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## PROJECTING CORE AND EXTENDED BRAND IDENTITY THROUGH INSTAGRAM ADVERTISING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI CLOTHING BRANDS

**Alvina Khan<sup>1</sup>, Rabail Haque<sup>2</sup> & Abdul Majeed Khan<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>English Lecturer, Department (School of English, Language & Literature), Iqra National University, Peshawar/ MPhil (Applied Linguistics), University of Peshawar, Email: [alvinakhan@inu.edu.pk](mailto:alvinakhan@inu.edu.pk), [alvinakhanzaiiii@gmail.com](mailto:alvinakhanzaiiii@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer in English, CEME, National University of Sciences and Technology, NUST, Islamabad, PhD English Linguistics Scholar, International Islamic University, IIUI, Islamabad, Email: [rabail.haque@ceme.nust.edu.pk](mailto:rabail.haque@ceme.nust.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup>Independent Scholar, National University of Modern Languages, NUML, Islamabad, Email: [majeedkhanumar@gmail.com](mailto:majeedkhanumar@gmail.com)

| KEYWORDS                                                                                                                                                         | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Brand Identity, Instagram discourse, core identity, extended identity, Pakistani clothing brands, captions, Critical Discourse Analysis, social media discourse, | Instagram advertising has become a powerful marketing tool through which clothing brands promote their products and project multifaceted brand identities. This paper investigates how selected Pakistani clothing brands project core and extended brand identities through Instagram captions. Critical Discourse Analysis is used as an analytical tool, with a specific focus on the second-dimension of Fairclough's three-dimensional model, namely discursive practice. The data comprise fifty captions which is taken from the official Instagram pages of five popular apparel brands. The analysis examines various discursive practices through which brands' messages are circulated, particularly in relation to product attributes and customer-acquisition strategies. The findings indicate that online advertising help brands to reach a diverse customer base through well-crafted descriptions and creative marketing strategies. Drawing on Aaker's Brand Identity Structure (1996), the study aligns the 'brand as product' with core identity and 'brand as person' with extended identity, resulting in an unprecedented consolidation between the concepts of brand identity and online advertising. |
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| <b>Corresponding Author</b>                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Email:</b>                                                                                                                                                    | <a href="mailto:alvinakhan@inu.edu.pk">alvinakhan@inu.edu.pk</a> , <a href="mailto:alvinakhanzaiiii@gmail.com">alvinakhanzaiiii@gmail.com</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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## Introduction

Online advertising is a powerful marketing strategy that helps commercial brands to use high-quality images, attractive captions, videos, reels, pop-ups and display ads etc. for promoting products in order to drive sales in the competitive fashion market. Just like any other corporate industry, the clothing industry in Pakistan relies heavily on social media advertisements to emphasize the core features of products and attract potential shoppers on a global scale. The present research paper focuses on how Pakistani clothing brands project multifaceted brand identities through Instagram advertising. This study also highlights the role of language in promoting consumer culture and how it affects the overall profit margins and sales of a brand. Critical Discourse Analysis was used as an analytical tool to answer the research question of this study. Fairclough (1989) asserts that language is a form of social practice that does more than just conveying information. The innovative use of persuasive statements such as '*luxe creations*' and '*timeless elegance*' etc. or descriptive terms such as '*affordable prices*' and '*promotional deals*' allow clothing brands to establish a unique voice and project distinctive brand identities. CDA will help us investigate how clothing brands use Instagram captions as a branding tool to promote products and influence customers' purchasing behavior in a post-modern consumerist market place.

## Brand Identity

Brand identity has become a vital tool to appear distinct and desirable to a larger customer base. Upshaw (1995) defines brand identity as 'the configuration of words, images, ideas and associations that form a consumer's aggregated version of a brand' (p.12). An identity structure is laid out by Aaker (1996) which lays out information on patterns of meanings that help brands project distinctive identities.

### The Brand Identity Structure

The identity structure consists of core identity and extended identity which are both crucial to the understanding of the driving forces that differentiate one brand from another in the dynamic fashion market.

### Core Identity

Core identity refers to the brands' core values, strong vision and other key attributes that shape how customers interact with a brand, purchase the advertised products and improve overall sales and profit margins. Core identity contains product-related associations that remain constant with changing market conditions and increased customers' expectations.

### Extended Identity

Extended identity, as the name indicates, is the extension of a brand's image through creative marketing strategies. Aaker (1996) views extended identity of brands as a flexible approach that

provides a texture to the brand's personality in the market. The extended identity adds essential details that fill in the picture of core identity. A brand without extended identity cannot compete in the market.

