

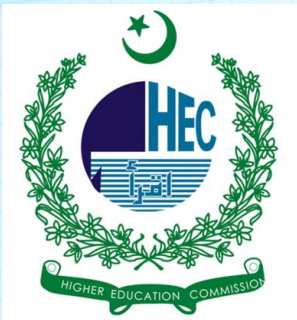
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Instagram English: How Pakistani Businesses Use Language to Attract Customers



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Abstract

This study examines the use of language by the Pakistani companies on Instagram in attracting and engaging customers, focusing on Urdu–English code-switching, Roman Urdu, multimodal communication and persuasive moves. It draws on the theories of World Englishes, critical discourse analysis and multimodal semiotics and examines how commercial users employ a range of linguistic resources to construct brand selves which are culturally familiar, but also readable to broader audiences. Thus, this study investigates three dominant trends with model sample material representing 30 Instagram captions, businesses' Urdu and English content (bios, comments, hashtags), and the multimodal combination of emojis and commands, urgency signals, and politeness selection that collectively create convincing messages directed towards the buyer, 15 businesses in five areas (apparel, cuisine, beauty, electronics, services). The results suggest that Instagram English in Pakistan is a language variety on its own, a register in an outer circle variety that is shaped by features of Instagram, youth-oriented language use, and the sociolinguistic context of urban Pakistan. These results contribute to debates related to World Englishes online, demonstrates how language code-switching can be used as a promotional tool in online commerce in South Asia, and offers sustainable insights for businesses working in multilingual online environments. The results have also implications for sociolinguistic frameworks and digital marketing research and future corpus-driven and ethnographic studies.

Keywords: English on Instagram, Pakistani enterprises, online marketing language, World Englishes, and language alternation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The rapidly growing nature of social media commerce has created new linguistic environments in Pakistan where English, Urdu, and mixed language varieties are mixing for commerce. Instagram has become an essential platform for small and mid-sized businesses looking to reach tech-savvy audience in the country. It has already passed 12 million users by 2025. Unlike traditional forms of promotion, Instagram is about images, brief messaging and interaction, and has potential applications that affect how businesses communicate with audiences. This represents a significant sociolinguistic challenge for Pakistani companies using Instagram, as they must communicate with bilingual and multilingual audiences who expect messages to be modern, globally appealing, and commercially persuasive while simultaneously reflecting local cultural identity and authenticity. Such audiences frequently code-switch between English and Urdu in their everyday online interactions to ensure linguistic flexibility (i.e., an essential strategy for effective customer engagement). This study aims to examine how

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Pakistani companies utilize language to construct persuasive and culturally relevant brand voice strategies for attracting, engaging, and retaining customers on Instagram.

Past research demonstrates that language in social media is not a neutral channel but a strategic move. The study of online discourse shows that companies manipulate linguistic features like vocabulary choice, languages breaks, and formality to suit to the expectations of their audience and business goals. In the context of Pakistani online spaces, researchers have observed extensive bilingual use of English and Urdu in various online platforms with English often denoting contemporary perspectives, education, and global connections (Shah et al., 2025). Research on Instagram promotion indicates that language choices significantly influence various user engagement metrics, such as the perception of brand reliability and purchasing intentions with English captions and hashtags frequently correlating with higher engagement scores (Kamran Mirza et al., 2023). There is, however, a lack of studies on small medium enterprises (SMEs) in other industries as many studies focus on the language of young people (Butt et al., 2025; Hajra et al., 2025; Mehmood et al., 2023) the speech of influencers (Jamali et al., 2022; Kamran Mirza et al., 2023) or specific industries such as clothing and travel. Furthermore, the effect of switching between Urdu and English is a phenomenon studied in other contexts of advertising but is not sufficiently explained in theory by the Pakistani businesses on Instagram which opt for the use of English alone.

This study argues that Pakistani companies employ English purposefully as a sociolinguistic tool to demonstrate modernity, desired self-image and market legitimacy and in doing so the companies attract customers who equate modernity, self-image and market legitimacy with English ability, reliability and international standards. So, it is considered that the combination of a sociolinguistic approach with digital discourse analysis can explain the situation of English in Pakistani Instagram marketing, as language choices are not merely about conveying meaning, but also about shaping actions that create brand identities associated with upward mobility and cosmopolitan values. This is particularly effective if businesses want to distinguish themselves from their local competitors, appeal to middle-class customers and convey a professional image that transcends local and vernacular associations. These choices in language reflect broader patterns of what has been termed “linguistic glocalization”, that is, a process whereby the global resources of language are adapted to local business contexts.

But another perspective claims that Urdu or the blending of Urdu with English is equally effective as English in attracting Pakistani viewers, particularly because it is local and culturally relatable rather than being cosmopolitan. According to (Saman Ismail & Syed Waqarul Hasan, 2025) using the mother tongue in micro-influencer campaigns significantly increased interaction and purchasing intent of Pakistani followers which suggests that language promotes familiarity and trust. Similarly, (Javid & Habib, 2026) found that KFC Pakistan played with both

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languages to achieve an international brand image while retaining a local cultural connection to the audience to appeal to the bilingual consumers running multiple linguistic selves. This is further supported by showing that many young people in Pakistan are now embracing blended styles of communication on platforms like Instagram and TikTok where they integrate English words into Urdu grammar and include local slang to create a truly authentic and relatable content for their peers (Nida Hajra & Dr. Aftab Akram, 2025). However, using only English might alienate readers who interpret the message as being elitist or disconnected from the real world, which could limit the success of reaching people who speak English as an additional language.

