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Multimodality as a Tool to Create Positive Self-Image and Enhance Interactivity through Websites: An Investigation of Top Rated HEC Recognized Public and Private Universities of Pakistan

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Abstract

Present study investigated the semiotic resources exploited by the homepages of the official websites of top rated HEC recognized public and private universities of Pakistan with an aim to explore the tactics used to enhance the interactivity level of these websites and to attract the audience. It scrutinized the variations present in these websites in terms of basic layout and design features and the use of multiple modes of representation to create desired effects. The homepages of ten university websites were analyzed by applying Pauwels' (2012) social semiotic multimodal framework for the analysis of websites as cultural expressions. The findings indicated that the interactivity level of these websites was independent of the sector they belonged to and most of the universities like LUMS, CIIT, Riphah International University, IIUI, UoK and BZU had adopted unique ways to provide the means of interaction to the target audience. Both the private universities namely LUMS and Riphah and some public universities like BZU, UoK and IIUI focused more on increasing the interactivity through social media sites and blog posts, CIIT focused on the use of multilingual approach to facilitate the audience while PU was the only one that provided a chance of one-to-one interaction between the users and the producers.

Key Words: *Multimodality, Social Semiotics, Website Analysis, Interactivity.*

Introduction

All sorts of communication depend on signs. The word "sign" was originally used by Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) while defining "semiology", which according to him was "the science of the life of signs in society". He described a sign as a product of signified and signifier.

Sign = Signifier + Signified

According to him, a signifier is anything that points us to a meaning, it can be a word, gesture, sound, image and so on; it is a sort of pointer to point towards something. On the other hand, a signified is the thing being pointed at. So, these are the two most important components that combine to produce a linguistic sign and according to Saussure (1983) they are inseparable. This model is often termed as the "Structural Model" of semiotics focusing, specifically, on the arbitrary nature of signs which illustrates that there is no direct relationship between the signifier and the signified much like the modern signs, for instance the letter "t" has no direct link to the sound it denotes (ibid, p. 117). Furthermore, he focused on the relational nature of signs by elaborating that signs exist in relation to other signs and this relational nature makes it possible for the signs to be understood which would have been otherwise impossible provided their arbitrary nature.

Previously, Pierce (1931-58) had proposed a three dimensional model of signs but his terminology was entirely different. According to him, a sign has three components namely "Representamen" which is the form taken by the sign; "Interpretant". The form refers to meaning being expressed and the actual object being referred to by the use of a particular sign. He classified signs into 66 categories out of which the most renowned and widely used are icons, indexes and symbols. An "Icon", according to Pierce, is a sign that is based on likeness to the object they represent, for example traffic signs. "Indexes" are based on casualty; for example, smoke indicates presence of fire and lastly, "Symbols" are much similar to Saussure's arbitrary signs.

Semiotics

The modern term for semiology is "semiotics" and it involves everything that can be taken as a sign. Eco (1976) defined a sign as something that can range from words, images, sounds and symbols to gestures and actions. Halliday (1978), on the other hand described it not as an isolated being but as an entity that has its meaning in relation to other signs. Traditionally, semiotics focused on a sign without looking at the cultural background or the social context in which it existed (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). Social semiotics, on the other hand, takes into account the social, cultural and historical scenario in which a sign is produced, transmitted and perceived (Kress, 2010). This approach provides a sense of potentiality to the sign, i.e. "potential or dynamic meanings" rather than fixed meanings.

Multimodality

Our communication, as it is now, relies on multiple modes of communication ranging from gestures, sounds, images (colour, size, camera angle, social distance), emojis, graphical (font size, colour, spacing, bolding or slanting) and textual (words, sentences, phrases) features. These modes are often used in combination with one another to achieve the desired results and these varied combinations have varied meaning potential in various circumstances and settings. The study of these modes is multimodality and can be defined as "the combination of different semiotic modes - for example, language and music - in a communicative artefact or event" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 281).

Websites as multimodal tools

In these changing times, websites are the means to advertise and promote businesses. A website is described by Djonov et al. (2015) as "a collection of web pages that display cohesion and coherence". According to Brugger (2019), this unification is apparent not only in meanings but also in "form and function" and thus makes a website a unified whole. The most significant part of a website is its home page which has been described as "a home to all the other pages of a website" or "a gateway or a user's

point of entry into a website" (Baldry & Thaibault, 2010). Because of their dynamic and interactive nature, these websites prove to be an extraordinary marketing tactic; which not only adheres to the changing needs of the customers but also helps to cope up with the demands of globalization.