### **Problem Statement**

Advertising is one of the fundamental marketing tools that help brands to create innovative content on the internet. The clothing brands use advertising discourse to engage with potential customers and build their trust. However, brand identity establishes brand loyalty and enhances customers' engagement, it also contributes to brand visibility and market differentiation. In the present work, Instagram captions of five Pakistani clothing brands are analyzed to look at how clothing brands creatively use language to promote and project core and extended brand identities. The research focuses on how various discourse practices on Instagram help clothing brands to stand out in the competitive fashion market.

### **Research Question**

1. How do Pakistani clothing brands promote and project core brand identities through Instagram advertising discourse?

### **Research Objective**

- To investigate the ways clothing brands in Pakistan project multiple identities through advertising discourse on Instagram.

### **Data Collection Tool**

The data has been collected from the official Instagram pages of five Pakistani clothing brands, including *Alkaram Studio*, *Khaadi*, *Limelight*, *Sana Safinaz* and *Nishat Linen*. Ten Instagram captions from winter and summer collections of clothing brands, particularly from the year 2022 are chosen to study discursive practices that help brands project core and extended brand identities. Similarly, Instagram is chosen as an effective medium for data collection because it helps to reach the brand's messaging to millions of potential online users at one time in the market.

### **Data Analysis Tool**

Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1989) is chosen as a theoretical framework for data analysis. This model consists of three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. While the three dimensions provide the broader theoretical foundation, the present study primarily focuses on dimension of discursive practice to understand the process of identity projection.

### Research Significance

This research offers valuable insights into advertising discourse from an academic perspective and develops a broader understanding of marketing strategies in today's digital age. From a theoretical point of view, this research broadens the application of CDA into digital platforms. While existing research has explored the significance of both traditional and online advertising, fewer studies have focused on how Instagram captions are carefully curated to influence customers and drive the identity projection of clothing brands. Through Instagram advertising of Pakistani clothing brands, this study expands on the concept of marketing and offers new insights into how clothing brands project core and extended brand identities.

### Limitations

The present research has the following limitations:

- The study is focused on the advertising discourse of clothing brands which means that the findings may not be generalizable to commercial brands such as cosmetics, shoes, skin-care and other lifestyle brands in the fashion sector.
- The selection of Instagram captions is based on a specific time frame and a limited number of clothing brands, which may not fully represent the entire Pakistani clothing industry as brands keep changing their marketing dynamics due to rapidly evolving social media trends.

### Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature in the field of advertising discourse in promoting clothing brands through projection of multifaceted brand identities. The chapter provides a general understanding of how clothing brands are promoted through social media advertisements. The concept of brand identity is elaborated with relevant sources of works provided, followed by a detailed overview of the current market positioning of different clothing brands that help them project core and extended brand identities.

### Promoting Clothing Brands through Online Advertising

The fashion industry, particularly the apparel sector, is well-known for its focus on social media advertising. With brands like *Gul Ahmad* and *Generation* that came into the market in the late 90's, people started recognizing the concept of a brand. Before that, there were only local market shops where clothes for formal, casual and other important occasions were being sold. The evolution of shopping from local bazaars to big brands in malls and virtual shops is a technological advancement in the e-commerce world. For instance, a casual dress from a famous brand will be far more appealing and desirable than any other outfit available in a local market at affordable prices. Hence, it can be said that strong branding strategies are essential for brands to stand out in the market.

## Brand Identity Projection by Clothing Brands

Online advertising has become a dominant medium for clothing brands to promote and project specific brand identities. Michaela & Orna (2015) also argued that over time, clothing brands have mainly shifted from traditional modes of marketing to online advertising which influences customers purchasing decisions. According to Shafaat (2021), fashion brands such as *Nishat Linen*, *Gul Ahmed* and *Sana Safinaz* have employed different creative marketing strategies on social media to create high market value for the advertised products. Shafaat was of the view that a specific identity contributes to a positive brand image which differentiates the product and its scope in the minds of customers (p.307). Hence, it can be stated that the current clothing industry has become more dynamic and creative compared to traditional marketing tactics.

## Online Instagram Advertising: The Popular Apparel Industry

Clothing brands use online Instagram advertising to represent their multifaceted brand identities. Muhtarogullari (2021) undertook a theoretical analysis of advertisements from Instagram pages of famous fashion companies, *Calvin Klein*, *Tommy Hilfiger* and *H&M*. By using Fairclough's three-dimensional modal, the focus was on the role of verbal and visual elements in texts to study the changing attitudes towards stereotypes such as racism, body size and LGBT rights in societies. The study showed that *Calvin Klein* used a colored celebrity model, 'Raise Flowers' with the catchy slogan "Just being, Black, femme, plus-size is super important for me." to challenge the racist ideologies, while, *Tommy Hilfiger* and *H&M* used different linguistic texts such as "And remember, it is NEVER too late to become the person you have always imagined." to empower LGBT community and increase their acceptance in society. Through discourse study of Instagram captions, these brands have used various discursive techniques to promote distinctive brand identities. Vinerean and Opreana (2019) investigated how different luxury clothing brands used Instagram advertising to maintain their core brand identities in the global market. The American brand, *Tom Ford* used 24 hours' stories to promote their core products on Instagram. Similarly, *Balmain* used the hashtag strategy '#BalmainArmy', as a marketing technique to drive customers' interest in the advertised products. Among different discursive techniques, influencer marketing of luxury products was at the top to influence customers' purchasing decisions. The study of these luxury brands helped us to understand how creative Instagram practices can manage customers' preferences related to high-cost products.