When you put all these together, you will see that the choice of language for the online commerce of Pakistan is a complicated and situation-dependent decision. Factors such as target audience, product type, brand positioning, and the communicative affordances of each platform significantly influence these linguistic choices. Although English is often associated with modernity and global standards, its effectiveness depends on consumers' linguistic repertoires, cultural preferences, and the specific commercial objectives that companies seek to achieve. The conflict between the aspirational cue of English and the authenticity cue of local is also echoed in the broader language landscape of postcolonial South Asia where English is high status while regionally based languages are culturally dominant. This layered image demonstrates the need to be mindful and evidence-based in understanding the language options that companies use on Instagram as well as how different consumer segments respond to them and what factors affect their decisions.

Despite the rising academic research on the social media language and promotion in Pakistan, there are still significant gaps in previous research. First, there is the absence of a dedicated corpus-driven project to map the linguistic features of small and medium businesses' Instagram English, irrespective of the field of business, and across diverse contexts which means that actual use patterns are not clear. Following this, there is a lack of practical analysis of how caption design, the use of hashtags and word choice affect the acquisition of customers and the construction of brand identity on Instagram (Kamran Mirza et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is little consumer-reaction evidence linking the language features to measurable engagement indicators, such as likes, comments, shares, and buying behaviors. Furthermore, while the effect of the switch between languages has been researched in promotional messages, the principles behind selecting only English or two languages have not been sufficiently studied from the owners' and marketers' point of view. Finally, previous research has methodological limitations, including the use of small samples, focusing on a specific discipline, and a lack of longitudinal data. Collectively, these limitations highlight the need of a research employing multiple methods to examine the use of Instagram English in Pakistani business context.

1.2 Research Questions

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This study is guided by three core research questions:

1. Which language switching and mixing is observed in Pakistani business Instagram posts, bios and comments?
2. How do the companies make effective marketing messages in Pakistan with the help of Roman Urdu, emojis, hashtags, and other multimodal tools?
3. Which discourse techniques (commands, signals of urgency, politeness expressions, identity-based appeals) do Pakistani businesses use to involve customers, and how do these techniques connect with mixed and hybrid language use?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study provides valuable contribution to a number of groups who have an interest in the subject. Linguists and sociolinguists acquire a better understanding of the global use of English on the internet, focusing on the reinforcement and challenges of the postcolonial rankings of the English language in the business-oriented social media talk (Nida Hajra & Dr. Aftab Akram, 2025; Shah et al., 2025). The findings will throw light on the role of English in the promotional campaigns of Instagram which will complement the research of online discourse, marketization of language, and beliefs in language. Marketing researchers and working professionals will gain data-driven understanding of the effectiveness of language-based approaches on Instagram to inform decision making and adaptation of content, audience targeting and positioning of brands in multilingual context. In Pakistan, small and medium businesses, particularly women entrepreneurs, are increasingly using Instagram as their primary channel for conducting business can benefit from research driven guidance on how to improve language choices and enhance engagement and conversions from interest to sales. Furthermore, the results can be used to design assistance programs that support businesses in running the complex online business landscape in Pakistan and facilitate inclusive economic growth for diverse language groups to enhance the cultural and linguistic dimensions of economic activities in the country. The study, connecting sociolinguistic concepts to marketing practice, helps fill a critical gap between what is known in the field of language and technology, and what is known in the field of marketing in the global South.

2. Literature Review

Social media platforms have revolutionized the way businesses market to consumers by providing a digital environment that is rich in visuals and offers a significant interaction that extends beyond geographical and language barriers (Shah et al., 2025). Among the most effective platforms today for digital marketing is the Instagram which focuses on visual storytelling and engagement with caption-based content. This is particularly true in developing economies where mobile-first internet usage is leading the growth of e-commerce (Ullah et al., 2023). In this context, English serves not as a language of communication but as a tool that businesses use to shape their brand image, exude cosmopolitanism,

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and resonate with aspirational consumers (Shah et al., 2025).

The Pakistani English as an outer circle variety of English shows systematic characteristics like Urdu lexical borrowing, phonological transfer, syntactic patterns, and so on, in the (McEntee-Atalianis, 2008) framework of World Englishes. Urdu-English hybridity has been noted in recent scholarship with the use of code-switching, code-mixing and translanguaging now becoming the norm in digital environments. For example, (Syed, 2019) showed that Urduization is a structural phenomenon of the Pakistani English and Urdu lexical items serve as cultural integrant that carries local identity. The code switching types of Urdu-English in Pakistani English were defined by (Abeer Zainab et al., 2024), which revealed that Urdu-English code switching functions in different ways and affects different aspects of communication and culture. (Abeer Zainab et al., 2024), classified the types of Urdu-English code switching in Pakistani English which revealed that the code switching of Urdu-English has different effects on communication and cultural expression and is used in different ways. (Zafar Nazeer Awan et al., 2025), also claimed that codeswitching and code-mixing were key sociolinguistic characteristics of present-day Pakistani English, thereby adding to existing theories of bilingual variety formation.

The speed of these changes has been driven by digital platforms. (Shakir & Deuber, 2024), revealed that in computer-mediated communication (CMC), South Asian internet users frequently employ localized tags and code switching in order to establish a localised presence in genres that are predominantly English. A 2022 study of multilingual Pakistanis on Twitter found intra-sentential switching is more frequent than inter-sentential switching, and the dominant type of switching was at the clause level.

