RESEARCH PAPER

Multimodal Meaning-making: A Stylistic Analysis of the Use of Semiotic Resources in Magazine Covers

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ABSTRACT

Magazine covers are rarely the topic of linguistic research, despite the enormous academic interest in linguistics. It is especially remarkable, given that the top page is the standard contact text and combines verbal and visual cues to deliver sophisticated and persuasive messages. This study focuses on the multimodal stylistic analysis of the cover pages of magazine covers drawn from two genres, i.e., fashion and political & international relations. The analysis was made by applying the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The research identifies that using particular modes, modalities, color schemes, visuals, and linguistic components on magazine covers significantly contributes to meaning-making. The study's findings reveal that Pakistani and International magazines vary in their use of multimodal resources for the stereotypical representation of females and politicians. The current study is expected to help future scholars better understand the discursive construction of social identities through multimodal media.

Introduction

A magazine is "a large, thin book with a cover that you can buy weekly or monthly, containing articles, photographs, often on a particular topic; a collection of similar articles that often appear online" (Oxford's Advance Learner Dictionary, 10th edition). The magazine cover features a model's photo and helps the viewer visualize the stories printed inside, drawing the reader in and forcing them to read.

Magazines include various topics and genres, appealing to various niches. They could be related to fashion, gardening, sports, or even certain professions like medicine, finance, technology, or international relations. Typically, magazines fall into one of three primary categories:

- General interest magazine

- Professional magazine

- Specific interest magazine

Notable international magazines like The People, National Geographic, and Cosmopolitan are aimed at the general global public and have a vast audience. These

magazines are published in paper and e-forms. There are also national magazines such as The MAG, Pappperazzi, and The Newsline in Pakistan.

Professional magazines target distinct demographics of people with a shared passion for a particular industry, and the topics are well-researched and provide in-depth knowledge to their readers. These magazines publish biannually and annually; MIT Week, Education Week, and Design News are a few reputable professional magazines.

Famous magazines appeal to a particular audience in a specific genre, like cooking, photography, and gardening, and they have a minimal audience because they do not cover a variety of topics like in general magazines. Vegetarian Times and Masala TV are well-known magazines in the food industry.

When a designer creates a magazine cover, he wants to attract and intrigue readers, and this goal is even more apparent in an international magazine. The purpose is not only to draw notice but also to arouse interest and lure them to read the whole thing and make a purchase. The title, an eye-catching image, the issue date, and catchy lines from the featured interviews inside the magazine must all be included on the front cover of a magazine. The title and featured model on the cover take up a sizable piece of the cover.

Discourse analysis examines language using a variety of social and cultural situations to achieve comprehensive insights. In contrast, multimodal analysis considers the depth and nuance of texts, allowing us to learn more about the complexity of language and other modalities. Nørgaard (2011) &Stock (2004). Many researchers believe that text and images are not excluded from one another. They create a single meaning together, not separately.

In the visual analysis of the images, a theory was given by Kress and van Leeuwen in 1996. They further developed and presented this theory again in their book Reading Images (2006), which offers a detailed analysis of the visuals. They opposed Barthes's (1977) notions about the unified meaning of the text and image. They said that text and image have different modes and convey different meanings, but the meaning of both modes intersect. A language is a form of semiotics and social activity which provide three types of meanings depending on the cultural environment (Halliday, 1978). In SFL, there are three metafunctions—ideational (representational), interpersonal (interactional), and textual (compositional). Kress and van Leeuwen used these metafunctions to explore image and linguistic elements. (Eggins, 2004)

The word stylistics is derived from the Latin word "stylus." Tumer (1973) defined Stylistics as a field of linguistics that studies the language features used in writings and how they contribute to interpreting literary works. Widdowson (1975) emphasized further that the linguistics study of texts is a component of stylistic analysis. It recognizes how different modes interact to shape textual meaning. In multimodal analysis, semiotics resources play a crucial role in developing an understanding of the visuals and textual elements (Malik et al., 2017). Designers utilize fonts, models' postures, colors, and color schemes to create cohesiveness in these resources and link them with their target audience. The semiotic elements in the magazine helped the viewers understand the complex political, social, and economic concepts easily. For example, the picture of a political leader on the front of a magazine, his facial expressions, and a line from his interview give the viewer to understand the particular perspectives.

