammar used in the post is used very carefully to create the connection between the readers and the university. The ideational strand of the meaning is to motivate students all over the world to get admission in the university. Transitivity structure is also utilized here and the verbs which are used to motivate the readers '**to predict and to create**', are transitive. The pronoun '**your**', is used in the post as a possessive determiner and it

really helps personalize the post for the readers. **‘The best way’** has been used for possibility and hope and it has also been used to show the evaluative lexis which clears the relationship between the Facebook users and the post creators. This phrase also infuses the post with excitement and anticipation for the readers who would definitely want to know the best way to predict their future.

Another angle of looking at the post caption is by breaking it into its theme and the rheme. The theme **‘the best way to predict your future’** is exciting and intrigues the reader to look forward to quickly reading the rheme **‘is to create it’**.

There is an interesting facet to the hashtag that is used in the post here. Unlike many social media posts captions, the post here resorts to a single hashtag. This may be seen as an attempt to keep it focused on this particular hashtag and the message that it carries. The caption read **‘the best way to predict your future is to create it’** which fills the reader with excitement and positive anticipation of their future at the university. It gives a message that to create their best future, admission into this university would be a crucial milestone in their future success. Hence the hashtag **‘GlanceatUOL’** is a phrase that gives a sneak peek into the university. The word **‘glance’** is also an interesting word which may allude to the ‘glance’ at the ‘best future’ for the readers of the caption.

Analysis level 2 Multimodality

The caption in the Facebook post is accompanied by a very interesting photo from the university campus. The colours are bright which indicates a bright future. There are many other buildings on the same campus but the brightest and the most spectacular building has been chosen to create a bright and hopeful impression on the viewers of the post. The font is also big enough to read and along with the building the sky with clouds has also been captured to give hope. As the morning and the blue sky indicate hope. The image of a tree with full leaves also leaves a very good impression on the readers and viewers as the colour of the leaves is also really bright and golden which could indicate the gold and the riches and indicates how bright the future could be after being associated with this institution. So by using perfect font, colours, and carefully picked landscape, the post has created a perfect blend of hope, encouragement, and enthusiasm in the students to look forward to their bright future.

It is also worth noticing that the photo does not focus any students. There are a couple of students in the photo, but they are backgrounded and the infrastructure and the landscape are foregrounded. This creates the impression that the best future would be created at this campus and the students who get admission in this university can readily imagine themselves in this ‘vacant’ photo building their future with their own hands.

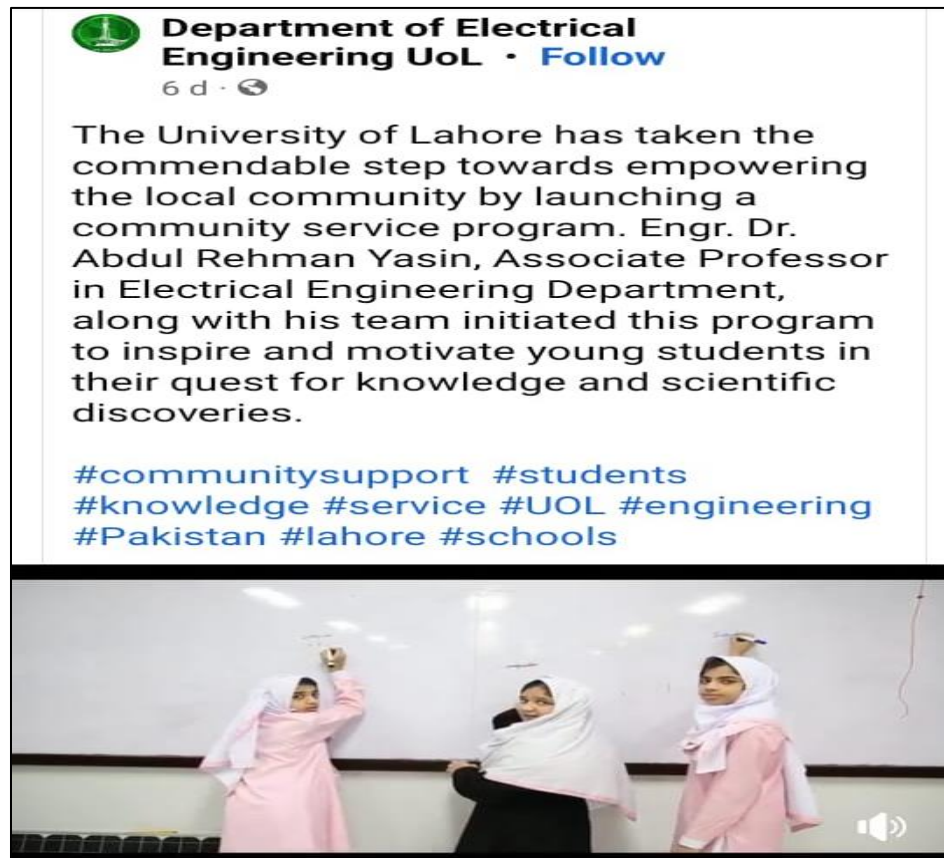
Analysis Level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

