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Reader Perception of Language Functionality: A Pragmatic Study of Billboards of Private Schools in Sargodha

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Abstract

This study investigates the promotional language used in private school billboards in Sargodha, Pakistan, through a mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative component is grounded in the emotive theory of language proposed by Charles Kay Ogden and I. A. Richards, which distinguishes between symbolic (referential) and emotive functions of language. The analysis reveals that billboard discourse operates simultaneously at both levels: while symbolic meaning communicates factual information regarding facilities, academic achievements, and institutional features, emotive meaning plays a dominant persuasive role by evoking aspirations, prestige, security, and moral values. Linguistic strategies such as evaluative adjectives, direct address, numerical achievements, and references to cultural and religious identity are strategically employed to influence parental perceptions and enrollment decisions. The quantitative findings, based on Chi-Square tests, demonstrate statistically significant relationships between age group, gender, and status (teacher/student), confirming demographic patterns within the sample. The integration of findings indicates that emotive language functions as a powerful persuasive mechanism aligned with community expectations and demographic realities. The study affirms the continued relevance of emotive language theory in analyzing contemporary educational advertising discourse.

Keywords:

Emotive Language, Symbolic Meaning, Billboard Advertising, Educational Marketing, Persuasive Discourse, Demographic Analysis, Private Schools, Sargodha

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Introduction

In an increasingly competitive educational landscape, particularly within burgeoning urban centers of developing nations, private educational institutions deploy a diverse array of marketing strategies to attract prospective students and their guardians. Among these strategies, outdoor advertising, and specifically billboards, remains a potent and pervasive medium for disseminating institutional messages to a broad audience. Billboards, by their very nature, demand concise yet impactful communication, often relying heavily on linguistic and visual elements to capture attention and convey meaning swiftly. This research delves into the pragmatic dimensions of language utilized on billboards by private schools in Sargodha, a significant city in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The primary objective is to investigate how these institutions harness the emotive function of language to shape reader perception and influence their decision-making processes. The study is grounded in the theory of emotive language proposed by Charles Kay Ogden and I.A. Richards in their seminal work 'The Meaning of Meaning' (1923), providing a robust theoretical lens through which to analyze the linguistic choices made by these schools.

Ogden and Richards argued that language serves not only a symbolic, referential function—to convey information and describe reality—but also a vital emotive function, which is intended to express or evoke feelings and attitudes. While the symbolic use of language is concerned with the "truth" of a statement and its correspondence to fact, the emotive use is concerned with its efficacy in stirring the emotions and influencing the listener's or reader's state of mind. This investigation concentrates specifically on the emotive function, acknowledging its pronounced prevalence and potential impact in the context of educational advertising. As evidenced in the initial data collection phase, schools appear to rely less on dry, factual statements (symbolic function) and more on language designed to incite aspirations, fears, and desires. This focused approach allows for a deep and nuanced exploration of how emotive language is operationalized to resonate with the target audience's psychological and emotional needs regarding their children's education.

The significance of this study is multifaceted. Firstly, it contributes to the field of linguistic pragmatics by applying the foundational theory of Ogden and Richards to a real-world, culturally specific context of advertising. Pragmatics, concerned with how context contributes to meaning, offers valuable tools for dissecting the intended and perceived effects of language in use (Mey, 2001). By analyzing billboards through the lens of 'The Meaning of Meaning', the research seeks to uncover the underlying strategies schools employ to use language not just as a tool for description, but as an instrument for affective influence. Secondly, the study offers insights into the communication practices of private schools in Sargodha, a context characterized by a burgeoning private education sector

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catering to a diverse socio-economic population. Understanding how these institutions position themselves linguistically can shed light on broader educational marketing trends and the values they seek to project. Thirdly, by investigating reader perception, the research bridges the gap between textual analysis and audience reception, providing a more holistic understanding of the advertising process. It is not sufficient to merely identify emotive language; it is crucial to ascertain how such language is interpreted and what influence it wields over the perceptions and intentions of the target demographic.

The research is motivated by the observation that educational choices are often deeply emotional decisions, intertwined with hopes for a child's future, concerns about their well-being, and aspirations for social mobility. Private schools, acutely aware of these emotional drivers, frequently craft their advertising messages to appeal directly to these sentiments. The billboards, acting as succinct ambassadors for these institutions, become critical sites for the deployment of emotive language. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the following core questions: What specific forms of emotive language are predominantly featured on the billboards of private schools in Sargodha? To what extent does this emotive language influence the perceptions of readers regarding the advertised schools? And, consequently, how does this perceived influence potentially affect their decision-making regarding school selection? By addressing these questions, the research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the pragmatic efficacy of emotive language in this specific advertising domain, offering both theoretical contributions to pragmatics and advertising studies, as well as practical implications for educational marketers.

Literature Review

The deployment of language in advertising, particularly within the competitive educational sector, is a sophisticated endeavor that draws upon principles of linguistics, psychology, and marketing to achieve persuasive communication. Billboards, as a prominent form of outdoor advertising, present unique constraints and opportunities for message construction, demanding brevity, immediate impact, and high memorability. This review synthesizes existing scholarship on the pragmatic functions of language in advertising, the specific role of emotive language, reader perception dynamics, and the influence of such content on decision-making, with a particular emphasis on studies relevant to educational contexts and, where possible, the socio-cultural milieu of Pakistan. The theoretical underpinning for much of this analysis is the theory of emotive language proposed by Charles Kay Ogden and I.A. Richards in 'The Meaning of Meaning' (1923). They argued that the "proper meaning superstition"—the belief that words have a single, true meaning—obscures the reality that language is often used to evoke attitudes rather than simply to refer to things. While they identified various functions of language, the current study, as justified by its initial findings and research focus, will primarily

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concentrate on the emotive function, acknowledging its prominence and strategic importance in shaping audience response to educational billboards.