With the help of intersemioticity, we can understand how different semiotic resources interlink and convey a single meaning. Like, on the cover page of a fashion magazine, the outfit, model's posture, his outfit and page colors, and the accompanying text will help the readers understand the latest fashion industry trend and enhance the individual's semiotic elements.

Literature Review

Tseronis (2015) analyzed six magazine covers of two weekly magazines published in Germany featuring Greece's role in the eurozone crisis during 2010-12. The researcher used the visual semiotic model given by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), known as "visual semiotic theory," to discover how non-verbal and verbal elements create meaning. The researcher concluded that certain visual and linguistic elements are used on the cover pages to attract the readers and urge them to buy the magazines by reading the cover story.

Held (2005) critically analyzed the cover of Italian and French magazines from a multimodal perspective. The researcher found that cover designers used persuasive techniques in designing the magazine covers and combined visual and verbal elements in a complex way. The study found that the front covers are designed so that the readers get an idea about the stories of the magazines.

Behshad & Ghaziabad (2015) selected 30 covers of different magazines through library achieves. They used the visual semiotic model and Halliday's metafunctions for the analysis. They found that meanings and concepts are represented through interactional, textual, and ideational functions. They concluded from their studies that there are different processes (reaction, symbolic, action, and analytical processes), strategies, and modalities are used to convey the meaning.

Bachmann, Harp & Loke (2018) analyzed 21 magazines printed in the US from 2010-2105 from a CDA perspective. This study explores how Hillary Clinton is portrayed on the front covers of magazines and her relationship between power, gender, & politics. They concluded from their findings that Hillary Clinton is presented as a superstitious, emasculating, and power-hungry politician. The magazines portrayed her image as a misogynist.

Kachorsky, Reid & Champman (2020) examined 155 covers of TIME Magazines related to education. They analyzed the magazines from social semiotic and visual cultural aspects. They concluded that schools are presented as sites for sociopolitical debates, schools are presented to fix, and educational institutes are used to suggest power, authority, and relevance in social circles.

Sugianto, Denarti & Praseto (2021) analyzed the cover of "The New Yorker" magazine printed on July 21, 2008, promoting the Anti-Islamic narrative. The researchers used Barthe's theory of signification to analyze the poster. The signs used for the anti-Islamic sentiment are portrayed through the picture of Obama and his wife, Michelle, during Obama's US presidential election campaign. The researchers concluded that the portrayal of Obama and his wife represented the thought of anti-Islamism in the US.

Yu and Song (2017) analyzed the portrayal of the character Zen master Huineng on the covers of the two translated versions of the book Platform Sutra. They used Hallidayan SFL and Kress and van Leeuwen's model to find the interactive meaning through visual and verbal texts. They took Wong and Cleary's translated books as a

sample. They found that the picture of the Huineng portrayed in a close shot in Wong's book establishes the relationship of "we" with the interactor and gives polite suggestions to the viewers. While in Cleary's translation portrays the picture in a very long shot, which establishes the relationship of "I" and addressee "you" and gives direct commands to the viewers. They concluded from these findings that in Cleary's translation, the image of the Zen master is presented as authoritative, while in Wong's translation, it is presented as friendly.

Li (2019) studied the book covers to elaborate on how text and visuals created the meaning. They took covers of 12 chick-lit books, examined them from a social semiotic perspective, and analyzed the text, representation of the actors, and composition of the covers. They concluded that different modes (colors, fonts, positioning, framing) participate in meaning-making. They also summarized that stereotypes about females are also present on the cover.

Moud (2019) studied 16 cover pages (10 from TELL Magazine and 06 from The Newswatch Magazine) from a multimodal perspective to find the ideologies used in the texts. The researcher used Norgaard's "stylistic tool kit" to analyze the covers. He found figurative language and lexical items present the ideologies through text and visuals on the covers.

