Identity construction through Urdu-English code-switching in mobile network Advertisements in Pakistan

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Abstract

Abstract

This study investigates the role of Urdu–English code-switching in constructing consumer identities in Pakistani mobile network advertisements. Drawing on a qualitative discourse-based approach, the research analyses selected television and YouTube advertisements from four major telecom brands in Pakistan: Jazz, Telenor, Ufone, and Zong. The study examines how linguistic choices, particularly the strategic mixing of Urdu and English, are used to associate mobile connectivity with values such as modernity, empowerment, humour, inclusivity, and national belonging. The findings reveal that English is predominantly employed to index technology, speed, and global digital culture, while Urdu functions to convey emotional depth, cultural familiarity, and collective identity. Each brand adopts a distinct code-switching pattern to target specific audience segments and project a unique brand persona, ranging from empowerment-driven and lifestyle-oriented identities to humour-based and efficiency-focused representations. Overall, the study demonstrates that code-switching in Pakistani telecom advertising is a deliberate communicative strategy that reflects and reinforces contemporary bilingual practices while actively shaping consumer perceptions and identities in the digital age.

Keywords: code-switching, identity construction, Pakistani advertising, Urdu–English bilingualism, mobile network discourse

Introduction

In Pakistan's multilingual context, the language of advertising reflects not only commercial intentions but also broader cultural and social identities. Studies of Pakistani television and billboard advertisements reveal that code-switching between Urdu and English is a common linguistic strategy, where English forms are deliberately embedded in predominantly Urdu messages to make them more appealing and engaging for audiences (Khan, Tahmeed, & Nawab, 2025; Habib, Khokhar, & Mustafa, 2025). Research on language variation in Pakistani commercials shows that this mixing arises from influences such as fashion, technological change, and audience expectations, suggesting that English carries connotations of modernity and cosmopolitan identity (Riaz, 2019; Imran & Hussain, 2024). Such findings underscore how language choices in advertisements go beyond simple translation or bilingual convenience; they actively shape how brands position themselves and how audiences interpret cultural meaning.

Within commercial messaging, code-switching functions to signal more than product features. Linguistic analyses of advertisement taglines in Pakistan demonstrate that English elements are not random but used strategically to highlight key concepts alongside Urdu, positioning products as both locally rooted and globally connected (Munir & Anwar, 2025). This pattern aligns with sociolinguistic research showing that bilingual language practices can reflect and construct identities by linking speakers or texts to perceived social categories such as professionalism, status, and youth culture (Idrees, Razzaq, & Khan, 2025). In mobile network advertising, where brands compete for attention in a crowded media landscape, code-switched slogans and

messages can help create a brand persona that resonates with consumers who navigate both Urdu and English in everyday life. This dual linguistic profile becomes part of the brand's identity and, by extension, part of how consumers see themselves in relation to that brand.

The construction of identity through code-switching in advertising is thus a dynamic interaction between language, society, and market forces. It reflects broader patterns of linguistic hybridity in Pakistani media, where English terms are increasingly prevalent in broadcast and print adverts, signaling external influences while maintaining local linguistic frameworks (Habib et al., 2025; Riaz, 2019). Sociolinguistic perspectives note that such practices are meaningful communicative choices rather than errors or deficiencies, serving to negotiate cultural affiliation and to bridge traditional and contemporary identities (Idrees et al., 2025). In the specific case of mobile network advertisements, understanding how Urdu–English code-switching contributes to identity construction offers insight into how language serves commercial, cultural, and personal functions in Pakistan's evolving media environment.

Significance of the Research

This research is significant because it highlights how language use in advertising contributes to identity construction in a multilingual society like Pakistan. By focusing on Urdu–English code-switching in mobile network advertisements, the study shows how advertisers strategically use language to reflect and shape social identities associated with modernity, youth culture, and technological awareness. Understanding these linguistic choices helps explain how commercial discourse mirrors everyday bilingual practices and evolving cultural values in Pakistani society.

The study also contributes to sociolinguistic and media discourse research by providing empirical evidence from a contemporary and influential domain. Mobile network advertisements reach a wide audience across social classes and regions, making them a powerful site for observing how language constructs meanings beyond communication. Analysing these advertisements deepens understanding of how code-switching functions as a symbolic resource rather than a random or informal practice, especially in public and commercial spaces. The research has practical significance for advertisers, media professionals, and language planners. Insights into how bilingual language choices influence audience perception can inform more culturally sensitive and effective advertising strategies. At an academic level, the study fills a gap in Pakistani advertising discourse by linking code-switching directly to identity construction, offering a foundation for future research on language, media, and globalisation in South Asian contexts.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how Urdu–English code-switching is used linguistically in mobile network advertisements in Pakistan.

2. To analyse how Urdu–English code-switching contributes to the construction of social and cultural identities in Pakistani mobile network advertising.

Research Questions

1. How is Urdu–English code-switching employed in mobile network advertisements in Pakistan?

2. In what ways does Urdu–English code-switching construct and represent social and cultural identities in these advertisements?

Literature Review

Research on code-switching in Pakistani media and advertising shows that bilingual language mixing is both widespread and socially significant. In television commercials, Urdu–English code-switching has been identified as a strategic tool used to influence consumer perception and enhance persuasive appeal, with advertisers deliberately alternating between languages to emphasise product qualities and engage diverse audiences. Studies of Pakistani television ads reveal that code-switching functions as a core component of persuasive linguistic strategies in commercials, reflecting the bilingual reality of Pakistani society and advertisers' intent to appeal to both Urdu and English speakers (Khan, Tahmeed, & Nawab, 2025). This phenomenon is aligned with broader observations that Urdu in commercials is increasingly influenced by English due to technological, cultural, and stylistic factors (Riaz, 2019). Sociolinguistic analysis of Pakistani billboards similarly shows the prevalence of English embedded within Urdu messaging to make slogans more appealing and impactful across linguistic groups (Habib, Khokhar, & Mustafa, 2025).