Websites of Educational Institutes

In the modern world, educational institutes are part of a race to create and display a positive and distinct identity for which they use websites as the medium (Ashburn, 2010). All the choices made by developers of these websites are conscious and are meant to invoke certain responses among the audience; even the design of a website evokes a particular thought pattern among the viewers (Najafian & Ketabi, 2011; Ledin & Machin, 2020). Efforts are made to design a website in such a way that it urges the viewers to to be a part of the magnanimous institute and they feel that it is an opportunity of a lifetime which should not be let go of.

Present Study

The present study provides a multimodal analysis of the the websites of top rated HEC recognized public and private universities of Pakistan. This comparative study focuses on how these websites exploit the interplay of multiple modes of communication to display a distinct and positive identity and attract the desired audience. Moreover, the analysis of "first impressions" and "look and feel" of the homepages provides an understanding of the effect they have on the intended customers. The significance of the study lies in the fact that millions of users visit the websites of educational institutes to get information thus it's important for these websites to be up to date, user friendly and interactive. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the features that are used by different website developers and also the features that are meaningfully absent thus helping in improving the websites.

The use of multiple modes of communication by the websites of educational institutes to convey the desired message to their target audience makes them a very good subject of multimodal analysis. The purpose of this research is to explore the possible meaning potential of these modes and the effect this meaning potential has on the audience. In order to fulfill the purpose, following research questions guide the course of this research:

1. What are the visual and textual features exploited by the websites of top rated HEC recognized public and private universities of Pakistan?
2. How are the layout and design features exploited to attract the target audience?
3. What is the nature and degree of interactivity of these websites?

Literature Review

Shehnaz & Qadir (2020) asserted that the logos and mottos used by universities in Pakistan are means to earn corporate identity. The varied combinations of geometrical shapes and colours not only make these logos memorable, distinct and innovative but also display a difference in terms of traditionalism v/s modernity in pre and post 70's universities. Zollo (2016) provided a comparative study of the semiotic signs displayed on Italian and British university websites. He hinted that Italian universities display a lack of web-genre awareness and there is no connection between modes that exist together. Moreover, the students seem to be absent from the webpage and are not mentioned either visually or linguistically. British universities on the other hand appear to be more interactive, user friendly and student centered. A

more recent study (Nasti, Venturi & Zollo; 2017) analyzed the depiction of students in the written and visual corpus of British university websites.

Tomaskova (2015) applied a multimodal Discourse Analytic (MDA) framework to analyze the homepage and prospective student webpages of British, North American and Czesh Republic universities. This scrutinization of marketization tactics and the cross-cultural comparison revealed significant differences in the use of images in relation to the verbal signifiers. Banda & Mafofo's (2014) multimodal analysis of the websites of selected South African universities revealed that these universities have redesigned their identities in order to exhibit a progressive, competitive and non-racial image for the diverse national and international audience.

Eisenlauer (2011) carried out a diachronic study in which he compared and contrasted facebook as a social networking site (SNS) with its historical equivalent i.e. poetry album. The study revealed that despite the presence of similarities in terms of self-representation and social connection, the direct and explicit nature of facebook makes it more interactive and expressive. Bauldry and Thaibault (2010) observed that the use of vibrant colours on *Nasa Kids* website has an interpersonal appeal and it presents "moon" not as something alien or frightful but as a warm and safe entity.

In Pakistani context, very limited research has explored the websites of educational institutes (Amjad & Shakir, 2014; Arshard & Shakir, 2014; Bano & Shakir, 2015; Nasir & Shakir, 2015) and most of them focus on just the linguistic elements.

Framework and Methodology

The data for this research consists of screenshots of the homepages of the official websites which was collected in May, 2017 after gaining consent from the universities. A list of the universities is provided with their rank according to HEC's official ranking.