Iqani (2015) examined the two magazines of the paper in which he tried to find the smoothness and relationship between the cars and women on the magazine's front pages. This study aims to find the role of texture, its smoothness, and magazine cover imagery and explore the semiotic elements which represent the embedded gender stereotypes on the cover of magazines. He concluded that there are heteronormative gender conceptions represented on the covers which are directly linked with the culture.

In 2021, Zhang & Cheung analyzed the covers of the TIME magazine and adopted the discursive news values analysis (DNVA) approach and corpus-assisted multimodal analysis (CMDA) to analyze the intersemiotic relations between the textual and visual resources used in designing the covers of the Time magazines. They selected 300 magazine covers from 2013 to 2020. They also used cluster analysis to find the values used in the magazines' covers which seek the target audience's attention. They discovered that some news values were enhanced using verbal and visual modes, whereas designers used texts for other news values.

Tayyaba & Malik (2019) analyze the English books of PTCB from grades one to five to study gender stereotypes and their constructions in the books through visuals. They used a mixed-method approach for the study and a criterion sampling technique for the data selection. They adopted Kress and van Leeuwen's MCDA (1996). They found that women were portrayed as nature lovers, caregivers, teachers, and homemakers, while the men were portrayed as family heads, shopkeepers, sportspersons, and drivers. They concluded that in PTCB books, gender-based stereotypes are illustrated, and curriculum designers, critical linguists, and educationists should design syllabi to minimize the impact of gender stereotypes in society.

Material and Methods

The technique used for the collection of the data is the quota sampling technique. I selected four magazines to cover to perform a visual analysis of them. The magazine's cover included two Pakistani and two international magazines in a way that two magazines were fashion magazines, and two other magazines were political in their

content. The selected covers are information-rich, and in-depth analysis is required. The covers were selected from the official websites of the magazines, and links to the official websites are mentioned in the references section. The selected covers have been analyzed from textual and visual perspectives. Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal (1996) was used to analyze the selected magazine covers from the abovementioned perspective.

The present study analyses the magazines' front covers from a multimodal perspective. The theoretical framework used is Kress and van Leeuwen's study in 2006 in their book Reading Images. These magazine covers contain text and visuals, and the theoretical framework utilized for this analysis is MCDA (Multimodal Discourse Analysis). This model explores the text from three functional aspects: linguistic, ideational, and interpersonal meaning. In *Reading Images*, Kress and van Leeuwen described a framework to analyze the visuals and texts from different perspectives. They stated that every image has layers of modes, and these modes have different meanings. They criticized Barthes's concept of the image's meaning, including text and visuals. They said every image has a visual and text; these elements have different meanings and are interlinked. The multimodal analysis extends the analysis to verbal and non-verbal modes. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, there are three perspectives to utilize the multimodal for the analysis: semiology, pragmatics, and SFL (systemic functional linguistics). They used the Hallidayan grammar to analyze the advertisement/image. Three metafunctions (compositional, interpersonal, and textual) are associated with this approach.

In ideational metafunction, Kress and van Leeuwen associated it with the meaning-making process inside the viewers' minds. They categorized this process with narrative and conceptual meaning. In the narrative process, some actions describe the action of the participants and those involved. Participants, processes, goals, and circumstances in this process deal with the settings, tools, and how participants are doing the action. In the conceptual process, there is the image and how it will be classified and symbolized.

The interpersonal metafunction deals with the message and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. They talked about the gaze, camera angle, distance, and modality. " Modality comes from linguistics and refers to the truth value of credibility of linguistically realized statements about the world." (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The last metafunction is textual. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explained this metafunction as this gives us information about the placement of the text. It tells us whether the text is written on the image's left/right side or the top/ bottom. They labeled this positioning as *Ideal/Real* and *Given/New.* In this metafunction, they also discussed framing and salience. In salience are potent cultural symbols, size, colors, saturation, focus, tone, foregrounding, backgrounding, and overlapping.

This model will explore the visuals from the representational, interactive, and compositional components. This model will analyze the visual from the narration and conceptual domain from the representational level. The interactive level will analyze the visual from the contact, point of view (POV), and distance. The compositional level will explore information value, salience, framing, typography, iconography, and modality of semiotic ideas. Modality is created through contrast, saturation, depth, and modulation. "The term Modality comes from linguistics and refers to the truth value of credibility of linguistically realized statements about the world." (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996)

Data Analysis

Magazines are excellent sources of knowledge as they cover a wide range of subjects. The model's image takes up much cover's space, drawing focus and setting the magazine's mood. I have selected four magazines' covers, two from Pakistani and two from the International level, for this study.