The linguistic patterns found in advertisements align with research on code-switching in broader communicative contexts in Pakistan. Code-switching among bilinguals in social interaction has been shown to reflect identity construction, emotional expression, and contextual meanings. For example, studies on everyday language use among young Pakistanis demonstrate that language alternation is tied to social identity, emotional expression, politeness strategies, and social relationships (Idrees, Razzaq, & Khan, 2025). Observations from digital communication research reinforce this point, finding that code-switching on social media platforms serves as an expression of cultural diversity and hybrid identity among Pakistani youth (Hajra & Akram, 2025). These insights suggest that language choices in advertisements likewise signal cultural affiliations and desired social positioning. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of commercial language further show that forms of code-mixing and alternation are common features of advertising content, often shaped by influences such as fashion, practicality, and technological advancement (Imran, 2024).

Various theoretical perspectives on code-switching provide context for understanding how language practices in advertisements relate to identity. Sociolinguistic models such as Myers-Scotton's matrix language-frame theory explain how the interplay between Urdu as the matrix language and English as the embedded language structures bilingual messages in a way that encodes social meaning (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The markedness model further highlights how speakers (including advertisers) make language choices that index social positions or affiliations (Myers-Scotton, 1998). These frameworks have been applied in broader media studies to show how linguistic hybridity in Pakistani media contributes to identity performance and social meaning (Kanwal, Rashid, & Khan, 2025). Research into sociolinguistic variation demonstrates that bilingual practices in commercials are not simply linguistic phenomena but reflect complex social and cultural dynamics, including identity

negotiation and language attitudes (Awan, Begum, & Khan, 2025).

Studies specifically examining advertisement taglines show how code-switching functions in slogan creation. Tagline research in Pakistan finds that English frequently appears embedded within Urdu structures, with Urdu acting as the matrix language and English adding stylistic appeal that shapes audience perception (Munir & Anwar, 2025). These findings are consistent with arguments that language mixing in media not only conveys product information but also contributes to shaping consumer identities and expectations. The prevalence of code-switching in Pakistani advertisements mirrors studies of television content and digital media where hybrid language practices signal modernity, cultural affiliation, and linguistic creativity (Siddiqui & Imran, 2023). Beyond commercial contexts, such practices have been shown to shape language use in youth digital discourse, underscoring the role of multilingual language choices in identity performance across communicative platforms (Hajra & Akram, 2025).

Comparative studies from broader sociolinguistic research reinforce the link between code-switching and identity. For example, investigations into language use among bilingual speakers in Pakistan show that switching between Urdu and English can be a purposeful strategy to express group belonging, social distance, or affiliations with modern and professional identities (Kainat, 2025). Similar research on other forms of media demonstrates how bilingual language choices function not just for communicative efficiency but to signal cultural positioning and social meaning (Awan et al., 2025). Studies in related bilingual contexts, such as advertising in other multilingual settings, also suggest that language alternation can reflect identity negotiation, aspirational affiliations, and social stratification (Sultan, 2023). This converging evidence points to the conclusion that Urdu–English code-switching in Pakistani mobile network advertisements is likely to play a significant role in constructing and communicating both brand and consumer identities in a linguistically diverse market environment.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of Urdu–English code-switching in constructing identity through mobile network advertising in Pakistan. Given the focus on linguistic and semiotic analysis of advertising discourse, a descriptive and interpretive approach is used to examine advertisement content in depth. Qualitative methods allow for the analysis of language patterns, persuasive strategies, and identity cues embedded in the selected advertisements (Munir & Anwar, 2025; Khan, Tahmeed, & Nawab, 2025). The study uses purposive sampling to select advertisements that are illustrative of code-switching practices and relevant to the research objectives.

Population and Sample

The population for this research comprises mobile network advertisements disseminated by four major Pakistani telecom companies: Jazz, Telenor, Ufone, and Zong. These networks represent the largest and most advertised mobile service providers in the country (Shatabdi, 2021; Riaz, 2019). A total of 20 advertisements were selected, with five advertisements from each network for analysis. These include television commercials, print ads, and billboard messages that were publicly accessible online through official company channels and media archives. Examples include campaign slogans and promotional material such as Jazz's "*dunya ko bataa do*"

campaign materials (Jazz brand positioning) and counterads comparing 4G services among networks (e.g., "Telenor 4G per aaein") that reflect bilingual messaging strategies in public media spaces (Aurora Magazine; Shatabdi, 2021; Munir & Anwar, 2025). Advertisements were chosen based on their prominence, linguistic content, and relevance to Urdu–English code-switching.

Data Collection
Data were collected through systematic retrieval of advertisement text, visuals, and audio where available. Primary sources included official company websites and YouTube channels, digital ad repositories, and media reports that archive telecom ad campaigns. Promotional examples of Jazz, Ufone, Telenor, and Zong were accessed where possible, including slogans and written content used in billboards and print media (Shatabdi, 2021; Aurora Magazine; Propakistani; Ufone official ads page). Each advertisement was documented with contextual information about the platform, year of release, and linguistic content.

Data Analysis Procedure
The collected advertisements were analysed using qualitative content analysis, with a focus on identifying instances of code-switching (inter-sentential and intra-sentential) between Urdu and English and their functions in constructing identities (Munir & Anwar, 2025). The analysis follows frameworks from sociolinguistic and discourse studies, such as Myers-Scotton's matrix language theory and insights from commercial discourse research, to interpret how language choices contribute to brand positioning and social meaning construction (Munir & Anwar, 2025; Khan et al., 2025). Coding categories include language pattern type, function of code-switching (e.g., emphasis, persuasion), and identity cues (e.g., modernity, professionalism). Comparative analysis across the four networks is conducted to highlight distinct identity markers associated with each network's advertising strategies.