Table 1: Names and relative scores (assessed by HEC) of universities used in this research

Serial No.	HEC Rank	Name of the University	ACRONYM	Relative Scores	Status	Official Website
1	2	University of the Punjab, Lahore	PU	85.014	Public	www.pu.edu.pk
2	3	COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad	CIIT	79.480	Public	www.comsats.edu.pk
3	4	University of Karachi, Karachi	UoK	71.424	Public	www.uok.edu.pk
4	6	Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore	LUMS	60.694	Private	http://lums.edu.pk
5	9	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	BZU	59.350	Public	www.bzu.edu.pk
6	10	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad	PIDE	58.878	Public	www.pide.org.pk
7	11	Islamia University of	IUB	57.836	Public	www.iub.edu.pk

		Bahawalpur				
8	12	Riphah International University, Islamabad		55.519	Private	www.riphah.edu.pk
9	13	International Islamic University, Islamabad	IIUI	55.390	Public	http://iiu.edu.pk
10	14	Government College University, Lahore	GCU	54.293	Public	www.gcu.edu.pk

Pauwels' (2012) multi-modal framework for the analysis of websites as cultural expressions serves as a base for the analysis of data. The framework has six phases out of which the first three are part of the present article. Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal framework and van Leeuwen's (2006) insights into typography are incorporated into the main framework as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior" (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2000). The framework used for analysis is given below:

1. **Preservation of first impressions and reactions**
   - Categorization of 'look and feel' at a glance
   - Recording of affective reactions
2. **Inventory of Salient features and Topics**
   - Inventory of present website features and attributes
   - Inventory of main content categories and topics
   - Categorize and quantify features and topics
   - Perform negative analysis: significantly absent topics and features
3. **In-depth analysis of Content and Formal choices**

   Intra-Modal Analysis (fixed/static and moving/dynamic elements)
   - Verbal written signifiers
   - Typographic signifiers
   - Visual representational signifiers
   - Layout & design signifiers

   Analysis of cross-Modal Interplay
   - Image-written text relations and typography-written text relations
     - Complementary
     - Illustrative
   - Sound / image-relations

   In-depth "negative" analysis

In the section 3.1. of the above framework, insights from Kress & Van Leeuwen's (2006) and Van Leeuwen (2006) are added to have a better understanding of the data.

Table 2: Summary of Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) Multimodal analysis

Systems		**Sub modes**	**Realizations**
Interactivity	i.	Gaze	Demand/Offer
	ii.	Size of frame and Social distance	Personal/Impersonal/Social
	iii.	Attitude	Subjective/Objective

	iv.	Angle	Horizontal	a) Frontal
				b) Oblique
			Vertical	a) High
				b) Low
				c) Eye-level
Compositional meaning	i.	Information Value	Top/bottom, left/right. Centre/margin	
	ii.	Salience	Colour contrasts, tonal contrasts, relative size, foregrounding or back grounding of information	
	iii.	Framing	Presence or absence of frame lines	
Colour as a semiotic mode	i.	Primary and secondary colours	Colour connotations and colour symbolism	
	ii.	Communicative functions of colours	a) Ideational function	
			b) Interpersonal function	
			c) Textual function	

Table 2 enlists all the elements to be taken into account while analyzing the visual data. Furthermore, the textual data is analyzed by keeping in mind the typographic framework presented by Van Leeuwen (2006) and a brief introduction of different typographic features to be analyzed is given in table 3.3.

Table 3: Van Leeuwen's (2006) Modal of Typography

Features of Typography	**Different manifestations**	**Meaning potential**
Weight	Bold	Daring, assertive, solid, substantial and so on
	Regular	Timid, insubstantial
Expansion	Condensed/narrow	Precise, economical
	Expanded/wide	Use of more space
Slope	Sloping	Organic, informal, personal, handcrafted and so on
	Upright	Mechanical, formal, impersonal, mass produced and so on
Curvature	Angular	Abrasive, harsh, technical, masculine and so on
	Rounded	Smooth, soft, natural, organic, maternal and so on
Connectivity	Connected	Organic, informal, personal, wholeness or integration (external connection)
	Disconnected	Atomization or fragmentation (external disconnection)
Orientation	Horizontal orientation	Heaviness and solidity or inertia and self-satisfaction
	Vertical orientation	Lightness or instability
Regularity	Regular	Following the rules
	Irregular	Rebellion against the norms

Findings

This section presents findings by discussing each section of the Pauwels' 2012 framework separately and in detail.

Preservation of First Impressions and Reactions

The analysis revealed that all the homepages seem informative but the main difference in terms of look and feel lies in the youthfulness, vibrancy and interactivity. The very first look by the viewer labels the webpage as either boring or interesting depending on what sort of frame sizes, visuals and placement techniques are used. In this regard, the first look at the homepage of LUMS holds an instant appeal for the most likely target audience i.e. students. It appears to be youthful, vibrant, exciting, modern, eye-catching and every bit of it portrays a campus life that is a student's dream come true. It creates a fantasy world in the minds of the onlookers and appears to be something desirable.