Results and Discussion

Semiotic Analysis of Fashion Magazine

In this section, the researchers will present the analysis of the covers of two famous fashion magazines. One of the magazine covers is taken from Paparazzi, which is a Pakistani magazine and enjoys a good readership in Pakistan. The other magazine cover used for the analysis is from an international magazine, i.e., Cosmopolitan.

Pakistani Magazine

Fig. 01: Cover from Papparzai Magazine, published in May 2020.

The following is the Mother's Day special edition cover of the well-known Pakistani magazine "Paparazzi.". The edition itself highlights that content is related to women only. The cover promotes two ideologies, and the model conveys the message to the viewers. The model is very young, stylish, and carrying a baby, implying she is also a mother. This picture is the representation of many working women these days. They take care of their houses, bodies, and jobs as well. It indicates that women are capable enough to do more than one job. The model's image is a message of support and appreciation for working women and encouragement for the women who stay at home and prefer performing the assigned roles. The model has direct eye contact with the

viewers, creating a deep and genuine connection with the audience. The model is wearing a Western dress which means that the authors are promoting a Western lifestyle along with an Eastern touch from the point of view of the family taking care of. They tried to create a balance between both styles to be appealing to both audiences. Different magazine contents are on the cover and follow the concepts authors try to convey to their readers. First, on the left side is "Happiness is homemade" Although two recipes are being shared in this section, the very construct of this phrase is unique. Happiness cannot be made or cooked, but they construct an ideology that staying at home provides happiness. It means taking care of the family, doing the daily chores, and being a perfect fit in the roles ascribed by society, for women, is the key to happiness. It instills that working women do not enjoy a happy life as they rarely stay home.

The second content point, "Make your dream happen, " is an interview with a young, talented Pakistani singer. This message of this point is opposite to the message presented in an earlier point. Here they encourage girls to dream and try to make them real. The central theme on which the whole edition is created is presented at the bottom of the cover, which is strange if they genuinely want to promote motherhood. The other points on the top/middle of the left and right sides are all capitalized and made easily readable for readers. While in the case of motherhood point, it is in all small letters and in the joined font that is not easy to read. It must have been written differently if the main focus was on motherhood. The authors acknowledged the challenging side of this journey, which is to grasp the attention of the targeted population as most people consider motherhood complimentary for women, and they do not consider the difficulties women face during this journey. Their eyes are only on the reward which they get in the end.

On the right side is content about an interview with a make-up artist. Now make-up artists, also known as beauticians, is a feminine profession, but the number of male make-up artists is also increasing. It was considered a safe option for women in earlier days as they used to work from home, but with time this profession expanded, and now it is on a different level. Such interviews provide females with different suggestions for the future.

The colors used in the model's dress contrast those in which women are primarily presented in magazines. While the dress of the baby indicates it is a girl as she is wearing pink(girlish), which indicates tenderness and calmness, and red indicates passion and emotions. The dress of the model contains only two colors, black and green. Marketers mostly use Black as a neutral color to assign power, formality, decency, and control. Here they tried to imply that women can have control and power as black color is used for men commonly. The shirt's color is green and shows serenity, harmony, and balance, which are the characteristics of females. This cover does not take a specific stand for women/mothers; it takes the ideas of modernity and culture together not to disappoint their readers.

From an ideological perspective, the model's pose and dress break the societal stereotypes that a mother can fulfill her dreams and care for her child. The motherhood discourse in the picture supports the model's argument because the stories on the front page give an overview of the opinions of different mothers who do professional jobs and care for their children. Because under the title of "Happy Mother's Day," there is a line that attracts the viewers and creates the meaning of what kind of difficulties a woman faces during her motherhood, and women from different fields of life share their experiences. This line gives a short overview of the stories of the magazine, which are specially printed for this day.