Umar and Rasool (2017) analyzed advertisements of Pakistani clothing to study how national identity projection differentiated brands in the competitive market. The study showed that clothing brands such as *J.*, *Khaadi*, *Nishat linen* etc., were in the limelight and caught the interest of a large audience due to their well-crafted national identity themes. The captions "Dil Dil Pakistan", "HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY...!!! From team NL." And a variety of words such as "crunchy chilgozas", 'pashmina shawls and silken fabrics' established relational values, thus highlighting the nationalistic aspects of the brands' identities.

Khan et al (2019) explored advertising content of the brands *J* and *NFL* taken from their websites and official profiles. The focus was on the strategic use of linguistic and semiotic elements that help brands project their multiple identities. It was found that clothing brand *J* used linguistic captions such as “*Let us know*”, “*Your feedback matters*” with a primary focus on the use of personal pronouns to make customers believe that their opinions play an important role in the decision-making process of the brands. Such techniques had great effect on clients’ engagement with the posts and how they became repeated customers in the long run.

Umar (2022) identified linguistic and semiotic features used in the advertising discourse of Pakistani Clothing, Food and Cosmetic. Critical discourse analysis was used as a tool to investigate not only linguistic expressions, vocabulary items, visuals, colors and graphics etc. but to understand meanings on a deeper level, as in the context of their social and cultural conditions. The study showed that different linguistic and semiotic arrangements such as code-mixing/switching, topics and taglines, ideologically significant words, images, symbols etc. were used by advertisers in establishing a desired brand image for the customers. The use of catchy phrases “*Your favorite brand Khaadi is now just a click away!*” described the contemporary approach of brands towards fashion.

Hence, it can be summarized that language played a significant role in promoting brands through projection of brand identities and producers used branding strategies tactfully that revealed a great deal about how they wanted their brands to be perceived by the consumer circles.

## Research Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on the research methodology and theoretical framework used in the present thesis. The study employs Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis is conducted through three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. However, given the study’s specific focus on the projection of core and extended brand identities, particular attention is given to textual and discursive practices that helped us identify the recurring patterns; “the product description pattern” and “the customer-acquisition strategies”. The discursive practice dimension is analytically used to interpret the identity projection process within the broader context of online Pakistani fashion advertising.

## Source of Data Collection

The data was collected from the official Instagram pages of selected Pakistani clothing brands. According to Hope (2018), Instagram is a big data source that a brand uses to reach out to a large number of consumers. The study employs a total sample of 50 captions, taken from the official Instagram pages of five Pakistani Clothing Brands including, *Alkaram Studio*, *Khaadi*, *Limelight*, *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz*. Ten Instagram captions from each brand of both winter and summer collections were chosen. This sample seems to be a reasonable choice in order to look at the in-depth meanings of language in social and cultural conditions in which they are created.

### **Sampling Technique**

The study employs a purposive sampling technique as researcher purposely selected data that was highly relevant to research objective. The criteria such as “*selecting captions from Pakistani clothing brands with active Instagram presence*” was deliberately selected to collect data that helped brands project distinctive identities.

### **Research Design**

The study employs a qualitative research design because the primary purpose is to identify and interpret the recurring discursive patterns through which Pakistani clothing brands project their specific identities on Instagram. A qualitative approach is suitable because product promotion and brand identity construction can be accurately studied through repeated patterns, themes and contextual meanings embedded in social media discourse of fifty captions.

### **Time Frame for Data Collection**

The available data on the official Instagram pages of these clothing brands was taken from the year 2022 (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022) as it provides the latest and recent data for studying language from the perspective of CDA.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA was used as an appropriate framework for the critical analysis of texts to answer the research questions. According to Fairclough (1989), the three-dimensional model is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse for it "views language as a form of social practice (p.72). Advertisements are social practices in which language plays a significant role in creating social realities for brands.

### **Description**

The first dimension of Fairclough's model is called description which is concerned with formal properties of the text that includes both verbal and/or visual language. Fairclough lays out different linguistic categories in his first dimension from which we have taken only those that are relevant to our research questions. The analysis is based on the three main parts of the texts, i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures.

### **Interpretation**

The second dimension of Fairclough's model is called interpretation. This dimension deals with discourse as a social practice. This dimension of CDA model provides a direction to study multifaceted brand identities such as core and extended from different aspects to answer the second research question. This level of Fairclough's model further contributes to understand how social media advertisements serve the capitalist interests of Pakistani clothing brands.