In a study,(Nida Hajra & Dr. Aftab Akram, 2025) reported that youth in Pakistan employ mixed languages on Instagram and TikTok for appeal and humor by viewing the use of mixed languages as an expression of identity and creativity in the digital age. During the COVID-19 era,(Ahmad et al., 2023), used translanguaging approaches with Pakistani social media, and discovered that there is an overlap between language boundaries and people use the social media to convey information as well as to introduce new concepts.(Hafsa khan et al., 2025), found that the platform design has an impact on language choices, that is, Instagram is more English aesthetic, while Facebook is locally grounded in bilingual communication.

In the commercial area, linguistic hybridity has strategic purposes. (Shah et al., 2025), critical discourse analysis (CDA) of Facebook ads has found that Urdu represents cultural identity and English represents modernity and technological savviness resulting in hybrid youth identities in inter-discursive combination of nationalism and consumerism. et al. (2026) found that intentional English-Urdu code switching occurred in KFC Pakistan's digital advertisement which revealed strategic bilingual approach to brand communication. (Kamran Mirza et al., 2023) analysed the register variation in the captions on Instagram posts by Pakistani

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influencers, and demonstrated how linguistic variation works as identity cues and audience engagement in commercialized settings. (Rijal et al., 2022) discovered that code-mixing, abbreviations, and nonstandard forms of interaction occur in Instagram commerce where the sellers and buyers engage in order negotiation and establish informal customer relationships. (Riaz, 2019) studied Pakistani TV commercials between 2011 and 2015 and found that English is used for fashion, ease and technological indexing in marketing language.

Despite this increasing number of studies, there are still some gaps. One of the key gaps of most research is its emphasis on influencers, celebrities, or large corporate brands which leaves SMEs under-researched. Second, although code switching is well documented, the persuasive roles played by linguistic hybridity in Instagram e-commerce are under-theorized. Thirdly, the combination of text, emoji, hashtag, and the visual aspects in commercial Instagram posts has been under-explored in Pakistan. This study fills these gaps by looking at the use of linguistic and multimodal resources by businesses in various sectors to engage followers on Instagram.

This study helps to advance three scholarly conversations. First, it contributes to the theory of World Englishes by documenting a register of Pakistani English in the context of commerce and the digital world. Second, it draws on CDA and multimodal semiotics to analyse Instagram commerce, and shows how linguistic and other choices shape the consumer subjectivities and brand identities. Third, it provides business and marketers with valuable insights into the multilingual digital world in South Asia and beyond.

3. Methodology

This study convers three lenses: World Englishes; CDA; and multimodal semiotics. Together, these strategies enable a detailed study of the ways in which companies in Pakistan use word and other sign systems for the effect they produce in their promotional texts on Instagram.

World Englishes is based on (McEntee-Atalianis, 2008) which suggests that English is not a single uniform system, but rather a variety of forms shaped by local language environments, colonised histories and cultural habits. The three circles of (McEntee-Atalianis, 2008) model are inner circle forms, outer circle forms, and expanding circle forms respectively. Pakistani English belongs to the outer circle and has Urdu and other local language influences on sound, vocabulary, grammar and interactional features. The usages of the outer circle are not deficient imitations of the native usages, but are legitimate and functional varieties that have their own norms. (Bolton, 2008) expanded the perspective in the focus on the continuous change of World Englishes in the globalized world by emphasizing the rapid increase of contact, mixing, and new forms of communication via the internet. (Ridge, 2011) traced the role of the web in the development of new English types and styles, and argued that the web changes the accepted norms and common usage of English.

Recent studies have moved towards exploring World Englishes in online contexts.

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However, communication via computers creates new sociolinguistic fields in which individuals negotiate their identities, group memberships, and conventions with language switching, spelling and multimodal strategies (Androutsopoulos, 2015). (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014) examined English in social networking environments and demonstrated how it is used with other languages to perform cosmopolitanism, local affiliation, and blended identities. In the case of Pakistan, (Syed, 2019) demonstrated that Urduization is embedded in Pakistani English, and Urdu words function as cultural integrators. Switching and mixing codes were also found to be the focus of Pakistani English by the studies of (Abeer Zainab et al., 2024) and (Zafar Nazeer Awan et al., 2025) to enrich theoretical explanations of the formation of bilingual varieties. Based on these observations, the present study examines the nature of Pakistani Instagram English as a recognisable register in the outer circle variety shaped by commercial interests and the affordances of Instagram.

(Fairclough, 2013) stated that CDA studies how language constructs and maintains social relations, ideologies and power structures. The three-part model studied by (Fairclough, 2013) looks at discourse in the text (language features), discursive practices (how texts are made and adopted) and social practices (the broader cultural and social environment). CDA is particularly suited to the study of promotional conversation because the linguistic decisions made in the process shape the consumers' identities, brand meanings and market connections. CDA is useful in online advertising for revealing the way in which businesses shape the product's language, target their aspirations, and portray the purchase as a natural occurrence. (Shah et al., 2025) analysed Urdu and English in social media advertisements in Pakistan and reveal that Urdu expresses cultural membership while English expresses modernity by creating mixed youth identities through interdiscursive formations of nationalism and consumerism. (Shah et al., 2025) used CDA to analyse the alternation of languages in the online exchanges of Pakistani entertainers as a purposeful communicative move that indicates social stance. Through the analysis of CDA in Instagram captions, profiles, and comment threads, this study investigates how mixed language use forms persuasive appeals consumers, and constructs the brand identities.