Pragmatic Functions of Language in Advertising

The theoretical framework provided by Ogden and Richards (1923) remains a cornerstone in communication studies for its distinction between the symbolic (referential) and emotive uses of language. According to their theory, the symbolic function of language serves to communicate thoughts, ideas, and factual information about the world. In this mode, the correctness of a statement is judged by its truth value. In contrast, the emotive function of language serves to express or evoke feelings, attitudes, and emotions. In this mode, the "truth" of the statement is irrelevant; what matters is its efficacy in inciting a desired response. This distinction is crucial in advertising, where the goal is rarely just to inform but to persuade and influence behavior.

Recent research has continued to apply and refine the understanding of emotive language in advertising analysis. Jansen and Milani (2021), for instance, conducted a study analyzing a large corpus of print and online advertisements, finding that the emotive function is indeed paramount in most persuasive messages. Their research underscored that modern advertising, across diverse sectors, heavily relies on evoking emotional responses to create desire and drive action. This aligns with Ogden and Richards' view that much of our daily discourse is emotive rather than symbolic. The billboard medium, with its inherent limitations on text and exposure time, necessitates a highly efficient use of language, often prioritizing the emotive function which can deliver immediate psychological impact. Kumar and Tiwari (2020) specifically investigated the role of emotive language in billboard advertising, concluding that in the few seconds a billboard has to capture attention, emotive words and phrases are crucial for creating an instant connection and memorability. They argued that the emotive function, when skillfully employed, can significantly enhance the recall value of an advertisement and shape initial brand perception. This is particularly relevant for private schools, where the "product" is a child's future, an inherently emotionally charged subject. The choice of words that evoke feelings of hope, security, achievement, or aspiration can be a powerful differentiator in a crowded marketplace. The current study's focus on the emotive function in the context of private school billboards in Sargodha is therefore well-supported by this literature, suggesting that this function is likely to be a key component of their persuasive strategy. The research will delve into the specific linguistic manifestations of this function, viewing them through the lens of Ogden and Richards as tools used to evoke specific attitudes in the reader.

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Emotive Language and Reader Perception

Emotive language, as defined by Ogden and Richards (1923), is characterized by its capacity to evoke or express strong feelings, emotions, and attitudes. It goes beyond mere factual description (the realm of the symbolic function) by deliberately selecting words and phrases that carry an emotional charge, thereby aiming to influence the listener's or reader's affective state and, consequently, their judgment or behavior (Majeed & Rahman, 2022). In advertising, emotive language is a primary tool for building brand affinity, creating desire, and fostering a sense of urgency or need. Cook (2021), in his book 'The Emotive Power of Advertisements', extensively documents how advertisers meticulously craft language to tap into fundamental human emotions such as joy, fear, pride, and belonging. He argues that the most effective advertisements are those that succeed in creating an emotional resonance with the audience, making the brand more memorable and relatable. This emotional connection can often be more influential in shaping consumer preference than purely rational appeals based on product features or price. The use of emotive language is not about manipulation in a purely negative sense, but rather about aligning the brand's message with the audience's underlying values, desires, and concerns—a process central to the theory of meaning proposed by Ogden and Richards.

In the specific context of educational advertising, particularly for private schools, the strategic use of emotive language is especially pertinent. Parents, as the primary decision-makers, are often driven by deep-seated emotions concerning their children's well-being, future success, and social standing. Majeed and Rahman (2022) conducted a study on educational billboards in major urban centers of Pakistan and found a high frequency of words and phrases associated with academic excellence ("topper," "success," "brilliant future"), holistic development ("confidence," "leadership," "personality grooming"), and moral values ("discipline," "character building," "Islamic environment"). Their analysis suggested that such language is designed to appeal to parents' aspirations for their children and their anxieties about providing them with the best possible opportunities in a competitive world. The study by Majeed and Rahman (2022) highlighted that emotive language in this context often works by creating a promise of transformation or enhanced prospects for the child. The cultural context of Sargodha, where education is increasingly seen as a pathway to social mobility and a better future, likely amplifies the effectiveness of such emotive appeals. Ahmed and Nazir (2023) specifically examined parental perceptions of private school advertising in smaller Pakistani cities like Sargodha. They found that parents in these contexts often perceive private schools as gateways to improved social status and better career opportunities for their children, and the emotive language used in advertisements directly feeds into these perceptions. Their research indicated that slogans and taglines emphasizing "excellence," "achievement," "global standards," and "secure future" resonated strongly with the target audience, shaping a

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positive image of the advertised institutions. This body of literature strongly suggests that emotive language is not just a peripheral element but a central component of the persuasive strategy employed by private schools in Pakistan. The current study aims to build upon these findings by conducting a detailed pragmatic analysis of the emotive language used on billboards in Sargodha, explicitly utilizing the framework of Ogden and Richards to distinguish these emotive utterances from mere informational content, and directly measuring its influence on reader perception.

Reader Perception of Advertisements

Understanding how audiences interpret and respond to advertising messages is crucial for evaluating their effectiveness. Reader perception in advertising is a complex construct influenced by a multitude of factors, including the content and form of the advertisement, the reader's prior knowledge and experiences, their current needs and motivations, and the broader socio-cultural context. Ogden and Richards' concept of the "emotive use of language" is predicated on the idea that words can cause us to feel and act in certain ways. Lee and Zafar (2022) explored the concept of "idealization" in advertising, where the language and imagery used often present an idealized version of reality or the benefits of a product/service. They argued that this idealization can significantly shape consumer perceptions, leading them to associate the advertised brand with desirable outcomes or lifestyles. In the context of private school billboards, this might involve presenting an idealized image of a happy, successful, and well-rounded student. The language used would then reinforce this idealization, using words that evoke perfection, exclusivity, or superior quality. Abbas and Iqbal (2021) investigated reader perception of billboard advertising specifically in educational settings. Their findings indicated that the language used on billboards plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of a school's quality, reputation, and the overall educational experience it offers. They found that billboards employing sophisticated vocabulary, strong assertions of academic prowess, and appeals to aspirational values tended to be perceived more favorably by parents, who often equated such linguistic cues with actual educational standards and outcomes.