## Explanation

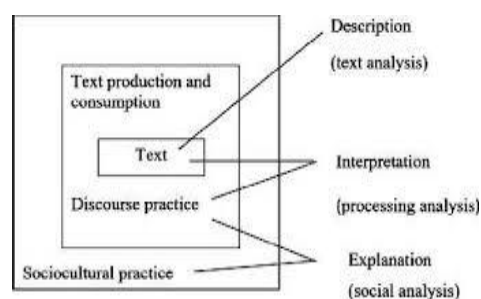
The final stage of Fairclough's model is called explanation which is concerned with the idea of how discourse as a social practice is shaped and influenced by the dominant social structures in society. This stage helps us understand language beyond the surface level and the focus is on the sociocultural conditions in which a discourse is situated.

## Analytical Framework

Fairclough's three-dimensional modal provides a strong foundation for data analysis from CDA perspective, however, the present research does not focus on all three dimensions. In relation to the research question and objectives, the analysis of selected captions is limited to second dimension of CDA modal, called discursive practice. The analytical framework combines Fairclough's CDA modal second dimension with Aaker's Brand Identity structure.

## Discursive Practice

This present research used discursive practice as its primary analytical tool. The linguistic features of Instagram captions were examined not as part of separate textual analysis, but as the evidence through which recurring patterns such as product description pattern and customer-acquisition strategies were identified to understand the process of brand identity projection. For instance, if the brands would repeatedly use words like embellishments, luxury, premium and sale items etc., or natural words combinations such as Eid sale, summer fabric or exquisite craftsmanship, these lexical might contribute to the recurring patterns of product quality and customer acquisition strategies which serve as the foundation for identity projection.



*Figure 3.1: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (1989)*

## Aaker's Brand Identity Structure

While Aaker defined brand identity as a set of associations that a brand seeks to create and maintain, the present study looked at how the core and extended identity was projected by using a variety of discursive practices.



**Figure 3.2: Aaker's Brand Identity Structure (1996)**

From Brand Identity Structure/System, two associations 'brand as product' and 'brand as person' were taken to link the analyzed data with core and extended brand identities. The brand as product focused on the associations that emerged from product itself. For instance, the quality of clothes, material, craftsmanship and other product-related associations allowed the brands to represent themselves differently from other market competitors. From the 'brand as person' element, the brand-customer relationship is particularly used because the data showed that clothing brands projected extended identities through customer-acquisition practices.

## Data Analysis

In this chapter, we will explore how different linguistic features, examined as discursive practices, help clothing brands project core and extended brand identities. The primary objective is to understand how the product quality, material, craftsmanship and pricing strategies can influence a brand's image and customers' purchasing behavior. By critically analyzing selected Instagram captions, it has been examined that customer acquisition strategies, seasonal sales, fusion wears, Pret collections and direct/indirect call to actions (CTAs) allow clothing brands to position themselves as traditional and luxury brands in the growing fashion market.

## Core Identity

The core identity of clothing brands is projected through their emphasis on product quality, functional attributes and emotional resonance that encourage customers to make significant purchases.

### Core Identity of Traditional Clothing Brands: *Alkaram Studio, Limelight, Khaadi*

The Pakistani clothing industry has undergone an impressive evolution in fashion trends and designs over the past years. Lakdawala (2023) argues that Pakistani apparel industry has gained popularity and recognition worldwide due to striking combination of traditional elements with modern appeal in clothes. The analysis showed that Pakistani clothing brands such as *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight* and *Khaadi* aim to provide top-quality clothes with traditional elements such as intricate embroideries, exquisite craftsmanship, embellishments and draping etc.

### Product Quality, Material and Craftsmanship

The analysis showed that clothing brands *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight* and *Khaadi* mostly use 'premium lawn', 'viscose', and 'cambric' that have been used for centuries in designing traditional clothes such as 'shalwar kameez' and 'long frocks' etc. In a caption posted by *Limelight* (caption 20), the collocation 'Khaddar Suit' refers to a traditional garment that is mostly handwoven on natural fibers such as cotton or wool. Khaddar dresses hold a special value in traditional and has been worn for centuries to weddings, religious events and other special events. Through well-crafted product descriptions, these brands reinforce their commitment to preserve cultural heritage and authenticity in traditional attires.

### Fusion Wear and Design Philosophy

With changing fashion trends, fusion wear has become a need of the hour to stay relevant and up-to-date in the clothing market. In the caption posted by *Alkaram Studio* (Caption 05), the collocations 'chic designs' and 'Printed Cotton Outfit' represent a creative approach of the brand towards traditional attire. The collocation 'chic design' suggests a bold pattern work on cotton fabric with elegant colors to make customers look classy and stylish. In another caption posted by *Limelight* (caption 24), the collocation 'embellished Co-ord' refers to a modern outfit with a touch of traditional elements. Co-ord is a two-piece outfit that is designed to be worn together to create a polished and coordinated look. By promoting an embellished co-ord set, the brand aims to seamlessly blend traditional craftsmanship such as floral designs, small motifs or cut work with modern aesthetics.