Theoretical Framework for Data Analysis
The present study is grounded in sociolinguistic theory, code-switching models, and identity construction theory to analyse how Urdu–English code-switching functions in mobile network advertisements in Pakistan. Sociolinguistics views language as a social practice through which meanings, values, and identities are constructed and negotiated (Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). In advertising discourse, language choices are never neutral; instead, they reflect social ideologies and cultural positioning (Cook, 2001). This framework enables the study to examine how bilingual language use in advertisements constructs identities linked to modernity, globalisation, and cultural hybridity.

The structural analysis of code-switching is guided by Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame (MLF) Model, which explains how bilingual discourse is organised by distinguishing between a matrix language that provides grammatical structure and an embedded language that supplies lexical items (Myers-Scotton, 1993). In the Pakistani advertising context, Urdu typically functions as the matrix language, while English appears as the embedded language. The MLF model is applied to identify and categorise inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching in the selected advertisements. This approach allows for a systematic analysis of how English lexical insertions enhance emphasis, persuasion, and brand appeal within Urdu-dominated

discourse (Myers-Scotton, 2002).

To interpret the social motivations behind these language choices, the study also draws on Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, which explains language selection as a socially meaningful choice made to align with or challenge expected norms (Myers-Scotton, 1998). According to this model, advertisers use English as a marked choice to index prestige, innovation, and global orientation, while Urdu serves as an unmarked choice that maintains cultural familiarity and emotional connection. This interpretation is supported by sociolinguistic research that links code-switching in media to social positioning and audience targeting (Gumperz, 1982; Bhatia, 2004).

Finally, the analysis is informed by identity construction theory, which views identity as fluid, dynamic, and discursively produced through language use (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). From this perspective, identities are not fixed traits but are continuously constructed through repeated linguistic practices. In advertising discourse, code-switching functions as a semiotic resource that constructs both brand identity and consumer identity (Fairclough, 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Urdu–English code-switching in mobile network advertisements is therefore analysed as a strategy that invites consumers to align themselves with identities associated with technological advancement, youthfulness, and global belonging. By integrating structural, social, and discursive perspectives, this theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens for analysing identity construction through bilingual advertising discourse in Pakistan.

Ethical Considerations.

All advertisement materials used in this study are publicly accessible and do not require approval from human subjects for use, as the research relies solely on publicly disseminated ads. Proper citation of sources and respect for copyright have been maintained throughout the documentation and analysis process.

Data Analysis of Jazz Advertisements
English Transcription of the Advertisement 1
Jazz – "Dunya Ko Bataa Do"
Girl 1: So, where are you from?
Girl 2: Pakistan.
Girl 1: Oh, Pakistan…
Girl 2: Brother, if people are only told bad news, then they will think Pakistan is bad.
Brother: We have to do something.
Father: People go abroad, and you came back to Pakistan?
Girl: Yes, only because people talk badly about Pakistan everywhere.
Girl (continuing): So that we can tell the world that Pakistan is not less than anyone.
(They begin making videos of people across Pakistan using Jazz internet.)
Voice-over / Tagline: Tell the world.
On screen: Dunya Ko Bataa Do
(Videos show different Pakistani realities and social issues shared through the Jazz network.)

Analysis

This advertisement clearly demonstrates how Urdu–English code-switching is employed in mobile network advertising in Pakistan, fulfilling the first research

objective. English is used in the opening interaction ("So, where are you from?" "Oh, Pakistan…") to represent a global conversational space and external perception. Urdu is then used for emotionally charged and ideological statements such as *"sirf buri khabrein hi batayi jaati hain"* and *"Pakistan kisi se kam nahi"*. This shift shows how English functions as a language of global judgment, while Urdu serves as the language of emotional truth, resistance, and national voice.

In terms of the second research objective, the advertisement strongly contributes to identity construction through code-switching. English indexes how Pakistan is viewed by the outside world, often with suspicion or negativity. Urdu, on the other hand, constructs an internal collective identity rooted in pride, responsibility, and belonging. The decision of the girl to return to Pakistan is linguistically framed in Urdu, signalling emotional commitment and national affiliation. Through this contrast, the ad constructs Pakistani identity as misunderstood globally but resilient and self-aware locally.

The use of Jazz internet as a medium to share videos symbolically positions the brand as an enabler of voice and representation. By ending with the Urdu slogan *"Dunya Ko Bataa Do"*, the advertisement blends local language with a globally oriented message. This hybrid linguistic strategy constructs an identity that is both proudly Pakistani and globally connected. Thus, the ad uses Urdu–English code-switching not merely for stylistic appeal but as a deliberate discourse strategy to challenge stereotypes, assert national identity, and align the Jazz brand with empowerment and positive self-representation.

English Transcription of the Advertisement 2
Jazz – "Meri Super Power" (Featuring Saba Qamar)
(The scene opens with Saba Qamar in a casual setting. She unlocks her mobile phone. The screen displays the message: "What is your super power?")
Saba Qamar: Music is my superpower.
(She appears on a video call with a friend.)
Saba Qamar: Connection is my superpower.
Saba Qamar (smiling): Friendship is my superpower.
(She is riding a bike with a boy, enjoying the ride.)
Saba Qamar: Adventure is my superpower.
(She is shown acting on stage.)
Saba Qamar: Passion is my superpower.
(She plays a mobile game with children.)
Saba Qamar: Enjoyment is my superpower.
(She is jogging and boxing.)
Saba Qamar: Determination is my superpower.
(Final scene.)
Saba Qamar: Every moment is my superpower.
Voice-over / On-screen: Jazz. My super power.

Analysis
This advertisement illustrates how Urdu–English code-switching is strategically used in mobile network advertising, addressing the first research objective. The repeated use of the English phrase *"super power"* combined with Urdu lexical items such as *meri*, *dosti ki*, *jazbah ki*, and *har lamha ki* creates a hybrid linguistic structure. English

functions as a symbolic language associated with strength, individuality, and global modernity, while Urdu personalises these meanings and anchors them in local emotional and cultural contexts.