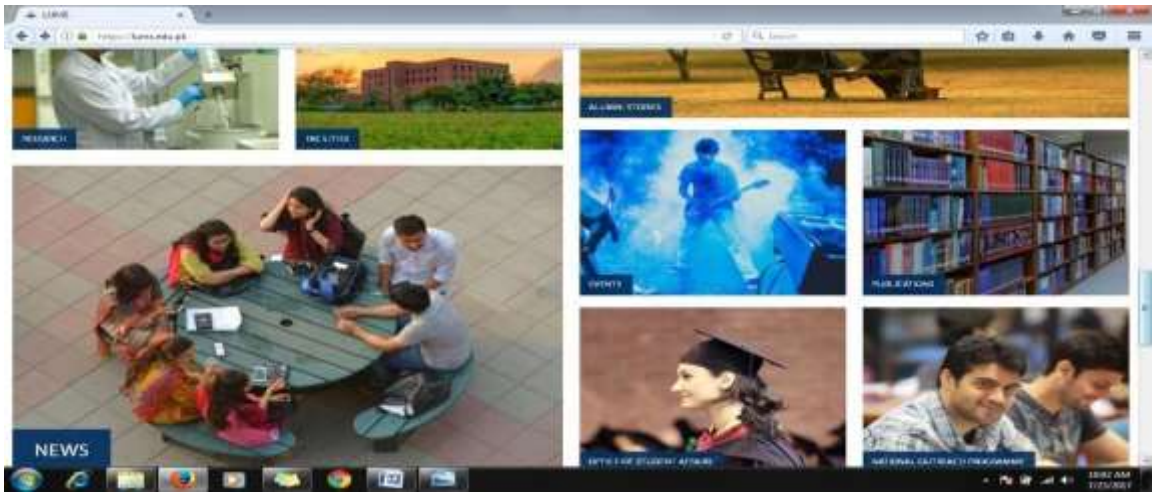

Figure 1: Screenshot displaying the vibrant homepage of LUMS' official website.

BZU, PU, CIIT and Riphah also appear to hold appeal for the students and display vibrant images but are more focused on the portrayal of buildings and staff activities. While on the other hand, the homepages of PIDE, IIUI and IUB are more information centered with less focus on the visual portrayal of university life. The homepage of UoK and GCU are downright boring and loaded with information that seems to be burdensome to look at.

Figure 2: Screenshots of homepages of different public universities

Table 4: First impression of the websites in terms of look and feel

University	Look and Feel
PU	Informative, interactive, well organized and vibrant
CIIT	Informative, interactive and vibrant
UoK	Naturalistic and informative
LUMS	Vibrant, Interactive, informative, modern, youthful
BZU	Informative, interactive and well organized
PIDE	Informative and well organized
IUB	Naturalistic, Compact, informative
Riphah	Vibrant, modern, informative & interactive
IIUI	Naturalistic, compact informative
GCU	Informative

Table 4 illustrates the first impressions created by all the public and private universities and it is evident that in terms of look and feel LUMS stands apart and attracts the attention of the viewers because of its unconventional use of images as hyperlinks. In the case of Public universities, PU and CIIT look promising and interactive.

Inventory of Salient Features

This phase not only involves counting, listing and categorizing the salient features present on a website but also keeps record of the features that are meaningfully absent. Both of these present and absent features reveal a great deal of information about the website. A quantitative inventory of the salient features is provided below to have a clear look at the salient features.

Table 5: An inventory of the salient quantitative features of the homepages of the official websites of the private universities included in the research

Salient Features		PU	CIIT	UoK	LUMS	BZU	PIDE	IUB	Riphah	IIUI	GCU
Total No. of images	Slide show	20	12	5	6	15	10	5	5	5	10
	Other	19	7	2	27	1	12	1	12	1	3
	Total	39	19	7	33	16	22	6	17	6	13
Collages		1	0	0	2	8	0	0	0	0	2
Images Featuring Buildings		20	9	3	4	0	1	0	1	6	8
Images featuring people	Students	3	1	1	15	3	5	1	0	0	3
	Faculty or staff	6	2	1	8	13	5	3	5	0	2
Contact	Demand	6	2	1	8	10	7	4	2	0	1
	Offer	3	1	1	15	6	3	1	5	0	4