### Lower Pricing Strategy

The traditional clothing brands *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight* and *Khaadi* aim to sell their high-quality products at affordable prices. According to Hameed (2023), *Alkaram Studio* offers stunning embroidered collections at an affordable price of just Rs 1,100. *Limelight*, with its perfect fusion of colors and designs, brings innovative fashion at affordable prices such as Rs 900-1000. In the caption posted by *Alkaram Studio* (caption 07), the brand advertises 'Viscose dupatta' at the Price of 'PKR 850'. Viscose is a high-quality material and by offering it at reasonable prices, the brand intends to appeal to budget-conscious shoppers. Through a lower pricing strategy, it can be said that core identity of *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight*, and *Khaadi* is deeply rooted in their commitment to offer traditional clothing at affordable prices.

### The Core Identity of Luxury Clothing Brands: *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz*

The core identity of luxury clothing brands is projected through different marketing techniques, which creates a huge demand for luxury goods in the market.

### Superior Quality and Craftsmanship

The emphasis on superior quality and craftsmanship of products serves as a cornerstone for projecting a strong core identity of luxury clothing brands. According to Abbas Rizvi (2024), *Sana Safinaz* stands as one of the luxury clothing brands with its emphasis on high-quality fabric and exquisite designs. In a caption posted by *Nishat Linen* (caption 39), the expression '*luxe creations*' suggests that the product is crafted with a high degree of skill. The term *luxe* stands for a range of expensive and luxurious products that often involve artisanal techniques, hand-stitching and cut-work designs etc. Through such expressions, the brand communicates its core values that embody the pinnacle of luxury, opulence and prestige.

### Fusion Wears and Creative Design Philosophy

In the fashion market, high-end brands are often at the forefront of pushing old designs to the edge and setting new trends to engage customers. The findings showed that *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz* blend traditional aesthetics with modern sensibilities to create stunning luxury attires. In a caption posted by *Nishat Linen* (caption 39), the expression '*ethnic and contemporary finery*' emphasizes the importance of cultural values preserved in modern designs. Through such expressions, the brand promotes a clothing collection that includes long dupattas, modern sleek satin Shirts and traditional motifs to reflect cultural depth with a sense of luxury and prestige. By offering clothing collections that are both traditional and contemporary, the high-end brands intend to cater to varied fashion styles of both local and global audience.

### Higher Pricing Strategy

The Luxury clothing brands mostly offer limited-time collections to create a sense of exclusivity. The exclusivity of luxury products is mainly maintained by higher pricing strategy. According to Solomon (2022), higher prices communicate the luxury status of products. Customers often become more intrigued when they see an exclusive collection. They are more likely willing to pay high prices for luxury items that are perceived as special and rare. In a caption posted by *Sana Safinaz* (caption 48), the brand advertises the 14<sup>th</sup> August collection as a marketing strategy to reinforce a sense of national pride and solidarity among customers. From the Azadi collection, the brand sells an embroidered shirt at the Price of '*Rs, 6,599/-*'. Through a higher pricing strategy, the brand aims to set a mark of premium quality and craftsmanship. Abbas Rizvi (2024) argues that the top-notch quality, exclusivity and craftsmanship of *Sana Safinaz* is reflected in its higher pricing strategy. Thus, higher pricing strategy serves as a powerful marketing tool for prominent standing in the market.

In addition to core identity, extended identity is also important so that a brand can survive with changing market conditions and customers' expectations.

### **Extended Identity: *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight* and *Khaadi***

The clothing brands such as *Alkaram Studio*, *Limelight* and *Khaadi* aim to project a strong extended identity through creative marketing techniques that attract customers and expand the brands' reach into new markets.

### **The Customer-Acquisition Strategies**

The customer-acquisition strategies play a pivotal role in acquiring new customers and converting them into potential clients. According to Ramroop (2024), customer-acquisition strategy is a business plan that involves creative marketing techniques and sales methods to connect with potential customers and drive sales.

### **Launch of Seasonal Collections**

Clothing brands typically launch seasonal collections ahead of each major season such as fall/winter and spring/summers.

#### **Spring/Summer Collection**

The analysis showed that clothing brands release spring/summer collections to achieve strong positioning in the market. In a caption posted by *Khaadi* (caption 12), the expression '*Khaadi Spring*' evokes customers' anticipation for the launch of a new summer collection. With the Spring edition, the brand aims to promote multi-colored lawn dresses with unique embellishments that reflect the warmth of the spring season. By using the hyponym '*Linen*', the brand emphasizes the importance of a soft and breathable fabric in the spring collection. In addition to its excellent absorbent properties, *linen* is also a versatile fabric that help brands to experiment with different dress styles and cuts. For instance, co-ord sets, kurtis or long frocks in linen can be perfect summer outfits for various occasions. Through seasonal collections, popular brands like *Khaadi* intend to stay relevant and more dynamic in the fashion market.