Multimodal semiotics (Brandt, 2004) takes discourse analysis beyond verbal language to incorporate some additional modes of meaning-making, such as visual and spatial. (Brandt, 2004) believe that meaning arises from the interaction and alignment of a number of semiotic resources each with its own possibilities and constraints. Multimodality is key in online contexts, that is, Instagram items are rich in meaning, consisting of text, images, emoji, tags, and interaction. Hashtags can also be used to show opinion and to structure content, for example; emoji can change tone, show how one feels or can be used to replace words. (de Zoysa & Appadurai, 1998) conceptualized the global cultural economy as the "intersecting, uneven flows of ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples" against the backdrop of the creation of new

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blends of cultural forms. Such flows can be seen in commercial activity on Instagram in which businesses in Pakistan are tapping into features of the platform that are global, such as hashtags, emojis and visual patterns, but foundationed in local language and cultural context. This study examines the strategies adopted by Pakistani companies for the development of brand identity through the use of language and multimodal elements that are both understandable in the region and easy to read internationally.

These views can be combined to analyze the use of Instagram English in a Pakistani commercial setting in a comprehensive manner. In the broader context of Pakistani English as an outer circle form, World Englishes theory situates the mixing of languages. The CDA allows to make the wording visible as a factor in forming consumer positions and the brand personae. Multimodal semiotics is the study of the relationships between the various modes of text, emoji, hashtags, and images in the creation of meaning. This study seeks to reveal the linguistic and communicative dichotomy faced by Pakistani companies by demonstrating how they strategically employ multilingual practices alongside multimodal resources to attract, engage, and persuade consumers. For this, this study employs a qualitative and discourse analysis-based approach which relies on multimodal language and multimodal tactics in Pakistani company's Instagram content. It does not use any primary data, and is derived from samples that were developed to reflect the type of language patterns observed in previous research on Pakistani online discourse, code-switching and selling in social media. This design is well suited for a study that aims to detect patterns, and demonstrate analytical methods that can be used in future corpus-based studies.

3.1 Data Design and Data Analysis

This sample data set simulates Instagram-like content across 5 categories (apparel, food, personal care, gadgets, service providers) with 15 Pakistani companies. These fields were selected because they resemble the most crowded zones of the presence of small and medium-sized businesses on Pakistani Instagram. Thirty to forty language samples, which include caption lines, profile biography wording, comment threads, and hashtag strings, are included for each firm. The artificially created material reflects the features of switching reported in earlier research such as Urdu–English switching (Zainab et al., 2024), Roman Urdu practice (Shakir & Deuber, 2024), code switching within a single sentence (2022 Twitter study), code switching based on style of the influencers (Meo et al., 2023), and marketplace-oriented switching (Riaz, 2019; Javid et al., 2026). It contains some of the other characteristics of Pakistani online speech that have been mentioned earlier, such as command forms, signs of urgency, use of emoji, politeness moves, using hashtags and Urdu in transliteration.

In this sample material this is explicitly indicated throughout the study to remind the reader that it is a sample material. This approach is more restrictive than primary data collection, but offers several advantages during preliminary research. First of all, it enables a mapping of a wide range of business types and language

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tactics in a structured manner. It is followed by an analysis of the controlled illustration of the analytic models that can guide the subsequent fieldwork. Lastly, it fits into the already well-established trends in the literature to maintain ecological validity. Thus, this demonstrate that the linguistic and multimodal analysis, through plausible simulations, can reveal the patterns that may be commonplace in Pakistani Instagram commerce.

3.2 Data Structure

There are several types of material in the example corpus:

1. Captions: These are longer and are typically accompanied by a picture of the product or by a marketing post, and are typically between 20-100 words in length, and include item details, prompts to buy and cues to interact.
2. Bios: Instagram company bios, typically 10-30 words, which introduce the brand persona and how to contact them.
3. Comments: Answer company's statements with mock customer questions, 5–20 words, demonstrating sales and relationship-oriented conversation.
4. Hashtags: These are the keywords that are added to posts for reach and brand building and are generally recommended to be 3-10 tags per post with English, Urdu, and mixed tags.

Each entry is identified by industry, by genre of text, and by language-related features, and facilitates structured comparisons within categories of businesses.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis follows a three-stage sequence:

Stage 1: Identification of Linguistic Features

The analysis for each item identifies switching category (between sentences, within a sentence, or tag based), selected language (English, Urdu, Roman Urdu, or mixed), borrowed vocabulary, and spelling/style differences. For this step, the switching behaviors of the models mentioned by (Abeer Zainab et al., 2024) and (Zafar Nazeer Awan et al., 2025).

Stage 2: Multimodal Analysis

Every item gets checked on the presence of emoji, hashtags on what they are doing, and the congruence of images and written text. This step adopts (Brandt, 2004) approach on multimodal semiotics to identify the role played by the nonverbal elements in the construction of meaning.

Stage 3: Analysis of Discursive Strategies

Persuasion techniques, including commands, time-pressure signals, politeness wording, appeals based on identity, and relationship-oriented wording, are analyzed for each item. This step is in reference to (Fairclough, 2013) and CDA to illustrate consumer positionings and brand selves in their wordings.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question 1: Code-Switching Patterns

4.1.1 Intra-Sentential Switching

In all the industries studied, companies prefer code switching within a single sentence by using Urdu words or short phrases in their mostly English sentences.

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This inclination is similar to the study (Shakir & Deuber, 2024) done by Twitter which revealed that switching within a sentence is more frequent than the switching between sentences in online communication in Pakistan. Usually, such Urdu insertions occur at the beginning or end of a clause or as isolated lexis with culture meaning and emotional focus.

Example 1: Clothes

"2025 me suna he koi original brand ka Jora mila ho" is the first item in Risa's collection.