Social distance	Personal	2	0	1	5	6	1	3	0	0	0
	Social	4	1	0	10	8	8	2	2	0	0
	Impersonal	4	2	4	7	2	1	0	3	6	10
Attitude	Subjective images	39	17	7	33	16	21	5	2	6	13
	Objective images	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Horizontal	Frontal	24	6	2	11	14	1	4	5	2	3
	Oblique	9	11	3	16	2	1	1	2	4	10
Angle	High	6	0	1	5	0	1	1	1	2	1
Vertical	Low	20	9	3	7	0	1	3	5	3	11
	Eye-level	10	8	1	10	16	1	1	1	1	1
Length of homepage		4 scrolls	6 scrolls	2 scrolls	5 scrolls	3 scrolls	4.5 scrolls	2.5 scrolls	9 scrolls	2 scrolls	2 scrolls
Total number of hyperlinks		254	155	97	236	238	181	138	204	318	62
Hyperlinks to other websites		16	34	9	5	11	17	3	5	9	6
Division of homepage into Categories		11	13	8	7	11	9	9	15	8	10

The facts and figures portray that all the universities have used different tactics in an effort to portray a distinct and positive self image. For example, PU has made use of most images (39) to convey information, Riphah relies on the length of the homepage to display maximum categories and give each section a distinct place to portray salience, IIUI portrays a strong text-user interaction and high interactivity level between the user and machine (Adami, 2013) by providing most hyperlinks. The provision of most hyperlinks to other websites by CIIT increases the interaction of the users with the outer world. All these distinguishing features make these websites stand apart.

Apart from these quantitative features, there are certain other distinctive features that set each website apart from the other; these include; multilingualism of CIIT (Urdu and English), Online consultant feature of PU, Arabic news section of IIUI and HE Minister complaint cell of GCU. In case of private universities, LUMS displays images as hyperlinks and Riphah makes use of blogs, YouTube video portal, subscription letters and FM radio to make it stand apart from the other websites.

In-depth Analysis of Content and Formal Choices

This is the central and most important phase of the analysis as it involves a detailed analysis of the visual, verbal and textual signifiers existing on their own and in relation with one another. In this phase, the insights from Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) Van Leeuwen (2006) have been incorporated to have a deep understanding of the data. Different choices made by the website developers are interpreted according to these frameworks and the analysis reveals a great deal about the possible intentions behind these choices and the effects produced by them.

Intra Modal Analysis

In this sub-phase of the framework, an individual analysis of different modes of representation has been carried out i.e., written, visual and typographic modes are analysed one by one to have a clear image of choices made by the website developers.

Verbal/Written Signifiers

Written signifiers are mostly used as means to provide factual information about the universities and persuade the audience (mostly students) to choose these universities for their educational journey. In this regard, Riphah International stands apart as it specially focuses on written signifiers as a means of creating a positive identity by the use of facts and figures, answering the questions like "Why Riphah" and by involving the international audience , while LUMS provides written signifiers just as captions for images or textual hyperlinks. In case of public universities, IIUI provides an "About the University" section, BZU provides a "Welcome to University" while GCU pays attention to the Vice Chancellor's message. CIIT is the only university that has provided a bilingual opportunity of interaction to the audience and this gesture signifies the importance given to the national language of Pakistan i.e Urdu.

Figure 3: Screenshots displaying various written signifiers

Typographic Signifiers

A variety in terms of font styles, colours and sizes has been observed in the homepages of both public and private universities and it helps to foreground certain elements by imparting salience to them. Sans serif with Helvetica typeface is the font that is employed by most of the homepages as it has a reputation of being Contemporary and unbiased (Gaille, 2014). The use of upright, disconnected, angular and regular styles are used to impart a look of formality, technicality and impersonality. Mostly used colors are white, blue and black and salience has been created by the use of uppercase and bold letters.

Figure 4: Screenshots displaying typographic variations

The figure 4 Illustrates the use of various font styles and sizes used by universities to make certain information stand apart. It is obvious that bigger fonts with bold and uppercase letters are used to increase salience and make certain information pop out.

Visual Signifiers

Though images are an essential part of each and every website, a difference has been observed not only in terms of numbers but also the content, camera angles and social distance. Most of the images provided by the websites are that of buildings from different angles and social distance; for example, UoK, CIIT, PU, IIUI and GCU rely only on the images of buildings with no represented participants. This approach provides a clear view of what the university looks like but the lack of students' perspective makes it difficult for the students to feel attached or associated to being addressed to. The images provided by PU and CIIT are placed in the form of slideshow in a relatively bigger frame and are taken from low camera angles to give them salience and a sense of power. These images appear to portray these universities as something desirable and prestigious; something to look up to and to long for. While on the other hand, the images provided by UoK, IIUI and GCU are not so impressive as the frames are smaller, placed out of direct focus of the viewers and the camera angles are high which make the institutes look timid and lacking prestige. The different pictures used by these universities are provided in figure 5 to illustrate how camera angles and social distance affect the way an institute is viewed.