International Magazine

Fig. 02: Cover from Cosmopolitan Magazine, published on June 2022.

The abovementioned magazine is "COSMOPOLITAN," released monthly and covers topics Women like love, sex, entertainment, Fashion, and beauty tips and trends. The model featured on the magazine's front cover is "Maddie Ziegler." This magazine release covers most topics related to the entertainment industry and what kind of problems a woman faced during her career.

The picture is taken from a lower angle to give the participant a kind of superiority over the audience. The shot is taken vertically and is a close-range shot. Artificial lights are used to give a feel of a naturalistic environment. The model spread out, put her hands on her head, and gave a dancing pose because the model is a dancer and actress by her profession. The model is wearing a dress, usually worn by a celebrity on the premier of a movie or a fashion show. The magazine's name is written in bold, and capital letters—most of the space is covered by the model and her dress. The name of the magazine is always on the top of the page. Two colors are used for fonts, i.e., red and white. White color is used as a contrast with the red color to make the text easily readable.

From a typographic perspective, the designer used two simple fonts to distinguish the central theme and chunk of the stories. The designer bolded the story's theme to make it easy for the reader to understand the whole idea of the story. The designer used top-to-bottom techniques to mention the magazine's highlights. There are three stories ' highlights on the top left side of the page and two stories ' highlights on the bottom right side. The pose of the model is like she is seducing the viewers. The model's dress is red and pink; pink represents innocence and femininity, while red is used to seek the viewers' attention. The fashion industry uses red for passion, pleasure, and signified power. The standard spacing between the bold and straightforward texts makes them easily readable for the readers. Because when there is very little or massive spacing between the lines of the texts, the reader will lose his attention.

The first story is about celebrities' reviews of the FAME in the entertainment industry. The second content is about the "Superstar Paradox " in the showbiz industry, the celebrity "Niche " told the readers how she is stuck in this paradox and gave 14 tips

to become a new celebrity and start your career in this field. The third main story is about the winners of the American TV show "Dance Moms," the winners are mentioned as Queens because they struggled to achieve these heights. The last story's highlight is "Hi, Ours Review," which discusses this magazine's fame because of its open topics and publishing stories of successful women in different fields. The ideology behind visuals and the linguistic element on the front page shows that women are concerned about their rights and progress in this field, like the other fields of life. The magazine's editorial policy is to promote feminist discourse and break the restrictions imposed on women. The linguistic elements and the image on the cover help the readers understand the editor's purpose; what does he/she want to tell you?

When we compare the covers of Pakistani and International magazines, we conclude that both magazines highlight the issues which are facing by women face in their lives. However, the Pakistani magazine's covers are loaded with text which distracts the viewers, while the other magazine has less text which does not lose the viewers' attention. In Pakistani magazines, different fonts are used, which disharmonizes the meaning-making process. In contrast, on the other cover of an international magazine, the text is harmonized in such a way that it maintains the harmony of the text.

Semiotic Analysis of Political Magazines

Two magazine covers are semiotically discussed in this section. One of the magazines covers is from Newsline, a Pakistani magazine on politics. The other magazine cover used for the analysis is from a famous political magazine, The New Statesman.

Newsline:

Fig. 03: Newsline Magazine, issue April 2013.

This magazine started publishing in 1989 and ended its journey in 2019. News Line is Pakistan's first political and international relations-related magazine released monthly. This cover portrays the political situation of the 2013 General Elections in Pakistan. On top of the cover, three critical events are mentioned with pictures. The first picture is about the "Fire incident "at a Karachi factory, where many people were burnt. The second story is about the protest held by a group against the court's decision. The

third story gave an overview of the fashion week held in Karachi, and many prominent figures in this industry presented their designs to the audience. After this, the magazine's name, "NEWSLINE," is mentioned along with the magazine's month, year, and website. Then there is the current scenario of the political situation of Pakistan portrayed through a sketch of the main leaders of the three biggest political parties of Pakistan with their political emblems. However, the political emblems of the parties are portrayed in a criticizing way. Bilawal Bhutto held the "arrow" in his left hand; Imran Khan held the "bat" firmly, and Nawaz Sharif made a victory sign with his right hand and held the "lion" with his left hand. The image demonstrates the struggle of Pakistan's major political parties to come into power.