#### **Fall/Winter Collection**

In addition to spring/summer collections, clothing brands also release winter collections to meet customers' seasonal preferences. In the caption posted by *Limelight* (caption 28), the brand introduces the winter collection with the expression '*Winter Western '22*'. The brand aims to bring a sense of elegance and sophistication to winter fashion with Western outfits such as '*jackets*', '*sweaters*' and '*co-od sets*'. Jackets and Sweaters are essential in winter because they are mostly made with leather, wool or other warm materials that appeal to customers with particular fashion tastes. Sweaters are often used as an extra layer with jackets in extreme winters or customers who carry a unique sense of fashion mostly incorporate them into their everyday outfits. Similarly, co-ords, with its matching pieces are mostly made from warm materials that provide an easy layering option for winters. Through launch of well-curated seasonal collections, clothing brands aim to establish an image of being a responsible and trustworthy fashion entity.

### **Launch of Stitched and Unstitched Collections**

The analysis showed that traditional clothing brands advertise both stitched and unstitched collections. In the caption posted by *Alkaram Studio* (caption 05), the brand advertises its '*Pret Collection*' to cater to unique fashion preferences of potential customers. Through stitched outfits, the brand intends to create a seamless shopping experience by allowing customers to choose their outfits based on their personal preferences. Through creative marketing techniques, Pakistani clothing brands project a strong extended identity

### **Sales and Discount offers**

Sales and discount offers play a pivotal role to attract a large number of customers. The analysis showed that traditional clothing brands use fewer promotional offers in their Instagram advertising. In a caption posted by *Alkaram Studio* (caption 06), the expression '*mid-season sale*' is a discount offer on seasonal items to attract customers and promote higher sales volume. Through mid-season sales, *Alkaram studio* aims to offer '*Big discounts with up to 50% off*' on specific clothing items which may encourage customers to make significant purchases without spending a lot of money. By announcing promotional offers occasionally, traditional clothing brands intend to achieve distinctive market positioning against other competitors.

### **Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing is a professional marketing strategy that involves collaboration with influencers who have a large following and can provide brands with great exposure. In a caption posted by *Limelight* (caption 21), the brand advertises its Pret collection by collaborating with the famous celebrity/influencer *Sophia Mirza*. Sophia Mirza is a top Pakistani fashion model, host and actress who is known in the industry for decades due to her quality work. Sophia Mirza holds an Instagram account with a total number of 249k followers. She often endorses products for different brands to establish the brand's credibility in the market and attract quality leads in return. By collaborating with Sophia Mirza, *Limelight* aims to create a noise around its new collection which allows the brand to reach new audience beyond its existing customer community.

### **Extended Identity: *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz***

The extended identity of luxury brands such as *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz* is projected through different customer-acquisition strategies that shape and reinforce the brands' luxury positioning in the fashion market.

### **Launch of Seasonal Collections**

The extended identity of *Nishat Linen* and *Sana Safinaz* is defined by their commitment to launch seasonal collections that aligns with social values and current market trends.

### Spring/Summer Collection

The analysis revealed that luxury clothing brands launch summer collections to feature trendy designs that carry significant meanings. In the caption posted by *Nishat Linen* (caption 33), the brand intends to highlight women's contributions through summer collection in the expression '*Nishat Linen is paying tribute to REAL WOMEN...with the latest Summer 2022 collection*'. By promoting the Summer collection, the brand features designs that draws inspiration from the stories of *REAL WOMEN* who have made great contributions in society. Through such initiatives, the luxury clothing brands promote the message of inclusivity and empowerment which resonates with the emotional interests of a broader audience.

### Fall/Winter Collection

The analysis showed that luxury clothing brands aim to incorporate exquisite designs into their fall/winter collections to reflect their unique approach in fashion. In the caption posted by *Sana Safinaz* (caption 49), the brand promotes its winter collection through the expression '*winter luxury*'. Through winter luxury, the brand intends to advertise a collection that is made from high-end fabrics such as velvet and silk etc. Velvet is a luxury fabric and by creating winter collection in the premium fabric, the brand intends to position itself as a prestigious brand with high-quality fashion aesthetics.

### Festive Collections

The launch of festive collections serves as a cornerstone of a luxury brand's extended identity. The luxury clothing brands launch festive collections to celebrate different traditions and cultural norms with great enthusiasm. In the caption posted by *Sana Safinaz* (caption 46), the phrase '*Eid collection*' emphasizes the cultural and religious significance of Eid. Eid is a major Islamic festival that holds great importance for Muslims across the world. The specific name of the collection projects an image that clothes have been carefully curated with traditional designs and premium fabrics. This strategic approach helps customers to anticipate their perfect dresses for Eid dawats and gatherings, making them more likely to make significant purchases.