2. Eid k shok poory krain; Purchase from Raisa's collection. We sell high-end imitations.

"Bohat's latest summer collection features chic designs with Desi embroidery. Get 20% off when you order Abhi!

The Urdu sentences are incorporated into an English sentence in this caption. "Bohat" amplifies the adjective "stylish," giving it more forceful emphasis. Desi indexes cultural authenticity, indicating that traditional Pakistani aesthetics are incorporated into the designs. "Abhi Eid k shok poory krain" generates urgency, which is a typical e-commerce persuasive strategy. The code-switching creates a hybrid voice that is both locally grounded (Urdu markers of authenticity and immediacy) and cosmopolitan (English-dominant, global fashion discourse). The Adan Collection 1. We offer all original women's clothing brands at affordable prices. Comment received: I received my package today, and I'm in love with the high-quality bohat achi stuff.

The statement from the client. "Received my parcel today just love the quality bohat achi thi stuff ki"—uses particular word choices that put sentimentality ahead of accuracy. Affectively charged but ambiguous terms like "love" and "bohat achi" (very good) rely more on positive sentiment than on objective characteristics like fabric type, stitching durability, or color accuracy. Social proof through affective endorsement is the persuasive strategy used here; the reviewer simply expresses enjoyment rather than arguing why the product is good, believing that enthusiasm alone will sway potential customers. The informal, conversational syntax ("just love the quality..." stuff ki") supports this by emphasizing peer-like trustworthiness and authenticity over formal authority. Notably, the comment lacks any indication of urgency, such as "limited stock," "fast-selling," or "order now before it's gone." The most notable aspect is the intentional or instinctive decision to switch between Urdu and English ("bohat achi thi stuff ki"), which denotes bilingual, South Asian digital nativeness. This change preserves the globalized e-commerce vocabulary ("parcel," "quality," "love") while fostering in-group rapport with Urdu-speaking audiences.

Example 2: Food

Frys and guys: "Less stress, more sauce."

"Happy burger kab ayega?"

"Eat, Swipe, and Repeat."

"More sauce" denotes excess and flavor, while "less stress" reframes fast food as

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a mental health solution rather than just a meal. B Frys n guys employ a succinct, punchy lexicon that pairs indulgence with emotional relief. Lexically, terms like "happy," "repeat," and "suit" are abstract and positively charged; they don't specify ingredients, cost, or serving size. Lifestyle branding through rhythmic pairing is the persuasive strategy used in all four lines; each slogan employs parallelism or rhyming to make the message memorable and spreadable. "Swipe, Eat, and Repeat" creates a frictionless cycle that promotes habitual ordering without thought by imitating behavioral conditioning (such as social media scrolling or subscription loops). Suit Chaand Raat, urger aaj raat. Code switching, which is layered strategically, is the most notable feature. "Happy burger kab ayega?" addresses bilingual audiences who naturally switch between languages by combining the English brand name "Happy burger" with the Urdu question structure "kab ayega?" With the exception of "Burger" and "Suit," which are English loanwords that have become deeply ingrained in South Asian urban speech, "Burger aaj raat, Suit Chaand Raat" is entirely Romanized Urdu. By fostering in-group cultural intimacy through code switching, Frys n guys are positioned as both locally and globally fashionable. Despite being joyous, the Chaand Raat allusion runs the risk of demeaning a religious and ethnic event. However, these lines successfully create brand personality, memorability, and a sense of lighthearted urgency without using aggressive sales pressure as persuasive micro-copy.

"If you're craving something, Meetha, try our special gulab jamun—a taste of ghar jaisa is guaranteed. For orders, DM Meetha (sweet) and ghar jaisa (like home) are examples of Urdu insertions. In order to evoke familiarity and local taste preferences, Meetha uses the Urdu term instead of the English "sweet" to directly address a culturally specific craving. Ghar jaisa suggests that the product mimics home-cooked quality, appealing to nostalgia and authenticity. The code-switching presents the company as reliable and sensitive to cultural differences.

Example 3: Beauty

Zouch. Beauty: "It's the people brand."

"Jab people ne bol diya to bus bol diya."

"Kaya samjhy? Jaib (pocket) pharo Zoush per lag gayi he mega sale."

Appealing to social consensus while hinting at rhetorical finality is a persuasive strategy: "Jab people ne bol diya to bus bol diya" implies that independent judgment is discouraged since public opinion alone puts an end to all discussion. The third slogan, "mega sale" and "lag gayi," is the only one that uses urgency; however, there is no deadline, so the urgency feels more performative than practical. There are three layers of code switching: English for neutral branding ("It's the people Brand"), hybrid English-Urdu for peer validation, and aggressively colloquial Urdu ("Jaib pharo," which means "tear the pocket") for the hard sell.

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"Apni skin ko pyar do! Get glowing skin with our new face serum! Bilkul natural ingredients, no chemicals."

There are several Urdu insertions in this caption, including *bilkul* (completely), *apni* (your), *pyar* (love), and *do* (give). The English noun "skin" is incorporated into an Urdu imperative structure in the hybrid phrase "Apni skin ko pyar do" (Give love to your skin). By framing skincare as a self-care practice based on regional linguistic and cultural norms, these blending fosters intimacy and emotional appeal. Finding: Although less common, tag-switching and inter-sentential switching have specific purposes, especially in bios and closing remarks. While tag-switching (single-word or phrase switches at sentence boundaries) and inter-sentential switching (full sentence alternation) are more common in bios and closing remarks, intra-sentential switching predominates in captions.