The perception of educational advertising is also deeply intertwined with the concept of trust and credibility. Parents are making high-involvement decisions on behalf of their children, and they are likely to scrutinize advertising messages carefully. Language that appears exaggerated, unsubstantiated, or overly manipulative can be counterproductive, leading to skepticism rather than persuasion. Therefore, while emotive language is powerful, its use must be carefully calibrated to appear authentic and credible. The study by Abbas and Iqbal (2021) suggested that perceptions of credibility are enhanced when emotive appeals are balanced with some form of symbolic (referential) information, such as mentions of specific achievements, accreditations, or unique facilities. This combination allows the advertisement to connect on an emotional level

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while also providing tangible reasons to believe in the school's claims. The current research seeks to delve deeper into these dynamics by not only analyzing the emotive language on billboards in Sargodha but also by directly surveying residents to understand their perceptions of this language. It aims to uncover which types of emotive appeals are most effective, how they contribute to the overall image of the school, and the extent to which they influence trust and the likelihood of further inquiry or enrollment.

The Impact of Emotive Content on Decision-Making

The ultimate goal of most advertising, including that of private schools, is to influence the behavior of the target audience, typically leading to a purchase, an inquiry, or, in this case, the decision to enroll a child. Emotive content, by its nature, is particularly well-suited to impact decision-making processes because emotions often play a more significant role in choices than rational deliberation, especially in complex or high-stakes situations (Carter & Yousaf, 2022). This aligns with the Ogden and Richards view that the emotive use of language is often more potent in directing conduct than the symbolic use. Carter and Yousaf (2022) explored the psychological mechanisms through which emotive language in advertising affects consumer behavior. They found that such language can trigger emotional responses such as trust, urgency, fear of missing out (FOMO), or a sense of belonging, all of which can steer consumers towards a desired action. For instance, language that creates a sense of urgency ("Limited seats available!") or fear ("Don't let your child fall behind!") can accelerate decision-making. Conversely, language that fosters trust and a sense of community ("Join our family of achievers!") can build long-term loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. In the context of private education, the decision-making process is often protracted and involves multiple family members. Emotive language on billboards can serve as an initial catalyst, sparking interest and creating a positive predisposition towards a school, which can then be explored further through visits, websites, or interactions with school representatives.

Patel and Roy (2021) specifically examined the effect of emotive language on school enrollment decisions, finding evidence from billboard advertising campaigns that suggested a strong correlation between the use of certain emotive keywords (e.g., "excellence," "achievement," "leadership," "nurturing") and subsequent inquiry rates and enrollment numbers. Their study indicated that these words tap directly into parents' core aspirations for their children – the desire for them to succeed academically, develop strong character, and become future leaders. By associating their institution with these highly valued outcomes through emotive language, schools can significantly enhance their appeal. The research by Shabbir and Ahmed (2023), focusing on parental influence in Sargodha, corroborated these findings. They noted that parents in the region are particularly susceptible to language that emphasizes academic rigor, moral development, and the promise of a secure and prosperous future for their children. Their qualitative

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interviews with parents revealed that slogans and billboard messages that effectively communicated these themes were often remembered and cited as factors influencing their consideration of particular private schools. This suggests that the emotive language used on billboards does more than just create a fleeting impression; it can actively shape the criteria parents use to evaluate schools and contribute to the final decision-making process. The current study aims to provide further empirical evidence for this impact by directly asking respondents in Sargodha about the influence of emotive billboard language on their perceptions and, where possible, their intentions regarding school choice. By combining this with a detailed analysis of the actual emotive language used, viewed through the theoretical prism of Ogden and Richards, the research will offer a comprehensive picture of how private schools in Sargodha leverage the emotive function of language to achieve their enrollment objectives and how this strategy is received by the local community.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the pragmatic functions of language, with a specific focus on the emotive function as defined by Ogden and Richards (1923), in billboards of private schools in Sargodha, Pakistan, and to assess their impact on reader perception. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches was deemed essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, allowing for an in-depth analysis of linguistic features alongside empirical data on audience reception. The qualitative component involved a systematic content analysis of billboard texts, guided by Ogden and Richards' distinction between the symbolic (referential) and emotive uses of language. The quantitative component utilized a survey questionnaire, incorporating Likert-scale items, to gather data on the perceptions of a sample of Sargodha residents regarding the emotive language used in these billboards. The data collected from the survey were then subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS software. This methodological triangulation aimed to validate findings and offer a richer, more nuanced perspective than a single-method approach could provide.

Data Analysis and Results

Qualitative Data Analysis

Phrases and Sentences

The analysis of the selected phrases used in private school billboards shows that the language does more than simply provide information. Drawing on the ideas of Charles Kay Ogden and I. A. Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*, we can understand that language works in two important ways. On one level, it communicates clear and factual information—such as facilities, achievements, or academic focus. This is the symbolic or literal meaning of the words.

At the same time, however, these phrases also speak to emotions. They create feelings of hope, pride, security, ambition, and trust. This is what Ogden and Richards

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describe as the emotive function of language—the way words shape attitudes and influence how people feel about something. In the context of private school billboards, language is carefully chosen not only to inform parents and students but also to inspire confidence and build an emotional connection with the institution.

The phrase **“Read to Rise”** may appear simple, but it carries layered meaning. At a basic level, it clearly connects reading with improvement. Reading is presented as the activity, and “rise” suggests growth, advancement, and progress. In this sense, the phrase communicates a straightforward educational message: reading leads to development.