Concerning identity construction, the advertisement presents identity as multidimensional, active, and aspirational, fulfilling the second research objective. Through code-switching, the ad constructs a contemporary Pakistani female identity that is confident, independent, socially connected, and physically active. English lexical choices frame the idea of empowerment and capability, while Urdu expressions maintain cultural familiarity and relatability. This combination allows the advertisement to address both global and local audiences simultaneously.

The use of a well-known Pakistani celebrity further reinforces identity alignment between the brand and consumers. By ending with the line *"Jazz, meri super power"*, the brand positions itself as an essential companion in everyday life, capable of empowering users across different social roles and experiences. Overall, Urdu–English code-switching in this advertisement functions as a discourse strategy that constructs a hybrid identity, blending modern global ideals with local cultural values, and positioning Jazz as an enabler of personal and social empowerment.

English Transcription of the Advertisement 3
Jazz – Pakistan's No. 1 Network – Super 4G
(Fast-paced visuals of people using mobile phones in different locations across Pakistan: offices, streets, homes, and outdoor spaces.)
Voice-over:
In today's fast-moving world, staying connected matters.
(Scenes of downloading, video streaming, video calls, and online work.)
Voice-over:
With Jazz Super 4G, experience speed you can trust and coverage you can rely on.
(On-screen text: "Fast Internet. Strong Signals.")
Voice-over:
From cities to remote areas, Jazz connects you everywhere.
(People smiling while using their phones, watching videos, and sharing content.)
Voice-over:
That's why millions choose Jazz.
(On-screen text appears.)
Pakistan's No. 1 Network
Voice-over (closing):
Jazz Super 4G. Stay connected. Stay ahead.
(Jazz logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement demonstrates the strategic use of Urdu–English code-switching and English-dominant discourse in mobile network advertising, directly addressing the first research objective. Although the spoken content is largely in English, the visual context, cultural imagery, and audience targeting clearly situate the message within Pakistan. English terms such as *"Super 4G," "speed," "network,"* and *"stay ahead"* function as markers of technological advancement and global digital culture. The limited or absent use of Urdu suggests a deliberate choice to foreground professionalism, efficiency, and international standards.

In terms of identity construction, the advertisement builds a national yet modern identity, fulfilling the second research objective. By declaring Jazz as *"Pakistan's No. 1 Network"*, the ad combines national pride with global technological competence. English is used to index authority, reliability, and superiority, while Pakistan itself becomes the identity frame through visuals and the explicit national label. This creates an identity where being Pakistani is associated with being digitally advanced and globally competitive.

The brand identity is constructed as powerful, trustworthy, and technologically superior, while the consumer identity is shaped as efficient, connected, and forward-looking. Unlike emotionally driven campaigns such as *"Dunya Ko Bataa Do"*, this advertisement relies on functional identity construction, where speed and reliability become core values. Through English-dominated language use and nationally framed messaging, the advertisement positions Jazz as a symbol of progress and leadership in Pakistan's digital landscape. Thus, language choice in this ad is not neutral but serves as a key discourse strategy for constructing both brand authority and a modern Pakistani identity.

English Transcription of the Advertisement 4
Jazz – Unlock Your Superpower (Short Format)
(High-energy visuals open with stadium lights, crowds cheering, and clips from a major sporting event such as HBL PSL. Young people are shown holding mobile phones, recording moments, and sharing content online.)
On-screen text: Unlock Your Superpower
(Fast cuts show fans watching matches on their phones, live streaming, video calling friends, and sharing highlights.)
Voice-over:
Every moment matters.
(Scenes of young men and women celebrating, using mobile internet in stadiums, cafes, and at home.)
Voice-over:
With Jazz, stay connected to what you love.
(On-screen text: "Fast. Reliable. Powerful.")
Voice-over:
From live matches to real-time sharing, Jazz gives you the power to stay ahead.
(Crowd cheers, selfies, and social media uploads shown on mobile screens.)
Voice-over (closing):
Jazz. Unlock your superpower.
(Jazz logo appears on screen.)

Analysis
This short-format advertisement demonstrates a clear use of English-dominant discourse with symbolic elements of Urdu–English bilingualism, addressing the first research objective. Key phrases such as *"Unlock Your Superpower," "Stay connected,"* and *"Stay ahead"* are presented entirely in English. The absence of Urdu in spoken language suggests a deliberate strategy to associate Jazz with global digital culture, speed, and technological sophistication. English functions here as the language of empowerment, innovation, and modern lifestyle.

In terms of identity construction, the advertisement constructs a youth-centred,

digitally empowered identity, fulfilling the second research objective. The association with national sporting events like HBL PSL provides a local cultural frame, while English language use projects a global, aspirational identity. Viewers are positioned as energetic, socially connected individuals who participate actively in national celebrations through digital platforms. This creates a hybrid identity where local passion and global connectivity coexist.

The repeated use of the metaphor *"superpower"* frames internet connectivity as a source of personal strength and agency. Jazz is positioned not merely as a service provider but as a lifestyle partner that enables users to fully experience, share, and participate in important cultural moments. Through English-dominant language and dynamic visuals, the advertisement constructs both brand identity and consumer identity as powerful, modern, and digitally fluent. Thus, the ad uses language and imagery together to reinforce Jazz's role in empowering contemporary Pakistani youth through connectivity.