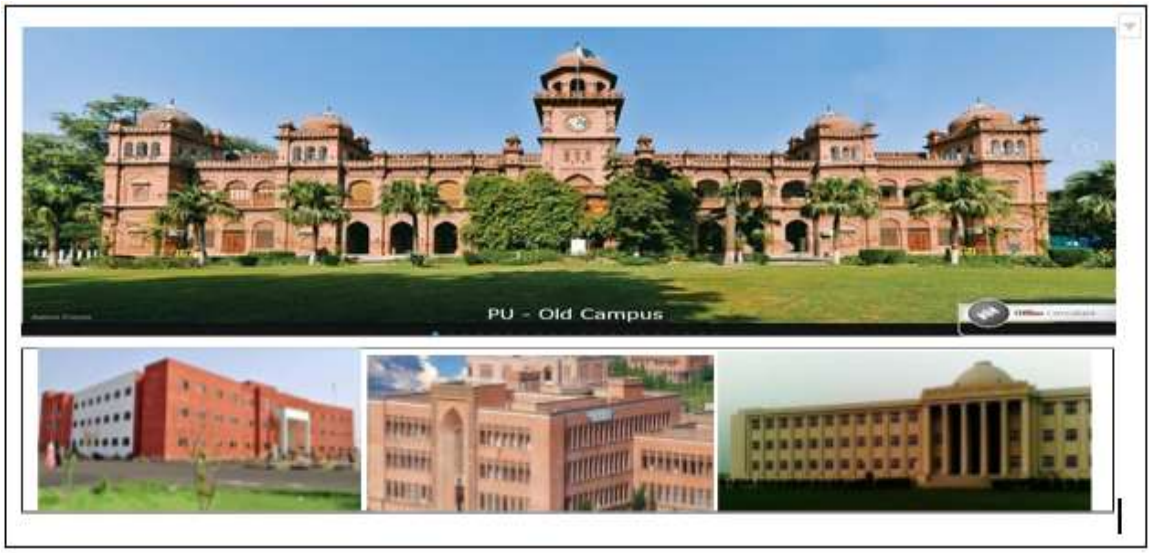

Figure 5: Comparison in terms of camera angles and social distance

On the other hand, the websites of BZU, Riphah, LUMS and PIDE focus more on the presentation of people in different surroundings and involved in different activities as illustrated in figure 6. Difference lies in the fact that LUMS and PIDE appear to be student centered with a special focus on the students' life at campus and the different activities they take part in; while BZU and Riphah are more focused on the presentation of faculty and staff members involved in different activities organized by the university and thus appear to be faculty centered.

Figure 6: Comparison in terms of represented participants and activities.

Layout and Design Signifiers

Pauwels (2012) describes layout and design signifers as essential tools which help in attracting the attention of the viewers and invoking desired effects by directing them to respond in a particular manner. This may include analysis of themes, template, color schemes, use of columns and frames, backgrounds,

left/right, top/bottom relations and much more. As far as layout is concerned, the basic orientation strategy is the same for all the websites i.e., header, body and footer and it corresponds to the cultural norm of educational websites. The basic design of all the websites is similar and they can be scrolled from top to bottom. The header lexia in all the cases is divided into multiple frames to provide salience to certain items except for PU which makes use of a single frame. All websites have used actual frame lines to show an orderly display of information and enhance salience (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) except for GCU Lahore's website which does not provide separate frames from individual sections and thus seems a bit flat. Use of larger frame sizes specially for images provides PU, CIIT, LUMS, PIDE and Riphah an open and clear stance while on the other side, BZU, GCU, IIUI, UoK and IUB have used the margins to centralize the homepage and create the effect of salience. Figure 7 shows differences in terms of framing techniques to grant salience to certain items and the way a homepage appears on a computer screen. Colour coding has also been used to make certain sections stand apart as compared to certain others.