Identity formation, also called identity growth or edifice, is a complex process in which humans develop a clear and unique view of themselves and their identity. Self-concept, personality development, and values are all closely related to identity formation.

Educational institutions create an image for the people by using Facebook wall posts. Common self-presentations include visual representations (e.g., image-based self-expression) and written representations (e.g., text-based self-expression in social media) (Rettberg, 2017). Facebook wall posts, particularly on the official Facebook page of any institution give it with different levels of popularity to have different understandings and interpretations of social interaction, which leads to different self-representation of the institution to earn more revenue by appealing to the students. The way any institution represents itself can mirror users' thoughts and beliefs about social interaction (Rettberg, 2017). People's interactions with others on social media are generally analogous to their interactions with others in the real social world. So, in order to create the best identity, the University of Lahore is not specifically discussing its strategies, curriculum, syllabus, and scholarships to appeal to the students, but the institution is going to be more generic and post a quote that shows that the University of Lahore believes in handwork and make the future of its students bright or help the students to make their future bright.

This is one of the unique ways to put a wonderful impression on the viewers and the readers to talk about something general and give hope and encouragement to the students. Identity could be seen as how other people understand you and how much you allow people to understand you.

Figure 5: Facebook wall-post 1



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

In this Facebook post the Field is undoubtedly social media and this global mode has been used by the University of Lahore to show that university really works to promote community service programmes in addition to the traditional education it provides. The university is more into developing the skills for young women in the community. The idea is that promoting the skills is more important than providing the community with the traditional academic degrees. This way the university is doing a great service by bridging the gap between skills development and academia. Theme in the first sentence of the caption in the post is **'The University of Lahore'** which is foregrounded here. The very first hashtag is **'community support'** which precedes the hashtags **'students'** and **'knowledge'** etc. This implies that the community support is an integral part of the services offered by the university and particularly by the Department of Electrical Engineering. It is significant because engineering degree programs are supposed to be very practical and their graduates should be able to readily serve the society as soon as they join the workforce.

Ideational strand is to motivate the community and to put an impression that university takes very good care of the community and does not only focus in the race of numbers and to get the number one status in this race. All the verbs have been used in this Facebook post are encouraging. For example, 'taken', 'empowering', 'launching', 'initiated', 'inspire', and 'motivate'.

So, the transitive verbs that have been used here properly refer to a system for describing the whole clause rather than just the verb and its object and that is the main stance of SFL as well. Passivation has been used to foreground the university and its specific department in the first sentence since in the second sentence the active voice has been used to give prominence to a teacher at the university and his team and by using this technique the community of young students have been backgrounded. So, the main attorney of power has been given to the campus management. As far as the Tenor of the post is concerned, it gives an interpersonal strand of meaning. Pronouns used here are, ‘his’, ‘this’ and ‘their’ independent possessive pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, and possessive pronoun respectively. All these features of the post confirm the socio-cultural strong relationship between the whole Facebook users community and the management of The University of Lahore. The mode of communication used is not only textual but also photo is attached to enhance the impact on the audience. The post is lexically and grammatically a coherent whole. Repetition of encouraging verbs can also be seen in the post.