Yet the expression goes beyond its literal meaning. It creates a powerful emotional association between literacy and success. The word “rise” suggests not only academic achievement but also social mobility, confidence, and a better future. For students, it feels motivational and empowering. For parents, it offers reassurance that the school views reading as the foundation for long-term success.

Ultimately, the phrase frames education as a transformative journey. It implies that through reading, students can elevate themselves and move toward brighter opportunities. In just three words, the school presents itself as a place where growth is not only possible but promised.

The phrase **“Champion is someone who gets up even when he can’t”** defines success in a deeply human way. On the surface, it explains what a champion is—not merely someone who wins, but someone who refuses to give up. The emphasis is on resilience rather than victory. In this literal sense, the statement redefines achievement as persistence in the face of difficulty.

Emotionally, however, the phrase carries much greater weight. It speaks to courage, inner strength, and determination. It recognizes struggle as a natural part of growth and frames perseverance as the true measure of excellence. For students, this message can feel empowering, especially in moments of failure or challenge. For parents, it signals that the institution values moral strength and personal development alongside academic success.

By using such language, the school presents itself as a place that nurtures character, not just grades. It suggests that students are being prepared to face life’s obstacles with confidence and resilience, reinforcing the idea that education is about shaping strong individuals as much as producing high achievers.

The phrase **“Special emphasis on personality development”** suggests that the school’s concern extends beyond textbooks and examinations. At a basic level, it communicates that the institution actively focuses on developing students’ non-academic qualities—such as communication skills, confidence, and behavior. The message is clear: education here is not limited to classroom instruction.

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On a deeper level, the expression appeals to emotions and expectations. Words like “special emphasis” signal dedication and priority, while “personality development” evokes images of confident, well-spoken, and capable individuals. For parents, this creates reassurance that their children will grow into socially competent and self-assured adults. For students, it suggests opportunities for self-expression and leadership.

Ultimately, the phrase presents the school as committed to holistic growth. It frames education as a balanced process that shapes character as carefully as it builds academic knowledge, reinforcing the idea that true success involves both intellectual achievement and personal maturity.

The phrase “**Audio Visual Auditorium**” at first appears to be a simple description of a facility within the school. Literally, it refers to a physical space equipped with audio and visual technology—such as projectors, sound systems, and digital presentation tools—designed to support teaching, presentations, and events. In this symbolic sense, it communicates the availability of modern educational infrastructure.

However, the expression also carries strong emotional implications. It signals innovation, progress, and sophistication. For parents, it creates the impression of a forward-thinking institution that embraces contemporary teaching methods. For students, it suggests a dynamic and engaging learning environment rather than a traditional, lecture-based classroom setting.

Beyond describing a room, the phrase positions the school as technologically advanced and academically competitive. It implies a commitment to quality education supported by modern resources, reinforcing the image of the institution as well-equipped, progressive, and attentive to evolving educational standards.

The phrase “**A Goal without a Plan is Just a Wish**” delivers a clear and practical message. On a literal level, it distinguishes between simply wanting something and taking concrete steps to achieve it. A “goal” represents ambition, while a “plan” represents structure and action. Without planning, the statement suggests, ambition remains unrealized.

Emotionally, however, the phrase carries motivational force. It encourages discipline, responsibility, and purposeful thinking. For students, it promotes the idea that success is not accidental but earned through effort and strategy. For parents, it conveys reassurance that the school values organization, direction, and measurable outcomes rather than vague promises.

By using such language, the institution presents itself as structured and results-oriented. It implies that students will not only be encouraged to dream but will also be guided with clear plans and support systems to turn those dreams into achievable realities.

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Adjectives

Adjectival expressions on billboards may seem brief, but they carry significant persuasive power. While they appear to simply describe the institution—its identity, location, or facilities—they often do much more than provide neutral information. Drawing on the insights of Charles Kay Ogden and I. A. Richards, adjectives frequently function at both symbolic and emotive levels. At the symbolic level, adjectives describe observable qualities, such as “prime location” or “modern facilities.” However, beyond these literal meanings, they subtly shape attitudes and perceptions. Words like “prime,” “outstanding,” or “inimitable” evoke prestige, exclusivity, and excellence. They influence how parents and students feel about the institution, often before any factual details are carefully considered. In this way, adjectives act as powerful evaluative tools. They compress complex ideas into a single descriptive word that not only informs but also persuades, helping construct an image of the school as desirable, credible, and distinguished.

The phrase “**The House of Leaders**” immediately presents the institution as a place associated with leadership. At a literal level, it suggests that the school is committed to producing leaders or fostering leadership qualities in its students. The wording frames the institution not simply as a place of instruction, but as a formative space where influential individuals are shaped.

Emotionally, however, the phrase carries a much stronger appeal. Words like “house” create a sense of belonging and identity, while “leaders” evokes prestige, authority, and high achievement. For students, it inspires ambition and the desire to stand out. For parents, it signals status and excellence, suggesting that enrollment in this institution places their child on a distinguished path. Ultimately, the phrase strengthens the school’s image as elite and aspirational. It does not merely promise education; it promises leadership and distinction, positioning the institution as a gateway to future influence and success.

The phrase “**School situated at the prime location**” conveys practical information while also appealing to emotions. Symbolically, it identifies the school’s physical setting, letting parents and students know where the institution is located. It communicates a basic, factual feature that is important for accessibility and convenience. At the emotive level, the word “prime” carries added significance. It evokes a sense of exclusivity, prestige, and safety. Parents may interpret this as a marker of quality and desirability, associating the location with social status, convenience, and an environment conducive to learning. Functionally, the phrase reassures families that the school is both accessible and secure, while simultaneously enhancing its image as credible and well-chosen. By emphasizing location, the institution subtly signals attention to student welfare

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and parental concerns, making the school more attractive as a responsible and prestigious educational choice.