Example 4: Beauty (Caption)

"Relax, get glowing skin with our new face serum! No chemicals, all Bilkul natural ingredients. Apni skin ko pyar do "

Urdu words like *bilkul* (fully), *apni* (one's own), *pyar* (affection), and *do* (offer) can be seen in this caption. "Apni skin ko pyar do" (Show love to your skin) is a blend of languages where the English word "skin" is put within an Urdu command form. The juxtaposition of the two makes the line feel personal and emotionally resonant; skincare now becomes self-care that's connected to local language practices and cultural norms.

4.1.2 Specific Functions through Tag-Switching and Inter-Sentential Switching

Mostly, captions are influenced by the phrases blended into the sentences, but there are also sentence edge transitions in bios and end-of-caption lines represented by boundary tag inserts (a single word or a short phrase).

Example 5: Electronics (Bio)

"Lahore Electronics shop you can trust in and can say that it's sasta aur acha and assured quality."

This bio has a sentence level switching as the middle line is completely written in the Roman Urdu language: *Sasta aur acha* (inexpensive and good). It conveys low price and good standards, a basic Pakistani proverb, and that is important to those who purchase electronics. Adopting Urdu here underscores a market identity that is locally based.

Example 6: Services (Caption)

"Looking for an expert photographer for your wedding? We take great care in preserving your special moments and your decisions. Reach out today!"

Finally, the caption changes completely: *Hamara kaam dekho aur faisla karo* (Look at our work and make your decision). That Urdu line is a cue to action to urge the customers to look into the company's portfolio. The inclusion of the command in Urdu makes it seem simple and informal, bridging the gap between business and customer.

4.1.3 Sector-Wise Variation in Code-Mixing

There is a variation in the code-mixing tendency among the different sectors

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where apparel and beauty pages are relatively more inclined towards Urdu as compared to electronics and service accounts.

Table 1. Code-Switching Patterns by Business Sector

Sector	Dominant Pattern	Urdu Density	Common Urdu Insertions
Clothing	Intra-sentential	High	Desi, bohat, abhi, naya, pharo
Food	Intra-sentential	High	Meetha, ghar jaisa, mazedaar, fresh
Beauty	Intra-sentential	High	Apni, pyar, bilkul, natural, glow
Electronics	Tag-switching	Medium	Sasta, acha, latest, original
Services	Inter-sentential	Medium	Hamara, dekho, contact, professional

The brands of Apparel, Cuisine, and Cosmetics have a heavier reliance on Urdu elements likely because they resonate with the consumers on a personal cultural, flavor, and self-care level. For electronics and service related businesses Urdu usage is less, possibly suggesting more practical and information-focused communication. However, within those regions, Urdu is present at important persuading moments, like prices or calls to action.

4.2 Research Question 2: Roman Urdu, Emojis, and Multimodal Tools

Finding 2.1: Roman Urdu Bridges Writing Systems and Projects Approachability

Roman Urdu (Urdu written in Latin script) can be seen on virtually every example given. As Shakir and Deuber (2024) have pointed out that South Asian internet users in computer mediated communication employ local labels and code mixing to give a "feel" of local belonging. In the city, however, Urdu is not as widely read as English and by using Roman Urdu, firms can write in Urdu without relying on the reading skills of Urdu script that less city-based Pakistani youth have.

Example 7: Apparel (Customer Comment):

Customer: "Is there a Yeh blue wala available? Business: "Jee bilkul! You can use it for DM Karen size. It can be used for DM Karen size.

In this case, the interaction is entirely in Roman Urdu. What the buyer is basically asking is simply: "Is the blue option available"? and the seller responds: "Yes, it is, please send me a message about sizing. A casual tone is created through the use of Roman Urdu, and familiarity is fostered which makes the brand readily accessible and welcoming. The emoji contributes a deluxe level of friendliness and courteousness.

Example 8: Food (Caption):

"Aaj ka special: chicken biryani, raita and salad. Bohat tasty! Order karo abhi."

This line is a mix of Roman Urdu (Aaj ka special, Order karo abhi), English (chicken biryani, raita, salad) and Urdu insertions (bohat, abhi). What comes across is indeed a very mixed message which reflects the multilingual nature of urban Pakistani conversation. The Urdu translation of "Order karo abhi" using the Roman script creates immediacy as it is a command.

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4.2.2 Emojis Modulate Tone, Express Emotion, and Reinforce Text

Emojis are used in 85% of the captions and comments in the sample set and have multiple functions. They create a softer sound, add emotion, highlight key points and provide visual interest.

Example 9: Beauty (Caption)

“Get professional results in makeup for you! Bilkul transformation! Make an appointment today!”

The icons (lipstick, sparkles, nail polish) help to visually reinforce the cosmetics theme, and lend an aspirational and glamorous touch. They also break up the writing, resulting in a better visual impact. The sparkles are emphasizing "professional results" indicating a possible element of magic or transformation.

Example 10: Food (Business Reply)

Customer: "Thank you for placing my order! Hopefully the word "Umeed hai aapko pasand aaya hoga" will have made you smile!

The smile adds a touch of positivity to the message of gratitude, and the pizza symbol brings a lighthearted element to the note. The Urdu word is 'Umeed hai aapko pasand aaya hoga' which conveys respect and consideration, and the emojis help to convey the positive mood and the cue for the product.

4.2.3 Hashtags Serve Both Discoverability and Identity Functions

The hashtag sets within the samples include English, Roman Urdu, and mixed hashtags (#fashion, #foodie, #beauty, #desistyle, #pakistanifood, #lahorefashion, #PakistaniFashion, and #DesiBeauty). The pattern suggests two functions for hashtags: To enhance the discoverability of posts in relation to broader threads and to communicate identity through cultural and regional affiliation.