Analysis Level 2 Multimodality

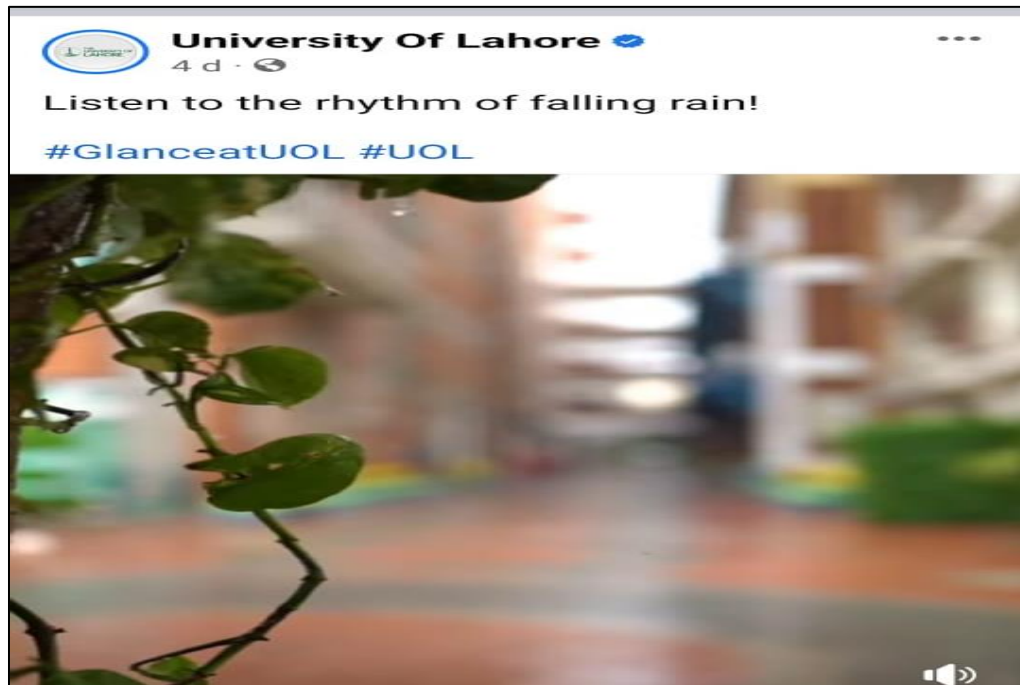
Sound technique has been used by attaching the photo of three girls who have written something on the board. They also appear as if they wanted to say something because they are facing the audience. The hashtags used here are all symbolic and illustrate hope and encouragement to the young community members. Moreover, the photo showing young girls rather than boys also seems a deliberate choice in conveying the message of women empowerment and girls’ rights to education. The photo is mainly monotoned rather than being very colourful. The girls shown are wearing head scarves that conform to the conservativeness of the society and it also gives out the message that hard work is much more important than the dresses.

Analysis Level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

First and foremost, identity that is created by the university is that they are more into empowering the female. They could have posted the pictures of male students as well because the university is fundamentally a coeducational institution. However, it seems like a deliberate choice to not have included the boys in the photos. Another identity that is constructed is that to fashion ones thought with education and skills is much more important than to fashion your appearance. The girls are wearing very simple dresses.

When the institution is going to launch a community programme it means the institution tries to empower the young students and focuses more on the talent, skills, and quality education than to join the race of numbers and rankings. The school-level students have been targeted to create identity. So the impression of the institution on the majority of the people is that the University of Lahore continues to launch such programmes for the development and progress of the community. The one purpose this post tries to achieve is to promote skills development and the other purpose is to focus more on the female education, skills and empowerment.

Figure 6: Facebook wall-post 2



Analysis Level 1 (SFL)

This post appears to be a great example of 'less is more'. To begin with, the intransitive verb '**listen**' is used preceded by two prepositions '**to**' and '**of**'. One uncountable noun '**rhythm**' and '**falling rain**' have been used figuratively identifiable with the rain drops. '**Rain**' is surely used as noun and '**falling**' as an adverb. '**Listen**' has been used as theme and the rest of the sentence as rheme and focus is to motivate and encourage the students to see the beauty of nature around the university campus.

Ideationally, the university management wants to appeal to the romantic senses of the students and the people who are not even a part of the campus life, may be able to have a glance at the university life at the University of Lahore. At the university, people spare sometime to see and feel the nature and get a well-rounded, human experience once they enrol at the University of Lahore. It gives a very potent message that focusing on the academic activities is not all that the students do, but they also have some leisure time to enjoy nature. In that way, university want to make itself unique than the other competitor universities. On interpersonal level, obviously the whole community and the university management has the socio-cultural relationship.