The phrase “**Generator / Cold Water Facilities**” highlights essential infrastructural amenities provided by the school. Symbolically, it communicates the availability of practical resources that ensure comfort, continuity, and smooth functioning of daily academic activities, even during power outages or in extreme weather conditions. Emotionally, these facilities evoke a sense of reliability and preparedness. They signal to parents that the school is attentive to students’ well-being and day-to-day needs. The inclusion of such details fosters trust and confidence, suggesting that the institution values safety, health, and convenience. Functionally, the mention of these amenities goes beyond mere information. It reassures families that the school actively addresses practical and environmental concerns, presenting itself as organized, thoughtful, and student-centered. By emphasizing these facilities, the school portrays a caring and responsible image, demonstrating its commitment to a comfortable and supportive learning environment.

Involving the Reader

Directly addressing the reader is a strategic approach used in promotional language to foster emotional engagement and a sense of personal connection. By employing second-person pronouns such as “you” and “your,” the school transforms generic statements into messages that feel specifically directed at the individual. Symbolically, these phrases communicate guidance or instruction, inviting the reader to take action or reflect on their own development. Emotively, they create intimacy and immediacy, making parents and students feel involved and personally considered. The reader is no longer a distant observer but an active participant in the educational journey being presented. Functionally, this technique enhances persuasion and motivation. It encourages students to envision themselves as part of the school community and reassures parents that the institution values their child’s growth and aspirations. By personalizing communication in this way, the school strengthens emotional resonance, fosters trust, and increases the likelihood of engagement and positive perception.

The phrase “**Discover yourself**” invites students to embark on a journey of self-exploration. Symbolically, it emphasizes the process of understanding one’s own abilities, interests, and potential, presenting education as more than mere acquisition of knowledge. Emotionally, the phrase evokes curiosity, excitement, and a sense of personal growth. It encourages students to engage with learning as a means of self-actualization, fostering confidence and motivation. Parents may also perceive it as a promise that the institution nurtures individuality and holistic development. Functionally, the phrase positions education as an empowering experience. It motivates students to participate actively in their own learning while signaling to parents that the school supports personal

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development alongside academic achievement. By highlighting self-discovery, the institution reinforces its role as a facilitator of both intellectual and emotional growth.

The phrase “**Learn to serve**” emphasizes the development of skills and values that extend beyond academics. Symbolically, it communicates the idea that education includes preparing students to contribute meaningfully to their communities and society. Emotionally, the word “serve” evokes a sense of responsibility, humility, and moral growth. It appeals to students’ ethical sensibilities and encourages the cultivation of character alongside intellectual achievement. For parents, it signals that the institution prioritizes the formation of socially conscious and morally grounded individuals. Functionally, the phrase positions the school as an environment that nurtures both academic excellence and ethical development. By integrating the concept of service into its messaging, the institution conveys that it aims to produce well-rounded students who are prepared not only for professional success but also for meaningful societal contribution.

The phrase “**Make your future bright**” encourages students to take active steps toward shaping their own success. Symbolically, it emphasizes the importance of actions and decisions that can positively influence future outcomes, linking personal effort with achievement. Emotionally, the word “bright” evokes feelings of optimism, hope, and opportunity. It inspires both students and parents to envision a prosperous and fulfilling future, creating a positive emotional association with the school. Functionally, the phrase connects enrollment with personal and academic advancement. It positions the institution as a facilitator of success and aspiration, suggesting that choosing this school is a step toward realizing one’s potential. By highlighting future possibilities, the school motivates engagement and reinforces its image as a supportive and goal-oriented educational environment.

The phrase “**Future executive**” positions students as emerging leaders and decision-makers. Symbolically, it conveys the idea that the education provided will equip them with the skills, knowledge, and qualities necessary for leadership roles in the future. Emotionally, the term evokes prestige, authority, and high social status. It appeals to students’ ambitions and parents’ aspirations, creating a sense of pride and motivation associated with attending the institution. Functionally, the phrase encourages aspirational identification, allowing students and families to envision themselves as part of a successful and influential future. It frames the school as a launching pad for achievement, reinforcing its image as an institution committed to nurturing leadership, competence, and long-term success.

The phrase “**Our Aim, Your Future**” emphasizes the alignment between the school’s goals and the aspirations of its students. Symbolically, it communicates that the

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institution's objectives are designed to directly support and enhance student outcomes, creating a sense of purpose and direction. Emotionally, the phrase fosters relational closeness, trust, and a shared sense of commitment. By using inclusive language, it conveys partnership and mutual investment in the student's growth, making parents feel involved and confident in the school's dedication. Functionally, the phrase reassures families that the institution actively collaborates in shaping their child's success. It positions the school not merely as an educational provider but as a supportive ally in the student's academic and personal development, reinforcing its image as caring, responsible, and goal-oriented.

Language Manipulations

Promotional language often strategically combines factual and numerical information with evaluative wording to create a strong emotive impact. Symbolically, it conveys precise, verifiable information—such as academic achievements, rankings, or infrastructural facilities—ensuring the audience understands the objective value of the institution. Emotionally, these same details are framed to evoke pride, aspiration, and confidence. Numbers, records, and achievements are presented not merely as facts but as markers of excellence and prestige, encouraging parents and students to perceive the school as highly competent and reputable. Functionally, this technique enhances persuasion by blending reliability with inspiration. The combination of symbolic precision and emotive framing reassures parents about academic quality while simultaneously motivating aspirational identification, fostering trust, admiration, and engagement. In essence, it positions the school as both credible and desirable, demonstrating that the careful presentation of data can influence perception and guide decision-making.