Jazz – *Apna Khayal Rakhna* (COVID-19 Awareness Campaign) Advertisement 5 Complete Written Transcription (English)
(Soft background music. Scenes of empty streets, homes, and families.)
Voice-over (calm, caring tone):
In these difficult times, distance has become an act of care.
(A mother washes her hands. A father returns home and sanitises.)
Voice-over:
Apna khayal rakhna sirf apnay liye nahi,
balkeh apnon ke liye bhi zaroori hai.
(Doctors, delivery riders, and shopkeepers shown at work.)
Voice-over:
Stay home. Stay safe.
(A family connects through video calls.)
Voice-over:
Jazz aap ke saath hai,
taakay aap apnon se connected reh saktay hain.
(On-screen text: "Stay Safe. Stay Connected.")
Voice-over (closing):
Apna khayal rakhna.
Jazz.
(Jazz logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement is predominantly Urdu-driven, with very limited and carefully placed English phrases such as *"stay home," "stay safe,"* and *"connected."* The restrained use of English reflects the seriousness of the public-health context. Urdu is used to deliver emotional reassurance, moral responsibility, and collective care, while English functions as a globally recognised health directive. This selective code-switching supports your research objective by showing that language choice changes according to communicative purpose.

From an identity construction perspective, the advertisement positions Jazz users as responsible, caring, and socially aware citizens. Unlike empowerment or lifestyle campaigns, the identity here is grounded in empathy and national solidarity. The

phrase *"apna khayal rakhna"* constructs a moral identity where self-care is framed as a social duty. English phrases are not aspirational in this context but instructional, reinforcing the seriousness of the situation rather than technological superiority.

The campaign also redefines digital connectivity as an emotional and ethical necessity rather than a commercial service. By stating that Jazz helps people remain *connected* while physically apart, the brand aligns itself with social responsibility. Code-switching here is minimised, indicating that Urdu gains dominance when the message prioritises inclusivity, emotional clarity, and public welfare. This finding strengthens your argument that Urdu–English code-switching in Pakistani advertisements is context-sensitive and ideologically motivated rather than merely stylistic.

Analysis of Ufone
Ufone – "Tum Hi Toh Ho" (Humour Campaign) Advertisements 6
Complete Transcription (English)
(A frustrated man is speaking on the phone.)
Man:
Hello? Can you hear me?
(Call drops. He looks annoyed.)
Man:
Yaar, network hi nahi aata!
(Another man appears, smiling.)
Second Man:
Tum Ufone use karte ho?
First Man:
Haan, kyun?
Second Man (laughing):
Bas phir… tum hi toh ho!
(Everyone laughs.)
Voice-over:
Strong network, great offers.
Voice-over (closing):
Ufone. Tum hi toh ho.
(Ufone logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement heavily relies on Urdu humour, with minimal but meaningful English use, such as *network*. Urdu functions as the primary language of interaction, creating familiarity and comic timing. English is used only where a technical explanation is required, keeping the message accessible.

Identity construction here positions the Ufone user as ordinary, self-aware, and humorous. The phrase *"Tum hi toh ho"* turns blame into shared laughter, creating a collective identity rather than an aspirational one. Code-switching helps maintain realism, portraying telecom usage as part of everyday Pakistani life rather than elite digital culture.

Ufone – "Sab Se Sasti Call, Sab Se Pyari Baat" Advertisement 7
Complete Transcription (English)
(A young man talks lovingly on the phone.)

Man:
Bas tumhari awaaz sunni thi.
(His friend interrupts.)
Friend:
Itni lambi call? Balance khatam nahi hota?
Man (smiling):
Ufone hai na.
(On-screen text: "Lowest Call Rates.")
Voice-over:
With the cheapest calls, talk as much as you want.
Voice-over (closing):
Ufone — sab se sasti call, sab se pyari baat.
(Ufone logo appears.)

Analysis

This advertisement foregrounds emotional intimacy as its central theme, presenting mobile communication not as a technical service but as a medium of affection and care. The opening Urdu dialogue *"Bas tumhari awaaz sunni thi"* immediately establishes a romantic and emotionally expressive context. Urdu is used deliberately here because it carries emotional warmth and cultural familiarity, allowing the audience to connect with the sentiment on a personal level. The friend's interruption introduces the practical concern of cost, which is then resolved through the simple and confident response *"Ufone hai na."* This line subtly positions Ufone as a reliable and affordable solution without disrupting the emotional tone of the scene.

From a code-switching perspective, English is almost entirely absent, except through the implied concept of *call*, which is already lexicalised in everyday Pakistani speech. This minimal use of English shows that when emotional connection is the primary focus, Urdu becomes the dominant language of persuasion. The identity constructed is that of a romantic, emotionally expressive Pakistani user who values meaningful conversation over expense. By linking affordability with emotional fulfilment, Ufone constructs an identity in which technology supports relationships rather than intruding upon them. The advertisement thus reinforces Ufone's brand image as people-centred and emotionally grounded.

Ufone 4G – "Internet Aesa Ho Toh Kya Baat Hai" Advertisement 8
Complete Transcription (English)
(A man angrily waits for a video to load.)
Man:
Yeh video chal kyun nahi rahi?
(Buffering icon spins.)
Friend:
Tumhara internet slow hai.
(Scene changes to the same man using Ufone 4G.)
Man (excited):
Wah! Ab maza aa gaya!
(Video plays smoothly.)
Voice-over:
Fast speed. Smooth browsing.

Voice-over (closing):
Ufone 4G — internet aesa ho toh kya baat hai.
(Ufone logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement centres on a common digital frustration: slow internet. The initial Urdu dialogue *"Yeh video chal kyun nahi rahi?"* expresses irritation in a casual, everyday manner, making the situation immediately relatable. Urdu here functions as the language of emotional response and complaint. The friend's statement *"Tumhara internet slow hai"* provides a direct explanation, keeping the interaction realistic and conversational. The shift to Ufone 4G marks a turning point, and the user's excited reaction *"Wah! Ab maza aa gaya!"* signals satisfaction and relief.

English lexical items such as *internet*, *video*, and *speed* are used to index technological performance and efficiency. This functional code-switching mirrors actual user speech in Pakistan, where English terms are commonly used for digital and technological concepts. The identity constructed is that of a digitally engaged but easily frustrated user who seeks smooth and reliable connectivity. Ufone positions itself as a practical solution that transforms everyday irritation into enjoyment. The use of code-switching enhances authenticity and trust, reinforcing the idea that Ufone understands real user experiences.