### Sales and Discount offers

The analysis showed that Luxury clothing brands frequently focus on sales and discount offers to attract potential customers who may not purchase premium items at high prices. According to Kenton (2024), the leading brands in the fashion industry maintain customers' interest and loyalty by offering various promotional deals and discounts. In the caption posted by *Nishat Linen* (caption 32), the expression '*Ikhtitam-e-Sarma Sale*' is employed which appeals to customers who look for trendy clothes at lower prices. The end-of-winter season sale serves as a powerful marketing strategy to boost sales and establish customer loyalty. The budget-conscious shoppers, especially those who wait for season end sales to stock up on their favorite clothing items. By offering sale, *Nishat Linen* projects an image of a fashion facilitator that cares about customers'

financial needs which also helps the brand to reduce its current inventory and exceed the revenue targets. In another caption posted by *Sana Safinaz* (caption 42), the brand offers *Flat 50% and 40% off* with *free delivery* which serves as a powerful incentive to attract customers and maintain brand loyalty. By offering attractive deals and offers, the luxury clothing brands aim to strengthen their extended identity against other competitors.

### **Influencer Marketing**

Luxury clothing brands also rely on promoting products by collaborating with famous influencers or celebrities. In the caption posted by *Nishat Linen* (caption 37), the brand promotes its newly launched Eid collection by collaborating with a famous Instagram influencer *Aden Rehan* (*Creative Director at a PR Company*). *Eid* is a festive occasion that holds deep religious values for Muslims across the world. *Aden Rehan* has created a perfect Eid look in *Limelight's* Eid ensemble to inspire people for Eid Dawats and social gatherings. Instagram followers perceive their favorite influencers as trustworthy figures and their recommendations carry more weight than any other form of advertising. The endorsement of products by influencers allows the luxury brands to validate purchasing decisions of customers which ultimately boosts sales and increases profit margins.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Previously, we identified various discursive practices that guide the identity projection of Pakistani clothing brands. This chapter offers a comprehensive discussion on research findings and interprets their critical implications in terms of the selected theoretical framework and Aaker's brand Identity Structure. Here, we will revisit the overarching research question of this study to develop effective answer. This chapter also adds to the readers' understanding that online advertising is not only a tool to promote products but a designed mechanism to maintain specific brand identities in an increasingly evolving digital landscape.

### **Brand Identity**

The Pakistani clothing brands project core and extended identities through various discursive practices in which product-description pattern and customer-acquisition strategies play a vital role.

#### **Core identity: Interpretation and Significance**

The findings showed that core identity is projected through a product-centric approach to provide a clear and distinct value proposition. This value proposition reflects the core vision and values, allowing the brands to reinforce a positive image in the minds of customers.

### The Traditional Clothing Brands

The traditional clothing brands emphasize product quality which extends Aaker's (1996) concept of product scope and its role in the projection of core identity. For instance, the collocation '*cambric kurti*' is a well-crafted product description that quickly highlights the brand's commitment to offer traditional clothing styles. Cambric is a classic fabric suitable for block prints and dyes which makes it a significant staple in traditional wardrobes. It is also known for its smooth texture and comfort which appears to be a core feature of traditional clothes. Similarly, the term '*Kurti*', a traditional Indian attire, is often adorned with floral prints and embroideries which makes it a top-notch traditional dress. The core identity also helps to communicate what to expect in terms of product performance in the growing fashion market. The product performance depends on the latest trends and designs in the apparel market. For instance, if a sleek shirt (a modern clothing style) with matching trousers is a top-followed trend, then traditional clothing brands face challenges in terms of how to retain their traditional values in designing fusion wear. The product descriptions such as '*kurti dress*' or '*palazzo suit*' allow brands to bring creativity and innovation into the designing process. Through fusion attires, the brands integrate modern styles and promote cultural inclusivity to cater to customers from different backgrounds. This alignment between functional attributes and traditional values strengthens the clothing brands' credibility which leads to the projection of a strong core identity.

### The Luxury Clothing Brands

The luxury clothing brands focus on self-expressive benefits of products to attract customers which aligns with Aaker's concept of brand identity- particularly his emphasis on symbolic attributes of products. Aaker (1996) asserts that brands provide self-expressive benefits to encourage customers to choose those products that can enhance their self-image, lifestyle and social status. The emphasis on the finest products like *silk*, *cashmere* and *velvet* etc. is a symbolic representation of high social status and prestige in society. For instance, the hyponym '*velvet*' carries significant self-expressive benefits for customers. Velvet is often associated with high-end fashion choices and owning velvet attire can signal that a person belongs to an elite group. This perception positively reinforces customers' purchasing behavior which results in higher sales. Through minimal product descriptions, the clothing brands appear exclusive and reinforce their core values which lead to the projection of core identity.