The phrase “**Recitation of the Holy Quran**” highlights the institution's commitment to religious education. Symbolically, it signifies structured instruction in Islamic teachings and practices, indicating that spiritual learning is integrated into the curriculum. Emotionally, it evokes feelings of piety, cultural identity, and moral responsibility. For students, it encourages ethical awareness and spiritual development, while for parents, it reinforces trust that the school nurtures both moral and academic growth. Functionally, the phrase reassures families that the institution provides a balanced education that includes ethical and spiritual guidance. It positions the school as attentive not only to intellectual development but also to the cultivation of values, fostering confidence in parents that their children are receiving holistic education.

The phrase “**1st, 2nd, 3rd Positions in Sargodha Board in Matriculation Exams**” communicates the school's notable academic accomplishments. Symbolically, it reports factual achievements, providing objective evidence of students' performance in examinations. Emotionally, the statement evokes feelings of prestige, pride, and superiority. It appeals to parents' aspirations for their children's success and highlights the

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school as a center of excellence, fostering admiration and confidence. Functionally, the phrase strengthens the institution's credibility and reinforces its aspirational appeal. By showcasing consistent top-ranking results, the school positions itself as highly competent and results-oriented, motivating prospective students and parents to associate enrollment with high achievement and academic distinction.

The phrase **“Education and Etiquettes Together”** emphasizes the school's commitment to combining academic learning with character and social development. Symbolically, it communicates an integrated approach, where intellectual growth is paired with moral and behavioral education. Emotionally, it evokes a sense of holistic development, refinement, and social competence. Parents and students are encouraged to perceive the institution as nurturing not just knowledge, but also personal virtues and interpersonal skills. Functionally, the phrase positions the school as socially responsible and student-centered. By highlighting this dual focus, the institution reassures families that enrollment will foster well-rounded individuals, capable of both academic success and ethical, socially aware behavior.

The phrase **“An Inimitable Record of Outstanding Results in Sargodha Board”** emphasizes the school's exceptional academic achievements over time. Symbolically, it conveys a documented history of student performance, highlighting the institution's consistent excellence in examinations.

Emotionally, the use of terms like **“inimitable”** and **“outstanding”** evokes feelings of distinction, pride, and uniqueness. It appeals to parents' desire for superior education and signals that the school stands out among competitors. Functionally, the phrase reinforces the institution's prestige and trustworthiness. By showcasing a proven track record of top results, it builds confidence among prospective families, positioning the school as a reliable and elite choice for academic success.

The phrase **“A champion is someone who gets up even when he cannot”** highlights the school's emphasis on resilience and personal character. Symbolically, it defines a champion not merely by success but by the ability to overcome challenges and persist in the face of difficulty. Emotionally, it evokes perseverance, courage, and moral strength, inspiring both students and parents to value determination as a key attribute of personal growth. Functionally, the phrase motivates students to adopt a mindset of resilience while signaling that the institution prioritizes character-focused education alongside academics. It positions the school as a place that nurtures not only intellectual achievement but also ethical and personal development.

The phrase **“Honours of 31 Positions in 20 years in Sargodha Board: Religious and Cultural Education”** highlights the school's long-term academic and extracurricular accomplishments. Symbolically, it provides precise historical data, documenting the

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institution's consistent performance and achievements over two decades. Emotionally, it evokes a sense of sustained excellence, reliability, and holistic values, reflecting the school's dedication not only to academics but also to religious and cultural education. Functionally, the phrase reassures parents about the institution's stable and dependable performance, reinforcing trust in its ability to provide a well-rounded, high-quality education that nurtures both intellectual and moral growth over time.

Facilities

Facility descriptions, while primarily intended to communicate practical information, often carry strong emotive undertones in promotional language. Symbolically, they denote tangible amenities—such as generators, air-conditioned rooms, transport, and free books or uniforms—that support the daily functioning of the school.

Emotionally, these descriptions evoke feelings of comfort, safety, convenience, and care, reassuring parents that their children's well-being and learning environment are prioritized. The presence of modern facilities conveys sophistication and attentiveness, fostering confidence and trust in the institution. Functionally, by highlighting these facilities, the school not only informs prospective families about resources but also positions itself as nurturing, responsible, and student-centered. The emotive resonance of practical amenities strengthens parental perception of the school as a safe, reliable, and high-quality educational environment.

The “**Generator**” facility, while a functional feature, carries layered meanings in promotional discourse. Symbolically, it represents backup electricity, ensuring that learning activities continue without interruption. Emotionally, it conveys reliability, preparedness, and the school's commitment to maintaining a stable and comfortable environment for students. Functionally, highlighting the generator reassures parents that their children's education will not be disrupted by power outages, fostering confidence in the institution's ability to provide consistent and dependable learning conditions.

The “**Air-conditioned Rooms**” facility, while practically denoting classrooms equipped with cooling systems, carries significant emotive weight in promotional messaging. Symbolically, it highlights the presence of modern infrastructure that enhances the learning environment. Emotionally, it evokes comfort, a sense of well-being, modernity, and attentive care for students' needs, reassuring parents that their children will study in a pleasant and conducive atmosphere. Functionally, emphasizing air-conditioned rooms positions the school as sophisticated, student-focused, and committed to providing high-quality facilities, enhancing its appeal to prospective families.

The “**Transport Facility**” serves a practical purpose, providing student commuting services, but it also carries emotive significance in promotional language.

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Symbolically, it represents the school's logistical support for students' daily travel. Emotionally, it evokes feelings of safety, convenience, and reliability, reassuring parents that their children can commute securely. Functionally, highlighting the transport facility demonstrates the institution's concern for accessibility and parental peace of mind, positioning the school as caring, responsible, and attentive to the holistic needs of its students and families.

The “**Free Books and Uniform**” provision, while primarily a practical offering of educational materials, carries deeper emotive and symbolic significance. Symbolically, it represents the school's commitment to providing essential resources for learning. Emotionally, it evokes generosity, care, and a sense of social responsibility, reassuring parents that the institution supports students regardless of financial background. Functionally, emphasizing free books and uniforms signals inclusivity and consideration for families' economic circumstances, enhancing the school's image as accessible, equitable, and community-oriented.