The lines "The Man Who Would be King" and "beneath the blusters and tall promises, the strategy will determine who will win the crown." These lines also depict the political scenario because every party wants to come into power. For this, they made tall promises to the citizens, but the winner will be someone who engages the people better. A political party's political ideology determines the party's strategy and priorities. In developing countries like Pakistan, every political party promises the citizens that when their party comes into power, they will develop the country and improve it is financial and citizens' financial condition. In 2013, the country's economic situation was not good; there was political instability, and every party feared this situation. The hidden ideology behind this was that every political party was blaming the previous era of the PPP, and PPP was struggling for a safe exit. However, the economic situation of the country frightened the political leaders. This situation is portrayed through the political emblems of the political parties.

The sketches on the cover page interact with the viewers, and sketches are made vertically. Red and white background colors are used as a contrast to one another. The lines "The Man Who Would be King" and "beneath the blusters and tall promises, the strategy will determine who will win the crown" are printed in bold and formal fonts to create harmony between them. However, the size of the line "The Man Who Would be King" is typed in larger fonts.

The New Statesman

Fig. 04: The New Statesman, issue September 2022.

The front page of the magazine "The New Statesman" is designed in a very sophisticated manner to communicate a vast range of multiple ideas. The blend of semiotic signs, color scheme, background, and linguistics text is harmonious. First of all, let us talk about the semiotic arrangements. Two characters are shown in the bottom frame, one of a female standing in front in a way as she is addressing in a profile view

wearing a formal dress. On the other hand, a man is standing far from the woman. He is also in a formal dress code with sleeves rolled back, looking at the female character. He is placed near the cracks caused by the inflation arrows, giving the sense that male breadwinners are losing their jobs or facing the challenge of meeting the expenditures owing to high inflation rates. The iconic images of the British empire are shown destructively to show inflation's impact.

Moreover, the sky-blue background of the page, along with the barren land, gives the impression of the widespread nature of the problem. The cracks caused by the inflation arrow go in all directions, meaning that the whole country suffers from the impact of inflation. As for as the textual side of the cover page is concerned, it has much information in the form of text, and its detailed analysis requires much awareness of the socio-economic issues faced by the country. The first look at the page's text takes the reader to two main contents: "THE NEW STATESMAN," the magazine's title, and "The Inflation War," the central theme of the magazine. These two expressions are made noticeable with the help of font color and extra-large size. The color scheme of the first one correlates with the inflation arrow, whereas the latter is associated with the destruction caused by inflation. Inflation, a complex collective phenomenon, is shown as a bomb. That bomb is creating an earth quack impact which is damaging the very roots of the country's economy. The word "WARS" is augmented with the semiotic representation of the destruction of the British Empire's iconic symbols and the placement of politician vs. public representation in argumentation mode.

Conclusion

An in-depth analysis of magazine covers indicates that the designers purposefully employed various strategies to increase their attractiveness. Design elements, color schemes, color saturation, typography, and modality are expertly used to make visually appealing covers. This study uses a multimodal method to reveal the implicit meanings and ideologies concealed within the images and text. We can comprehend these covers' complex and rich messages by examining how different approaches interact.

Images published in fashion magazines offer glaring insights into the widespread impact of gender stereotypes in society. It is interesting to note that gender representation differs between countries, highlighting the importance of cultural variables. Due to the visual perpetuation of predetermined gender roles, these periodicals mirror society's standards and expectations.

As we focus on politics and international relations publications, the findings show how the editors purposefully convey hidden political viewpoints. These publications convey their intended meanings through expertly written text and images. The magazines effectively communicate their ideological viewpoints by artfully blending the message with readers' beliefs and preconceptions.

The Hallidayan metafunctions are essential for comprehending the text's complex meaning. These metafunctions give us a foundation for understanding the functional contributions of the textual parts, enabling us to interpret the text's nuanced meanings and connotations. This study deepens our understanding of the complex multimodal content of magazine covers and the significant communication potential that these covers have. They act as powerful conduits, successfully expressing complex concepts and ideologies through design cues and ways of expression.

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