### Extended Identity: Interpretation and Significance

Fashion trends in the apparel market keep changing with new seasons, events and holidays. In summer, customers prefer light-weight, breathable fabrics with bright colors, while, in winter the demands switch to cozy sweaters and warm shawls etc. This shift in consumer preferences creates a continuous demand in the market which can be easily fulfilled through seasonal collections. The seasonal collections of traditional brands often include Eastern outfits with long dupattas or simple cotton suits or kurtis. Similarly, the seasonal collections of luxury brands include high-end fabrics such as *crepe*, *viscose* and *linen* for summers and *cashmere*, *fleece* and *velvet* etc. for

winters. Despite introducing the new clothing lines, traditional and luxury clothing brands remain firmly rooted in their core values. This approach aligns with Aaker's (1996) concept that extended identity helps brands to grow and beat the market competition without losing the core values that are central to the brands' unique identity. Sales and discount offers also project the extended identity of clothing brands. The expressions like '*promo deal*,' '*flat 20% off*' etc. influence how customers perceive a product in terms of its value. Price is a primary indicator of a product's value. For instance, traditional brands do not frequently offer promotional deals because their prices are reasonable which suggests that customers are receiving good value for their money. In contrast, luxury brands offer frequent sales because their prices are usually very high. Although, this approach aligns with Aaker's notion that customers equate higher prices with premium quality; it poses its own challenges. The higher prices can only cater to specific customers who can afford luxury but limit the larger customer base which may influence sales volume in the long run. Influencer marketing is also a popular discursive practice on Instagram. The clothing brands do frequent collaborations with celebrities and influencers to increase website traffic, gain new followers and drive sales. Influencers who create genuine content that truly reflects the brand's core vision may establish a strong connection between the brand and customers. Influencer collaborations also increase brand awareness and visibility but they do not ensure organic sales. For example, brands promote their clothing lines through well-known figures in the industry; their sales are largely dependent on the product's scope and the degree to which it relates to customers on a personal level. This creates a disconnect between influencers' content and brands' expectations which can negatively influence the relation between the two. Thus, it becomes evident that clothing brands employ discursive practices such as frequent deals, sponsorships and celebrity endorsers etc. to project extended identity which aligns with the Aaker's Identity structure.

### Critical Reflection

Brand identity is projected through various lexical choices that are shaped by the social contexts in which they are produced. Fairclough (1989) asserts that texts in isolation do not carry meanings unless they interact with the immediate context in which they are produced. When clothing brands use language, they are not only describing the products but also reinforcing a certain social reality. For instance, the narratives about social status and prestige that are equated with owning high-end products reinforce realities that already exist in the society and people believe and value them. Similarly, the discursive practices also align with issues such as exclusivity, inclusivity, affordability, and urgency etc. that are prevalent in society. The discursive practices behind identity projection involve strategic decisions of copywriters who are well aware of social trends, market demand for a product and specific objectives of a brand. For instance, the extended identity of traditional brands includes discursive practices that relate the brand's messaging to the existing cultural values and eastern trends. This contextual alignment enhances the relevance of brand identity in the competitive market. The prevalent discourse practices do not stop at the production; they extend to how customers receive and interpret a message based on their beliefs and thoughts. This approach establishes a dialectic relation between the brand's intended

message and customers' reception of it. When a brand projects its identity, it seeks to establish a narrative that reflects the aspirations and values of the potential customers. If those values align with customers' expectations, it positively influences purchasing decisions. If not, then customers actively respond through feedback loop which allows the brands to negotiate their specific identities and bring changes in their marketing strategies. This approach fosters brand loyalty and enhances customers' engagement which are both vital tools for the projection of distinctive brand identities.

## Conclusion

This study has applied a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to fifty Instagram captions of five Pakistani clothing brands: 1). *Alkaram Studio*, 2). *Khaadi*, 3). *Limelight*, 4). *Nishat Linen* and 5). *Sana Safinaz*. The purpose of this study was to investigate how clothing brands use well-crafted Instagram captions to project brand identities. The analytical framework for this research was Fairclough's three-dimensional modal of CDA in order to examine linguistic features and their relation to brand identity concepts. The discursive practices worked as a focal point to analyze core and extended identities. I have critically interpreted the significance of research findings and their social implications in relation to Brand Identity Structure in the last chapter of this study. The results of this study suggest that online advertising is a dominant mode of communication between brands and customers and is used as a mediator for brands to present a product attractive and persuade customers to make a purchase. In addition, the findings also underscore the importance of digital media literacy for effective branding and knowledge of discourse analysis strategies for future researchers which also calls for teaching approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

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