Ufone – "Tum Hi Toh Ho" (Celebrity Version) Advertisement 9
Complete Transcription (English)
(A celebrity interacts with people on the street.)
Celebrity:
Call drop ho gayi?
Man:
Haan, Ufone use karta hoon.
Celebrity (laughing):
Bas phir… tum hi toh ho!
(Crowd laughs.)
Voice-over:
Millions trust Ufone every day.
Voice-over (closing):
Ufone. Tum hi toh ho.
(Logo appears.)

Analysis
In this version of the campaign, the inclusion of a celebrity adds visibility and credibility while maintaining linguistic simplicity. The celebrity's question *"Call drop ho gayi?"* reflects a shared everyday experience, immediately reducing social distance between the celebrity and the public. The response *"Haan, Ufone use karta hoon"* keeps the interaction informal and grounded in ordinary speech. The recurring humorous line *"Bas phir… tum hi toh ho!"* reinforces the campaign's light-hearted tone.
Urdu remains the dominant language, while English appears only indirectly through the word *call*. This limited code-switching maintains accessibility and humour. The identity constructed here is collective rather than individual, suggesting that call drops

are a shared experience and not a personal failure. By allowing the celebrity to speak in the same linguistic style as ordinary people, Ufone presents itself as a network for everyone, not just elite or urban users. The advertisement strengthens brand relatability and positions Ufone as socially inclusive and self-aware.

Ufone – "Behtareen Internet Offer" (Data Packages Campaign) Advertisement 10
Complete Transcription (English)
(Young people taking selfies and making videos.)
Girl:
Upload ho gaya!
Boy:
Streaming bilkul smooth hai.
(On-screen text: "Best Internet Offers.")
Voice-over:
With Ufone internet packages, enjoy nonstop browsing.
Voice-over (closing):
Ufone — behtareen internet offer.
(Ufone logo appears.)

Analysis
His advertisement targets younger audiences and reflects contemporary urban speech patterns. The utterances *"Upload ho gaya"* and *"Streaming bilkul smooth hai"* demonstrate natural code-switching, where English digital verbs are embedded within Urdu sentence structures. This linguistic mixing mirrors how young Pakistanis commonly speak, especially in digital and social media contexts. Urdu provides grammatical framing, while English supplies technical vocabulary.
The identity constructed is that of a socially active, digitally fluent youth who is comfortable navigating global platforms while remaining culturally rooted. English indexes modernity, technological competence, and global connectivity, whereas Urdu maintains cultural intimacy and social belonging. Through this balanced code-switching, Ufone positions itself as a modern yet locally grounded brand that understands youth culture and digital lifestyles. The advertisement thus reinforces Ufone's image as relevant, accessible, and youth-friendly**.**

Analysis of Zong Advertisements
Zong 4G – "Let's Get Digital" Advertisement 11
Complete Transcription (English)
(Fast-paced visuals of young people using smartphones.)
Voice-over:
It's time to move forward.
(Scenes of video calls, online classes, and mobile gaming.)
Voice-over:
With Zong 4G, experience faster internet and stronger connections.
(On-screen text: "Fast Speed. Strong Signals.")
Voice-over (closing):
Zong 4G. Let's get digital.
(Zong logo appears.)

Analysis

This advertisement is clearly English-dominant, which immediately signals a forward-looking and globally oriented brand identity. Phrases such as *"move forward," "faster internet,"* and *"let's get digital"* frame digitalisation as progress and inevitability. The absence of Urdu dialogue suggests that the target audience is already familiar with English-dominated digital discourse, particularly urban youth and professionals.

From an identity construction perspective, Zong positions its users as future-ready, confident, and technologically competent individuals. Unlike brands that rely on emotional appeal or humour, Zong presents digital life as a norm rather than a novelty. The limited use of Urdu indicates that English itself functions as a symbol of modernity and efficiency. Code-switching here is minimal because English alone is sufficient to construct an identity of digital sophistication.

Zong 4G – "Har Sim Zong 4G" Advertisement 12

Complete Transcription (English)

(People in different locations are checking their phones.)

Man:

Yahan bhi signals hain!

Woman:

Har jagah internet chal raha hai.

(On-screen text: "Nationwide Coverage.")

Voice-over:

With Zong 4G, every SIM delivers powerful connectivity.

Voice-over (closing):

Har SIM Zong 4G.

(Zong logo appears.)

Analysis

This advertisement shifts toward a more Urdu-centred narrative, focusing on accessibility and nationwide coverage. Urdu expressions such as *"har jagah internet chal raha hai"* emphasise ease and reassurance, making the message understandable to a broad audience. English technical terms like *SIM* and *internet* are smoothly integrated, reflecting everyday bilingual usage in Pakistan.

The identity constructed is that of a practical and mobile Pakistani user who expects reliable connectivity regardless of location. Rather than promoting aspiration or lifestyle, the ad highlights dependability and reach. Code-switching serves a functional purpose, ensuring clarity while maintaining relatability. Zong is positioned as a trustworthy network that works consistently across the country.

Zong – "Aisi Internet Service" Advertisement 13

Complete Transcription (English)

(A man frustrated with slow loading.)

Man:

Yeh net phir slow ho gaya!

(Switches to Zong.)

Man (relieved):

Ab kaam smooth ho raha hai.

Voice-over:

High-speed internet that keeps up with you.
Voice-over (closing):
Zong 4G — aisi internet service.
(Zong logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement draws on a familiar experience of slow internet to establish immediate identification with the viewer. The complaint *"Yeh net phir slow ho gaya"* uses Urdu to express frustration naturally and conversationally. The shift to English descriptors, such as *internet* and *smooth,* highlights the technical improvement offered by Zong.
The identity constructed here is efficiency-oriented and task-focused. The user is shown as someone who relies on the internet for work and productivity rather than entertainment alone. Zong positions itself as a solution to everyday digital problems. Code-switching mirrors real-life speech, reinforcing authenticity and strengthening the brand's image as practical and problem-solving.