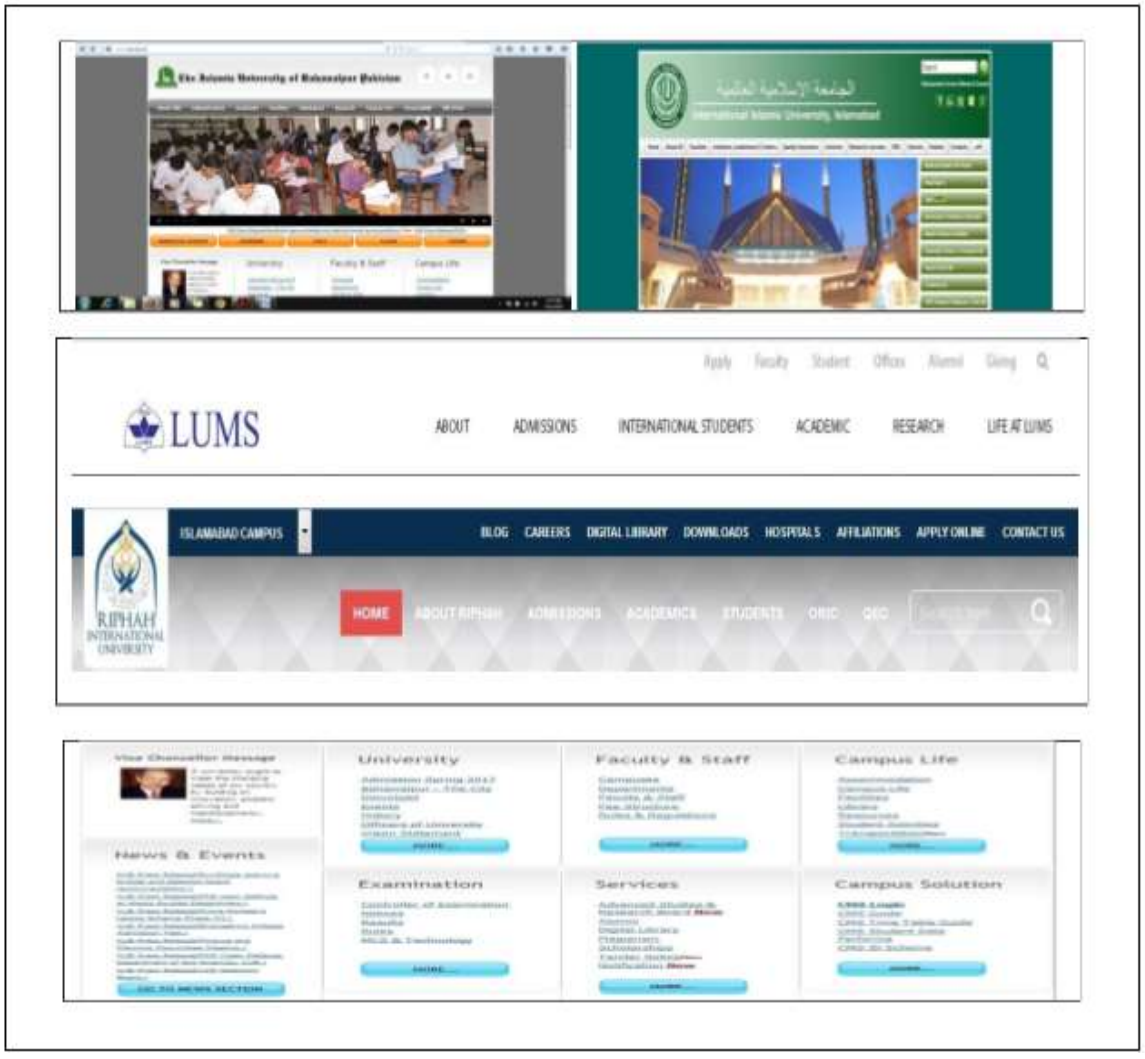

Figure 7: Different framing techniques used to portray salience.

Analysis of Cross Modal Interplay

Cross modal analysis signifies the analysis of various modes of communication in relation to one another.

Image-written text relations and typography-written text relations

There are two different types of relations between text and image. "Illustrative relation" signifies that both image and text are tightly bound and the text is vital for the understanding of image and vice versa. On the other hand, "complementary relationship" means that image has been used to complement the text and in most cases it is a generic image and is loosely bound to the text.

All the homepages display both types of relationships where "Illustrative" relations exist mostly where the images are labelled and complementary relations exist when images are used as icons. Figure 8 shows various pictures displaying complementary relations where image and text complement each other and in most cases image alone is enough to portray the meaning.