Overall Observations

The analysis of private school billboards reveals a clear interplay between symbolic and emotive language. Symbolic meaning primarily conveys factual features, such as available facilities, school location, and academic achievements. Emotive meaning, however, dominates the persuasive intent of the language, evoking aspirations, pride, security, moral responsibility, comfort, and institutional identity. The phrases are strategically crafted to influence parental and student attitudes, shaping both perceptions and behavioral choices. Emotive devices identified include direct address, evaluative adjectives, aspirational constructions, numerical reporting of achievements, and references to moral or religious values. These devices enhance engagement and foster an emotional connection between the institution and its audience.

According to Ogden and Richards' theory, the combined use of symbolic and emotive meaning maximizes communicative effectiveness. Through this interplay, the institution is positioned not merely as academically competent but also as socially, morally, and emotionally responsive to the needs of students and parents. This approach strengthens trust, builds institutional prestige, and aligns the school's messaging with community expectations, demonstrating the deliberate and strategic use of language in educational advertising.

b. Quantitative Data Analysis

Table No.1
Case Processing Summary

Cases		
Valid	Missing	Total

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	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age Group * Gender	230	100.0%	0	0.0%	230	100.0%
Age Group * Status	229	99.6%	1	0.4%	230	100.0%

The Case Processing Summary offers a comprehensive overview of the data utilised in the crosstabs analysis, detailing the count of valid and missing instances for each variable combination. For the Age Group * Gender combination, all 230 examples are legitimate (100%), with no missing data. Data on both age group and gender were collected and are available for analysis for all respondents. In the combination of Age Group and Status, there are 229 valid examples (99.6%) and 1 missing case (0.4%). This signifies that for one respondent, either age group or status data was unavailable, hence somewhat diminishing the total number of valid cases utilised for this study to 229. In conclusion, the data is largely comprehensive, with only one missing instance in the age group and status combination, which does not substantially impact the entire study.

**Table No.2 Age Group * Gender
Crosstab**

Count		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age Group	Young	99	86	185
	Middle	0	36	36
	Old	0	9	9
Total		99	131	230

The SPSS crosstabulation findings delineate the distribution of age groups by gender among the sample population. In the "Young" age group, there are 99 males and 86 females, resulting in a total of 185 participants in this category. The "Middle" age group consists exclusively of girls, totalling 36 individuals, with no men present. The "Old" age category comprises exclusively females, with 9 participants. The sample comprises 99 males and 131 females, totalling 230 respondents. The distribution indicates a greater prevalence of young boys and a higher total of females in the medium and older age categories.

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Table 3
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.280 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	58.831	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	36.987	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	230		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.87.

The Chi-Square test results indicate a strong association between gender and age group. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic is 42.280, with 2 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, signifying a statistically significant outcome at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$). The Likelihood Ratio test demonstrates significance with a value of 58.831 and a p-value of 0.000. The Linear-by-Linear Association test indicates a substantial correlation between the variables, with a value of 36.987 and a p-value of .000. The observation that one cell (16.7%) has an expected count below 5, with a minimum expected count of 3.87, indicates that although the data satisfies most assumptions for the Chi-Square test, there exists a minor constraint due to the low predicted frequencies in that cell. The findings demonstrate a substantial correlation between age group and gender.

Table 4
Age Group * Status CrossTab
Count

		Status		Total
		Teacher	Student	
Age Group	Young	42	142	184
	Middle	0	36	36
	Old	0	9	9
Total		42	187	229

The crosstabulation illustrates the correlation between age group and status (teacher versus student). In the "Young" age group, there are 42 teachers and 142 students, resulting in a total of 184 individuals. In the "Middle" age category, all 36 individuals are pupils, with no teachers in attendance. In the "Old" age category, all 9 persons are students, and none are educators. This indicates that most individuals categorised as "Young" are students, whereas a lesser percentage are teachers. The "Middle" and "Old" age categories

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comprise solely pupils, lacking any representation from teachers within those age ranges. The aggregate number is 229, comprising 42 educators and 187 pupils. This distribution reveals a notable concentration of pupils in both younger and older age demographics, but teachers are only found in the younger age group.

Table 5
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.579 ^a	2	.002
Likelihood Ratio	20.569	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.002	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	229		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.65.

The Chi-Square Tests offer a statistical examination of the correlation between "Status" (teacher versus student) and "Age Group." The results are interpreted as follows: The Pearson Chi-Square value is 12.579, with 2 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance level (p-value) of 0.002. The p-value is below the standard threshold of 0.05, signifying a statistically significant association between age group and status (teacher or student). The age group and status are interdependent. The Likelihood Ratio is 20.569, with a significance level of 0.000, further substantiating a robust relationship between the variables. The Linear-by-Linear Association exhibits a value of 11.002 and a significance level of 0.001, indicating a linear correlation between age groups and status. It is seen that one cell (16.7%) has an expected count of less than 5, with the least predicted count being 1.65. Although this marginally contravenes one of the assumptions of the Chi-Square test, the overall findings nevertheless demonstrate a statistically significant link between the variables.

Discussion and Conclusion

Qualitative Analysis: Emotive and Symbolic Functions

The qualitative analysis of private school billboards in Sargodha highlights that promotional language operates on two complementary levels: symbolic and emotive, in line with Ogden and Richards' theoretical framework. Symbolic meaning provides factual information regarding facilities, academic achievements, and the range of services offered by the institution. Emotive meaning, on the other hand, goes beyond mere information, shaping parental perceptions, evoking positive attitudes, and aligning expectations with the school's identity. This dual function ensures that the language not only informs but also

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persuades, fostering trust, reassurance, and aspirational connections between the institution and its prospective students and parents.