Analysis Level 2 Multimodality

The best technique of imagery has been utilized here to enhance the romantic sense of the audiences. Even while scrolling through their Facebook wall, when the users come across this type of post, they are attracted and stop for a while to listen to the falling rain. Not only the viewer can listen to the rhythm of falling rain but also can feel it the way it has been posted. All the modes of appealing the audiences have been used here in this post. So, it could be the best example of multimodality where we can use all of our five sense to feel the situation. The lush green colour of the wet leaves also indicates hope and enthusiasm for the viewers. Moreover, by using the hashtag '**GlanceatUOL**', while the accompanying photo foregrounds the refreshing, green branch of a tree with raindrop falling from one of its leaves, nature is given the precedence and the 'artificial'; the building and the infrastructure is thrown in the background. This really gives the message to the reader that this university takes care of the aesthetics of its students and helps them live their best life by drawing them closer to the nature.

Analysis level 3 Self-representation in Social Media

Nonpareil the identity has been nourished by the University on the viewers. No other can have an idea that this could also be the technique to make the positive impression by some institution. The building, the ground the gate and the pleasant weather is captured and posted to construct a positive impact on the viewers. A subtle message on the other hand, most of the universities use to post just about the academic activities on their face book wall posts. They have also tried to set a trend that to relax the student we can get better results. Along with this beautiful scene it is written very clearly call now.

Results and Discussion

Synthesising the results of the analysis, it has been observed that the most common multimodal features of the first university include hashtags and an image of the campus building (UMT). Captions of the first university mostly included the ranking of the university and phrases related to its beauty and magnificence. When it comes to self-representation of the first university on social media platforms, UMT mostly focused on representing itself as highly ranked and showcased very lucrative images of the campus building, reflecting its magnificence and facilities.

On the other hand, the Facebook wall-posts of the second university mostly contained phrases which reflect that the future can be made if efforts are put in (UOL). Secondly, the most common feature also includes the beauty of the campus building. Facebook wall-posts of the second university also included an image reflecting its philanthropic attitude. Hashtags have also been used by UOL as well.

Counting on the common multimodal features of both universities, hashtags have been used by both universities, but the nature of the hashtags was different. Hashtags of UMT were showing the personal association of the writer with the university, but on the other hand, hashtags of UOL were focused on either the philanthropic side of the university or the beauty of the university campus. Both universities also focused on capturing the mesmerizing view of the campus building in the wall-posts. Both universities have also utilized quantified self-representation on social media.

Overall, the analysis highlights the persuasive strategies employed in both the text and multimodal aspects of the Facebook wall-post to construct a positive identity for the institutions, evoke pride among readers, and convey the institutions' key attributes (Bamberg, De Fina & Schiffrin, 2011; Bezemer, 2012; Brunner & Brown, 2007). The result of this study shows that universities have now started to self-represent themselves as brand, this result is in line with the result of Buzel (2007).

Overall, the analysis underscores how the text and multimodal elements work together to construct and reinforce an identity of excellence, belonging, and pride for the UMT. The caption and image combine to convey a sense of personal connection, highlight the institution's achievements, and showcase its visually appealing aspects, contributing to an effective self-representation in the social media context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on the identity construction of private universities in Lahore through captioned Facebook wall-posts provides valuable insights into the strategies employed by private universities to shape and project their identities. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of identity construction and the use of multimodal discourse analysis to examine linguistic and visual elements in Facebook posts and captions.

The study reveals that private universities in Lahore utilize a range of discursive strategies on social media platforms, such as language, images, and visual design, to convey specific messages and create desired impressions. These strategies aim to present the universities as reputable educational institutions offering a comprehensive and enriching experience to students. The research also underscores the role of Facebook as a powerful tool for identity construction and branding, enabling universities to engage with various stakeholders and shape their perceived identities.

It is important to note that the Facebook wall-posts represent a curated and mediated version of university life, subject to selective presentation and idealized depictions. While these posts contribute to identity construction, they should be approached critically, considering the deliberate framing and persuasive intentions behind them.