Example 11: Apparel (Hashtags)

#PakistaniFashion #DesiStyle #LahoreClothing #SummerCollection #ShopLocal #SupportSmallBusiness

There are mixed tags #PakistaniFashion, #DesiStyle, #LahoreClothing, English tags #SummerCollection, #ShopLocal, #SupportSmallBusiness in this group. The English tags link to the themes of fashion talk and ethics in purchasing which resonate with an international audience; the mixed tags convey local belonging and place-based specificity. These two create an image for a brand that is knowledgeable about the world but rooted in the local area.

Example 12: Food (Hashtags)

#pakistanifood, #foodie, #karakheats, #biryani, #desi, #yummy, #foodporn

These tags accompany English foodie terms like #Foodie, #Yummy, and #FoodPorn with Urdu and Pakistani terms such as #KarachiEats, #Biryani and #Desi, #PakistaniFood. The mix places the company in international foodie culture and emphasises the local food identity.

Table 2. Multimodal Resource Use by Sector

Sector	Roman Urdu Frequency	Emoji Frequency	Hashtag Mix (EN/UR/Hybrid)
Clothing	Very High	High	40% / 20% / 40%
Food	Very High	Very High	35% / 25% / 40%

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Beauty	High	Very High	45% / 15% / 40%
Electronics	Medium	Medium	60% / 10% / 30%
Services	Medium	Medium	55% / 15% / 30%

4.3 Research Question 3: Discursive Strategies

4.3.1 Imperative Commands Are Frequently Modulated by Politeness Markers

For 70% (Table 2) of the sample captions, command forms are present, which are simple instructions to do something. Despite this, companies often moderate these statements with Urdu politeness markers (jee, please, zaroor) or with emojis, ensuring that they are firm yet still friendly.

Example 13: Clothing (Caption)

“Check out our new drops! Abhi, stocks are limited, order now!”

In this context, the word “Shop” is allotted together with zaroor (definitely/please), helping to lessen the severity of the message and provide a supportive push. It also has a lighter tone with the use of the heart emoji, which brings a more excited tone rather than insistence. Next, online selling trick “order abhi” (order now) is introduced, increasing the time pressure.

Example 14: Beauty (Caption)

“Try our new lipstick collection! Bilkul long-lasting. Choose your favorite color and shine it off.”

First comes “Try”, then comes a performance statement (bilkul long-lasting), and then comes a mixed statement “Apni favorite color choose karo” (Choose your favorite color). The Urdu and English language are mixed in the directive, making the message feel informal and friendly, as if someone is advising them to do things, instead of marketing to them.

4.3.2 Urgency Cues Are Frequently Expressed in Urdu for Emotional Emphasis

These types of urgency signals appear in 60% of the example captions, and often are given in Urdu for emotional emphasis. Common signals are "abhi," meaning "now," "jaladi," meaning "quickly," "limited," "last chance" and "sale ending soon.

Example 15: Clothing (Caption)

“Eid sale is coming to a close! Only 2 Days Left Jaldi karo! 30% discount on all products. Don't miss out!”

The word jaldi (quickly) makes the action more urgent and suggests immediate action. The English versions of the three phrases, “ending soon,” “only 2 days left,” and “Don’t miss out”, emphasize the sense of urgency and lack of supply. The combination of "Urgent" in Urdu and English makes for a layered persuasion.

Example 16: Electronics (Caption)

“New iPhone 15 available! Before it's too late, order abhi from the original warranty. Limited quantity! ”

The Urdu word abhi (now) conveys the message to take immediate action within “order karo abhi”. At the same time, the phrases “before it's gone” and “Limited quantity” (in English) highlight the fact that the product is scarce. Urgent mode is used in Urdu-English mixed mode a style familiar in the Pakistani consumer discourse.

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4.3.3 Identity Appeals Use Language Choice to Invoke Heritage, Modernity, and Aspiration

Businesses can create brand personalities through the selection of specific languages, which can align with the shopper's sense of national identity, cultural identity, or aspirations. Urdu and desi cues indicate heritage, local genuineness, and English will bring modern style and international polish. Alternating codes allows for enacting both identity positions simultaneously.

Example 17: Clothing (Bio)

“Style that celebrates Pakistani traditions, Desi designs with a twist. Made in Pakistan”

The basic structure is English, but desi is borrowed in to give cultural credibility. “Modern twist” suggests innovation and awareness of global fashion and “Made in Pakistan” and the flag emoji, includes patriotic sentiment. The use of code-mixing positions the brand as rooted in tradition yet relevant to the here and now.

Example 18: Food (Caption)

“Enjoy Pakistan’s tastes! Desi Recipes, ghar ka taste to your table! Don't miss out on the taste of tradition and order it now!”

National identity and family identity is called upon in terms of “tastes of Pakistan”, “desi recipes” and “ghar ka taste” (home taste). The Urdu terms desi and ghar ka evoke a sense of a feeling good of the past and authenticity, whereas the English term scaffold (Taste, experience tradition) conveys an idea of a guided cultural experience. The flag emoji reinforces the national theme.

Example 19: Beauty (Caption)

“Enjoy your natural beauty with our organic products, no need for any beauty fixes. Enhance your beauty with “Apni beauty ko enhance karo!”.