Zong – "Internet Ka Naya Andaaz" Advertisement 14
Complete Transcription (English)
(Montage of users streaming, studying, and working.)
Voice-over:
Your life moves fast.
(On-screen text: "High-Speed 4G.")
Voice-over:
So your internet should too.
Voice-over (closing):
Zong 4G — internet ka naya andaaz.
(Zong logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement combines English framing with Urdu metaphorical expression. English sentences emphasise speed and performance, while the Urdu phrase *"naya andaaz"* adds cultural familiarity and stylistic appeal. This balanced code-switching allows Zong to maintain a modern tone without distancing itself from local audiences. The identity constructed is that of a modern multitasker, someone who moves seamlessly between work, education, and entertainment. Zong presents itself as an enabler of fast-paced contemporary life rather than an emotional or lifestyle companion. Code-switching here works to bridge global digital values with local linguistic comfort.

Zong 4G – "Har Pakistani Ke Liye" Advertisement 15
Complete Transcription (English)
(Scenes of students, shopkeepers, and families.)
Voice-over:
Different lives. Different needs.
(On-screen text: "Affordable Internet.")
Voice-over:
But one network for everyone.

Voice-over (closing):
Zong 4G — har Pakistani ke liye.
(Zong logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement foregrounds national inclusivity, using the Urdu phrase *"har Pakistani"* to construct a collective identity. The visuals of diverse social groups reinforce the idea that Zong serves everyone. English appears mainly through technical references such as *4G* and the *internet*, ensuring technological credibility.
The identity constructed is collective, inclusive, and utilitarian. Unlike Jazz's emotional nationalism or Telenor's lifestyle emphasis, Zong's approach is restrained and service-oriented. Code-switching balances national belonging with modern digital access, positioning Zong as a universal network rather than a brand tied to specific social identities.

Analysis of Telenor Advertisement
 Telenor – MORE se Zyada Data / Calls (4G Benefits) Advertisement 16
Complete Transcription (English)
(Opening scene shows a young man scrolling on his phone while travelling.)
Voice-over:
Why settle for less when you can get more?
(Quick cuts of video streaming, voice calls, and social media usage.)
Voice-over:
With Telenor 4G, enjoy more data and more calls.
(On-screen text: "MORE Data. MORE Calls.")
User (excited):
More speed, more fun!
(Friends talking on the phone, laughing, and sharing content.)
Voice-over (closing):
Telenor 4G. MORE se Zyada.
(Telenor logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement uses Urdu–English code-switching in a compact and highly strategic manner. The phrase *"MORE se Zyada"* blends English (*MORE*) with Urdu (*se zyada*, meaning *more than*), creating a bilingual slogan that is catchy and easily memorable. English functions as a marker of quantity and technological advancement, while Urdu grounds the message in everyday conversational style. This fulfils the first research objective by showing how code-switching is employed to emphasise service benefits.
From an identity perspective, the ad constructs the user as value-conscious yet digitally aware. The repeated use of *MORE* associates Telenor users with abundance, smart choices, and efficiency. Urdu softens the promotional tone and makes the message relatable. The hybrid language thus constructs an identity that is practical, modern, and socially connected, aligning the brand with everyday Pakistani digital needs.

Telenor – "Ab Dil Khol Kay YouTube Dekhain" Advertisement 17
Complete Transcription (English)
(A family sits together watching YouTube videos on their mobile phones.)
Voice-over:
Now watch YouTube without worries.
(On-screen text: "YouTube Packages.")
User:
Now I can watch freely!
(Friends watching music videos, vlogs, and tutorials.)
Voice-over:
With Telenor YouTube packages, enjoy unlimited entertainment.
Voice-over (closing):
Now watch with an open heart.
Telenor 4G.
(Telenor logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement relies on Urdu-dominant discourse with selective English usage, particularly the word *YouTube*. Urdu phrases such as *"Ab dil khol kay"* express emotional freedom and comfort, while English represents the digital platform. This demonstrates how code-switching operates functionally, where English terms represent technology, and Urdu conveys emotion and accessibility.
In terms of identity construction, the ad presents the consumer as entertainment-loving, relaxed, and family-oriented. Urdu strengthens cultural closeness, while English links users to global digital content. The identity constructed here is not elite or competitive but inclusive and emotionally grounded, showing how Telenor positions itself as a facilitator of joyful everyday digital life.

Telenor 4G – "Jo Har Pakistani Chahay" Advertisement 18
Complete Transcription (English)
(Scenes of people from different regions of Pakistan: students, workers, families.)
Voice-over:
Everyone wants something different.
(Students attending online classes, families video calling.)
Voice-over:
But every Pakistani wants strong signals and fast internet.
(On-screen text: "Strong Network. Wide Coverage.")
Voice-over:
That's why Telenor 4G gives you what every Pakistani wants.
Voice-over (closing):
Telenor 4G — Jo Har Pakistani Chahay.
(Telenor logo appears.)

Analysis
This advertisement is Urdu-centred, with English used only for technical expressions like *4G* and the *internet*. Urdu functions as the primary identity-building language, constructing a collective national identity. English remains instrumental rather than expressive.

Regarding identity construction, the ad builds a shared national identity, positioning Telenor as a network for everyone. The phrase *"har Pakistani"* is inclusive and unifying. Code-switching here serves to balance national belonging with technological credibility, reinforcing the idea that modern connectivity is part of everyday Pakistani life**.**

Telenor Billboard – "Naa Daien, Naa Baien, Seedha Telenor 4G per Aaein!" Advertisement 19
Visual Transcription (English)
Billboard Text:
Not right, not left — come straight to Telenor 4G!
(Telenor logo displayed prominently.)