Overall, this study enhances our understanding of how private universities in Lahore utilize multimodal discourse strategies on Facebook to construct and promote their identities. It emphasizes the significance of social media platforms in higher education communication and branding. Future research could focus on examining the reception and impact of these constructed identities on the target audience, as well as investigating how they influence decision-making processes among prospective students.

Acknowledgements

None


Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.


Funding Source

The authors received no funding to conduct this study.

ORCID iDs

Waqasia Naeem ¹  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3364-6280>

Afshan Quyyum ²  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9273-6562>

Sidra Haroon ³  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9879-9927>

References

- Bamberg, M., De Fina, A. & Schifffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and identity construction. In S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V.L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research; Volumn 1 Structures and processes* (pp.177-199). New York, NY: Springer.
- Bezemer, J. (2012). What is multimodality? Mode: Multimodality methodologies for researching digital data and environments, University College London. Retrieved from the website: <https://mode.ioe.ac.uk/2012/02/16/what-is-multimodality/>
- Brunner, B. R. & Brown, M. H. (2007). *Web Sights: Images of diversity on college and university home pages*. In S. C. Duhe (Ed.), *New media and public relations* (pp.357-369). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Bunzel, D. L. (2007). Universities sell their brands. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 16(2), 152-153.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Febrianti, Y. (2020). *A Multimodal Semiotic Analysis of University Branding Posters and Films* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2005). *Introduction: Towards an applicable description of the grammar of a language*. In J. J. Webster (Ed.), (2005), *Studies in English language* (pp.xii-xxx). London, England: Continuum.

- Hassan, T.U., Shabir, G., Safdar, G., Hussain, J.S. (2019). Social Media Defy Spiral of Silence Theory and Provides Baseline for new Spiral of Social Media Theory: Ground Perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 39(4), 1549-1558.
- Jaroenrat, K. (2010). A causal model of factors influencing the university choice of international students in Thailand. Doctoral dissertation, Department of Education Administration, Burapha University, Thailand.
- Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design (2nd ed.)*. Oxon, England: Routledge.
- Kress, G. R. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Taylor & Francis.
- Mafofo, L., & Banda, F. (2014). Accentuating institutional brands: A multimodal analysis of the homepages of selected South African universities. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 32(4), 417-432.
- Marks, B. (2012, June 19). The trouble with university branding...new free brand mapping research.
- Nasti, C., Venuti, M., & Zollo, S. A. (2017). UK university websites: A multimodal, corpus-based analysis. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 11.
- Obee, J. (2012). *Social networking: The ultimate teen guide*. Plymouth: Scarecrow Press.
- Rettberg, J. W. (2017). Self-representation in social media. *SAGE handbook of social media*, 429-443.
- Roggendorf, N. (2008). How New Zealand universities present themselves to the public: an analysis of communication strategies. Master's thesis of Arts in Communication Studies, School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/472>
- Safdar, G., Shabir, G., Khan, A.W. (2018). Media's Role in Nation Building: Social, Political, Religious and Educational Perspectives. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 38(2), 387-397.
- Saichaie, K. (2011). Representation on college and university websites: An approach using critical discourse analysis. Doctoral dissertation in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies (Higher Education and Student Affairs), Graduate College, University of Iowa. Retrieved from <http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/1071>.
- Turner, J. H. (2014). *Theoretical sociology: A concise introduction to twelve sociological theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Multimodality, genre and design*. In S. Norris & R. Jones (Eds.), *Discourse in action – Introducing mediated discourse analysis (pp.73–94)*. Routledge, London
- Varien, M.D. & Potter, J.M. (2008). *The social production of communities: Structure, agency, and identity*. In M.D. Varien & J.M. Potter. (Eds.), *the social construction of communities in the prehispanic Southwest (pp.1-18)*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Vignoles, V.L., Schwartz, S.J. & Luyckx, K. (2011). *Introduction: Toward an integrative view of identity*. In S.J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V.L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research; Volumn 1 Structures and processes (pp.1-27)*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Vijitjaroen, P. (2013). Factors influencing the user facebook fan page engagement: Case study of a university. An independent study of Master of Science, Information Technology Policy and Management, College of Innovation, Thammasat University.
- Wenger, E. (2008). *Communities of practices: Learning, meaning, and identity (18th ed.)*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.