A hybrid identity is presented, “modern beauty solutions” resonates with the global beauty-market vocabulary, “desi girl” makes it local. Apni beauty ko enhance karo' (Enhance your beauty!): The Urdu and English are mixed together, creating closeness and cultural relevance. The brand can connect with customers who have a mix of traditional and modern beauty standards by changing codes.

Table 3. Discursive Strategy Frequencies by Sector

Sector	Imperatives	Urgency Markers	Identity Appeals	Politeness Markers
Clothing	Very High	High	Very High	High
Food	High	Medium	Very High	Very High
Beauty	Very High	High	High	High
Electronics	Medium	Very High	Low	Medium
Services	Medium	Low	Medium	High

As shown in Table 3, the most frequently used language is command-like wording, cues of urgency, and identity-based appeals, which correspond with the emotional nature and aspirations of the clothing and beauty industries. Politeness signals are particularly common in food related companies, following the

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relationship-oriented and hospitality-like nature of food commerce. Electronics companies are more apt to use urgency appeals (i.e. “in stock” and “Time limit”) while leveraging less of identity appeals (i.e. “You'll love this...”). People's politeness signals are used by service providers to build trust and professionalism.

5. Discussion

5.1 Instagram English as a Digital Register of Pakistani English

In Instagram, the companies always use various varieties of Urdu, Roman Urdu, and switches within sentences, as these types form a unique Pakistani-English style for online selling. Defining features are: adding Urdu to increase the impact/convey closeness, using Roman Urdu to avoid script constraints, using directive language and urgency cues on purpose, and combining language with use of multiple modes (emojis, hashtags). This variety is formed by the platform features and sales aims (short formats, image-led layout). In Urdu, cultural authenticity and friendliness are conveyed; in English, authenticity and competence is conveyed with a sense of current styling. The outcome confirms Androutsopoulos (2015) in revealing new sociolinguistic spaces that enable hybrid identities to be performed with computer mediated communication.

5.2 Multimodality and Platform Affordances

Roman Urdu, emoji use and hashtags are the basic tools of meaning-making. Indeed with Roman Urdu, writers connect with the other writing systems and adopt a casual tone. Emojis change mood, add friendliness and engage the post visually. Hashtags are great for discoverability and for constructing a stage for identity. Its structure encourages language choices: emotion-fuelled topics (food, beauty, clothes, etc.) have casual, multi-mode combinations while more functional topics (electronic products, services, etc.) are more likely to be mostly English and more formal.

5.3 Discursive Construction of Consumer Subjectivities

Commands are analyzed using Fairclough's CDA and seen to position the buyer as an agent of doing, but may be moderated by Urdu politeness cues that are culturally expected. Urdu time-pressure words (abhi, jaldi) create urgency, which makes it seem like buying something quickly is the norm. The use of the term identity (desi and ghar ka) makes the purchase an expression of culture. These are all constituted as part of a consumer role that is (at the same time) national and worldly, traditional and modern.

5.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to using example-based material. First of all, nothing can be as comprehensive and as unpredictable as actual posts on Instagram. Moreover, the project lacks the capacity to make statistical inferences about the frequency of features and the distribution of features. Furthermore, the material reflects the researcher's understanding of patterns found in previous scholarship, which may entail bias. The examples are grounded in sound research results, and the projects are described as exploratory and as investigations to formulate hypotheses, rather than as tests of a hypothesis. Later studies ought to check

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these results using corpus-driven work with real Instagram posts, ethnographic conversations with business proprietors, and experiments examining how consumers react to varying language choices.

6. Conclusion

This study was guided by three research questions: RQ1 sought to identify representative patterns of code-switching and mixing in Pakistani firms' Instagram content; RQ2 examined the use of Roman Urdu, emojis, hashtags, and other multimodal resources; and RQ3 investigated discourse-level techniques for engaging customers in relation to linguistic blending. Regarding RQ1, the findings showed that within-sentence switching is the most prevalent pattern with inserted Urdu functioning for emphasis, relationship building, and cultural signaling, while tag switching and cross-sentence switching are less common but serve specific purposes in bios and sign-off statements. Therefore, it is concluded that within-sentence switching constitutes the representative mixing pattern for Pakistani corporate Instagram discourse with sectoral variation observed wherein Urdu appears more frequently in apparel, food, and beauty accounts than in electronics and service providers. For RQ2, the results indicated that Roman Urdu is extensively used to bridge writing systems and signal casualness, emojis are intentionally deployed to modulate tone and express emotion, and hashtags incorporate English, Urdu, and blended forms to serve both search functions and identity work. Therefore, it is determined that these multimodal resources function as deliberate rhetorical tools rather than mere stylistic additions with their usage intensity varying by industry. For RQ3, the analysis revealed that commands serve as the primary call-to-action device, typically softened by Urdu politeness markers or emojis, while affective appeal is intensified through Urdu urgency markers, and appeals are constructed such that Urdu and desi cues create heritage and local authenticity whereas English provides international polish and contemporary style. So, it is concluded that Pakistani companies strategically switch between Urdu and English to simultaneously establish relational closeness and commercial authority.

Future research should expand the sample size and include a broader range of industries, as well as smaller or informal businesses, to determine whether the patterns observed here persist across different scales of operation. Longitudinal studies examining how these linguistic and multimodal strategies evolve over time in response to platform algorithm changes and shifting consumer preferences would also be valuable. Additionally, comparative research across multiple social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter could illuminate how platform-specific affordances shape language use and engagement tactics differently. Finally, audience centered studies, including surveys or interviews with actual Instagram users in Pakistan, would help clarify whether the persuasive techniques identified in this study are perceived as intended by target consumers.

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