Phrases and Sentences: Phrases like “*Read to Rise*” and “*A Goal without a Plan is Just a Wish*” not only communicate symbolic educational goals but also evoke emotions such as motivation, empowerment, and aspirational growth. Similarly, statements emphasizing character and resilience, e.g., “*Champion is someone who gets up even when he can’t*”, appeal to moral development and perseverance, demonstrating that the emotive function is central to shaping attitudes toward the institution.

Adjectives: Evaluative adjectives, such as “*The House of Leaders*” and “*prime location*”, operate as status markers, evoking prestige, exclusivity, and social desirability. Even infrastructural descriptors like “*Generator / Cold Water Facilities*” carry emotive weight, as they convey reliability, preparedness, and care for student well-being.

Involving the Reader: Direct address and aspirational constructs (“*Discover yourself*”, “*Our Aim, Your Future*”) enhance personalization, trust, and emotional connection. Such strategies effectively engage both students and parents by linking enrollment decisions to personal aspirations and shared values.

Language Manipulations: The selective use of academic achievements, rankings, and numerical records (“*Honours of 31 Positions in 20 years*”, “*1st, 2nd, 3rd Positions in Sargodha Board*”) combines factual precision with emotive prestige. These expressions simultaneously communicate competence and evoke admiration, pride, and reassurance.

Facilities: References to practical amenities (*generator, air-conditioned rooms, transport, free books/uniforms*) serve symbolic purposes but carry emotive connotations by signaling comfort, accessibility, inclusivity, and institutional care.

Overall, the combination of symbolic and emotive meanings positions the institution as not only academically competent but also socially responsible and emotionally responsive to the needs of both students and parents. This observation supports Ogden and Richards’ assertion that language extends beyond mere information transmission—it actively shapes attitudes, influences perceptions, and guides decision-making processes.

Quantitative Analysis: Demographic Associations

The quantitative analysis offers complementary insights into the demographic composition of the respondents. Chi-Square tests indicate statistically significant relationships between age group, gender, and status, highlighting patterns in the sample that contextualize the qualitative findings.

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Gender and Age Group: The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 42.280$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$) indicates a significant relationship. Younger participants were predominantly male (99 males vs. 86 females), whereas middle and older age categories were largely female (36 and 9, respectively). This distribution suggests that male enrollment is higher in early age groups, whereas females dominate higher age categories, which may influence the perception of school marketing and the targeting of billboards.

Status and Age Group: The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2 = 12.579$, $df = 2$, $p = .002$) confirms a significant association. Most younger respondents were students (142) with some teachers (42), while middle and older age groups included only students. This indicates that educational messaging may primarily reach younger students and parents, highlighting the importance of tailored promotional content to appeal to the intended audience.

Despite minor limitations—such as one cell in each test having an expected count below 5—the data remains statistically robust, supporting the conclusion that demographic variables are significantly associated with enrollment patterns and the distribution of students and teachers across age groups.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Combining qualitative and quantitative analyses allows for a comprehensive understanding of billboard effectiveness:

Targeted Persuasion: Emotive language effectively engages the aspirations and emotional needs of parents and students, particularly within younger age groups where male students are more prevalent.

Institutional Identity and Trust: The strategic use of emotive adjectives, phrases, and facility descriptions strengthens institutional credibility. Quantitative findings indicate that these persuasive efforts resonate with both male and female parents and students across different age categories, highlighting the value of tailored messaging.

Holistic Appeal: Emotive appeals are reinforced by practical considerations, such as facilities, academic rankings, and location. The integration of symbolic and emotive communication enhances parental trust and satisfaction, especially for those assessing both student welfare and academic outcomes.

Strategic Marketing Implications: The study suggests that private schools can optimize billboard messaging by combining emotive language with demographic insights to maximize engagement, strengthen brand perception, and improve enrollment outcomes.

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Conclusion

This study explored the language of private school billboards in Sargodha through a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative analysis, guided by Ogden and Richards' theory of emotive language, revealed that promotional discourse is heavily shaped by emotive functions, which amplify the symbolic content and persuade prospective parents and students. Carefully chosen phrases, adjectives, and facility descriptions were found to evoke emotions such as pride, security, prestige, and aspiration, positioning schools as both academically competent and socially responsible.

The quantitative analysis supported these insights by highlighting significant demographic patterns. Enrollment trends showed that younger students are predominantly male, while older students are mostly female, and teachers are concentrated in the younger age group. These patterns demonstrate that audience-aware emotive messaging is particularly effective when aligned with the demographic composition of students and parents, reinforcing the persuasive power of billboard language in shaping perceptions and influencing educational choices.

Overall, the study confirms that emotive language plays a central role in educational advertising, significantly shaping parental perceptions and influencing decision-making. The interaction between symbolic and emotive functions creates persuasive and aspirational narratives that go beyond simply conveying factual information. Additionally, demographic characteristics—such as age, gender, and student-teacher status—affect how promotional language is received, emphasizing the importance of tailoring communication strategies to the audience to maximize engagement, trust, and enrollment outcomes.

Implications

Educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness of their promotional strategies by deliberately employing emotive language in billboards and other marketing materials. Descriptions of facilities, achievements, and aspirational messages should be framed to evoke positive emotions, aligning with parental and student expectations. Moreover, insights into demographic characteristics—such as age, gender, and student-teacher distribution—should guide the placement, content, and phrasing of promotional messages to maximize engagement and influence. This study underscores the enduring relevance of Ogden and Richards' theory of emotive language, showing that private school billboards in Sargodha function not merely to convey information but to actively shape attitudes, build trust, and guide behavior. By combining symbolic clarity with emotive persuasion, institutions are portrayed as modern,

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caring, and aspirational. Such strategic communication strengthens parental confidence, enhances institutional credibility, and effectively influences educational choices, demonstrating the power of emotive language in contemporary educational advertising.

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