Figure 8: Complementary image-text relationships displayed on various homepages

LUMS has especially made use of Illustrative relations where text informs us what is there in the image and image plays a significant role as it is the hyperlink that leads to the next page. In the right-left relation between a text and image as shown in Figure 9 which displays CIIT's rector and his message, the right placement of image gives it the status of "new information" while the written message is something that remains constant. It signifies that the person representing the office may be a new or changed person but the message portrayed is the same which coincides with the university's policy and vision. The top position of the image grants it the information value of "ideal" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) as is the case with UoK's Vice Chancellor's picture and the caption has the status of "real".

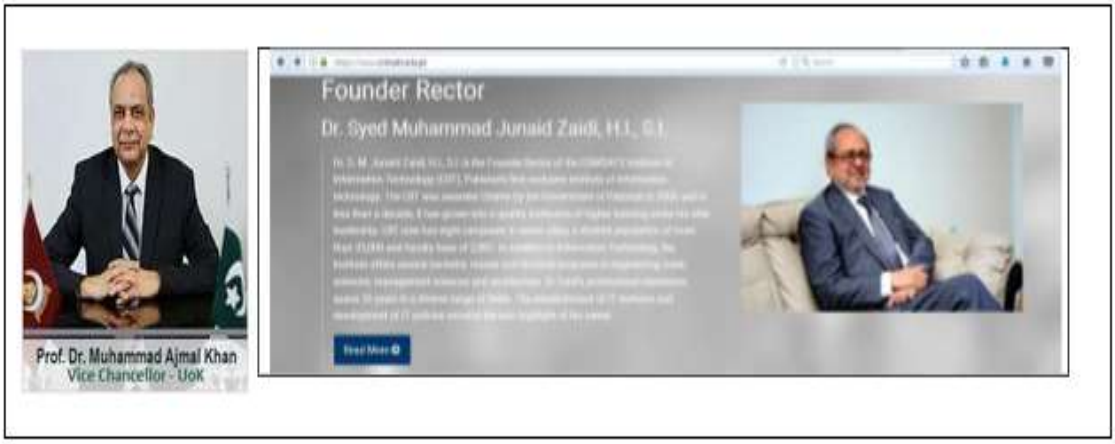

Figure 9: Illustrative image- written text relationships displayed on various websites

As far as the typography-written text relationships are concerned, the effect of salience has been created by the use of bold letters, uppercase letters, italics and use of bright colours. All the websites have made use of both complementary and illustrative relationships where typographic features enhance the meaning potential of the written signifiers and increase their significance by imparting special importance to certain items. Most of the time, red colour has been used to highlight important and urgent information as it catches the attention of the viewers immediately.

In-depth Negative Analysis

Negative analysis refers to the analysis of features that are meaningfully absent from the layout; as according to Pauwels (2012), even absence of some features reveals a great deal of information about the culture of the designers and producers of these websites (p.256). The universities like PIDE, GCU and IUB fail at providing any links to their social media pages and thus lack far behind in the field of providing the means of social interaction to the viewers. The absence of these links also signifies lack of the use of modern means of interaction by these universities. It appears that their priority is to be informative and in order to fulfill the informative purpose, they have side lined the interactive domain.

UoK, CIIT, PU, IIUI focus more on the presentation of buildings and have neglected the presentation of represented participants. This focus on buildings illustrates that they want to provide a panoramic image of the universities by imparting an institutional feel to the homepage. In case of Riphah, absence of student activities and lack of close-ups on the homepage signifies that the university intends to present the macro-structures in the foreground and the focus is not on individual personalities but events and activities as a whole. Similarly, absence of any direct message by university officials signifies absence of a direct point of view or voice and thus no direct connection is there between the audience and the producers.

Conclusion

To summarize, it is safe to say that all the universities have come up with unique ideas to make their website stand apart and to attract the attention of national and international audiences. Multiple modes of communication are exploited but the visual mode is most prominent and effective in capturing the attention of the audience and constructing the desired image of the universities. CIIT, PU and BZU in the

public domain and Riphah in the private domain display a beautiful interplay of visual and written signifiers displaying both complementary and illustrative relations (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). LUMS, on the other hand, relies mostly on youthful visuals to invoke the desired feelings among the viewers (Najafian & Ketabi, 2011). The display of direct written messages by the officials of GCU, PU, IIUI and Riphah is what enhances connectivity between the viewers and the producers and thus creates a sense of familiarity and their words echo a positive self representation (Saichaie, 2011).

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