Analysis
This billboard uses Urdu sentence structure with English technical terminology, a classic example of code-mixing in outdoor advertising. Urdu phrases *"naa daien, naa baien"* create humour and familiarity, while *Telenor 4G* anchors the message in technological authority.
In terms of identity, the billboard constructs the consumer as decisive and smart, someone who avoids confusion and chooses the best option directly. The casual Urdu tone suggests confidence and friendliness, while English maintains professional credibility. This combination strengthens brand competitiveness and positions Telenor as the obvious and reliable choice.

Telenor – *"Telenor ho toh #Woohooo!"* (2024) Advertisement 20
Complete Transcription
(Reconstructed by the researcher based on repeated viewing of the official advertisement on Telenor Pakistan's YouTube channel. The ad relies heavily on music, chants, and visual energy rather than long dialogues.)
(Upbeat music begins. Fast cuts of young people dancing, laughing, hanging out, and using smartphones.)
Voice-over (energetic):
When you've got Telenor 4G, every moment turns into Woohooo!
(Friends recording videos, making reels, and posting content.)
Friend 1 (excited):
More data, more fun!
Friend 2 (laughing):
Let's keep the party going!
(Scenes of street football, night hangouts, selfies, vlogging, and instant uploads.)
Voice-over:
Turn your GBs into fun and enjoy non-stop entertainment on Telenor 4G.
(Quick shots of fast-loading apps, video calls, and social media reactions.)
Group chant:
Woohooo!
Voice-over (closing):
Telenor ho toh — Woohooo!
(Telenor logo appears. Music fades out.)

Advertisement Analysis

This advertisement directly fulfils the objective of examining how telecom brands construct youth-oriented digital identities through language and visuals. Unlike Jazz's empowerment-based discourse or Zong's performance-driven messaging, Telenor relies on emotion, playfulness, and collective enjoyment. The repeated chant "Woohooo" functions as an emotional marker rather than an informational one, signalling excitement, freedom, and social connection. Linguistically, the ad uses simple English phrases such as "more data, more fun" and "keep the party going," which are short, rhythmic, and easily chantable. This minimal use of language shifts the focus from explanation to experience. English here works as a global youth code, associated with pop culture, social media, and entertainment, while the absence of heavy Urdu suggests confidence in a digitally fluent audience.

In terms of identity construction, the Telenor user is portrayed as young, expressive, socially active, and focused on entertainment. The network is not framed as a tool for productivity or necessity but as a facilitator of joy and shared moments. This aligns with Telenor's broader brand objective of positioning itself as a fun-first digital lifestyle partner rather than a purely technical service provider. From a discourse perspective, the slogan "Telenor ho toh #Woohooo!" creates a cause-and-effect relationship between network ownership and emotional satisfaction. The network becomes synonymous with happiness and celebration, reinforcing brand loyalty through affect rather than functionality. This strategy clearly differentiates Telenor from competitors by anchoring its identity in youth culture, spontaneity, and digital play.

Findings

The analysis of mobile network advertisements in Pakistan reveals that Urdu–English code-switching is a systematic and purposeful strategy used to construct specific consumer identities rather than a random stylistic choice. Across all four networks, English is consistently associated with technology, speed, and digital competence, while Urdu is used to convey emotion, humour, cultural belonging, and national identity. This patterned distribution confirms that language choice in advertising reflects broader sociolinguistic hierarchies in Pakistani society, where English indexes modernity and Urdu signals social intimacy and shared cultural values.

The findings further show that each telecom brand employs code-switching differently to project a distinct brand identity. Jazz predominantly constructs an empowered and responsible national identity, using Urdu to express emotion and collective pride and English to frame digital action and global connectivity. Campaigns such as *Dunya Ko Bataa Do* position users as active storytellers who challenge negative representations of Pakistan through digital media. Telenor adopts a lifestyle-oriented and youth-focused identity, combining casual Urdu expressions with English digital terminology to portray fun, freedom, and everyday enjoyment. In contrast, Ufone relies heavily on Urdu-based humour and satire, constructing an identity rooted in ordinariness and self-awareness, where English appears only as functional vocabulary. Zong, however, uses comparatively more English, constructing a tech-savvy and efficiency-driven identity, with Urdu mainly serving an inclusive and explanatory role.

Another significant finding is that code-switching operates as a marker of social accessibility and audience targeting. Advertisements aimed at youth and urban users

show a higher frequency of English lexical items, particularly related to social media, gaming, and streaming. In contrast, ads emphasising affordability, nationwide coverage, or emotional connection favour Urdu-dominant discourse. This indicates that code-switching is used to align linguistic choices with the perceived social class, age group, and digital literacy of the target audience. Rather than excluding non-English speakers, these advertisements strategically balance both languages to maintain broad appeal.

The findings demonstrate that Urdu–English code-switching in Pakistani mobile network advertisements plays a central role in shaping consumer identity by linking language choice with values such as empowerment, humour, inclusivity, and technological progress. The hybrid linguistic style reflects contemporary Pakistani sociolinguistic realities, where bilingualism is not only normalised but also commodified to create brand meaning and social alignment. These findings support the view that advertising discourse actively participates in identity construction by framing digital connectivity as both a cultural and social experience, not merely a technological service.

Conclusion

The analysis of Zong 4G advertisements demonstrates a consistent brand strategy that emphasises reliability, digital advancement, and wide accessibility across Pakistan. By carefully combining Urdu for cultural connection and English for technical clarity, Zong presents itself as a network aligned with everyday realities rather than emotional or entertainment-based appeals. The constructed user identity is practical, efficient, and future-oriented, reflecting confidence in digital literacy and modern communication needs. Through themes of coverage, speed, and inclusivity, Zong positions itself as a dependable service provider that supports diverse users and integrates seamlessly into contemporary Pakistani life.

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