

**RESEARCH PAPER****Semiotic Devices Used in the Advertisements by Private Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Case Study of Kohat Division****¹Mudassir Inam*, ²Tariq Amin and ³Nazakat Awan**

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***Corresponding Author:** mudassirinam25@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The study attempts to analyze the different semiotic devices used in the advertisements of private schools generally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Kohat division. It explores the role that different semiotic devices play in the advertisements of private schools in Kohat division and reveals the implicit, hidden, and inherent ideologies behind using these semiotic devices in private school advertisements. The present study is qualitative, and the data were collected from the latest advertisements of 2023 advertised by the private schools in KP, specifically in Kohat division. Kohat and Karak districts were selected from Kohat division. Six schools from these two districts were selected through a simple random sampling technique. After selecting private schools, the advertisements given by the selected schools were downloaded and analyzed using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model. The study expects to make private school owners realize that some parents do not look at the pictures and semiotic devices in advertisements; instead, they look at the quality education provided by the school when they look for a school for their children.

KEYWORDS: Advertisement, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kohat Division, Private School, Semiotic Devices**Introduction**

Advertising is a type of communication with the buyers of a service or a product. It is a form of marketing communication that can be used to convince, manipulate, and encourage the audience, such as viewers, listeners, readers, or sometimes a group of people, to take action. Clark et al. (2009) say that advertisements are the methods for pursuing buyer's selection, and therefore, it is necessary for the researchers to realize and understand the whole procedure. Every company, industry, agency, educational institution, etc., advertises their products or services in this modern world. These various companies, educational institutions, and agencies attracted their customers through advertising.

However, various companies, agencies, and educational institutions use different types of persuasive strategies in advertisements to persuade the public to buy the advertised products. In addition, in our own country, Pakistan, different companies, industries, educational institutions, agencies, etc. advertise their products or services to attract the general people towards the advertised products or services.

The present study deals with different kinds of advertisements and their roles in increasing the general public's interest in schools. Some schools, such as private schools, are observed to use advertisements for their business more. Private schools are independent, non-governmental, and are not administered by national, state, or local

governments. Private schools run on the tuition fees of the students. Private schools give different advertisements for their school to attract the general public. They use different procedures to attract and lead people to apply for admission to their schools. The advertisers of private schools use different devices, such as television, newspaper, Facebook, rock, and walls, to advertise their schools.

The study attempts to investigate the different semiotic devices used in the advertisements of private schools in KP, specifically in Kohat division. It attempts to analyze the diverse roles that semiotic devices play in the advertisements of private schools in Kohat division and the implicit, hidden, and inherent ideologies behind the use of each device in private school advertisements.

Diverse agencies use advertisements as one of their tools to persuade the general public. There are always hidden ideologies at work in selecting and rejecting a specific device for a particular advertisement. The private schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa employ diverse semiotic modes and semiotic resources to persuade the public to be admitted to their schools. This study attempts to investigate different semiotic devices, explore the roles that the semiotic devices play in the advertisements, and reveal the hidden ideology behind particular semiotic device use in the advertisements of private schools in KP, particularly in Kohat division.

Literature Review

Advertising plays a significant role in our daily life. It determines the way of life. A significant amount of money is spent on advertising. It has a significant effect on the nature of social relations. In terms of purposes of advertisements, it can be said that they are multi-functional because they can describe, warn, sell, entertain, and inform. Chan and Chan (2005) conducted a study using television advertisements to find its informational content. Advertising can be costly. Some of its types, such as an ad in the newspaper or on the radio, do not require much money, whereas other forms of advertising, such as television, require significant funding (Kotler, 2010).

Abideen and Saleem (1987) say that an advertisement is a new form of communication that tries to convince an audience, such as listeners, readers, or viewers, to buy a product or service. It is one of the significant ways to communicate with the customers. In addition, it helps inform the customers about the goods, the brands available in the market, and the various types of products that are useful to them. It is for all types of people, such as young and old.

Types of advertisement

There are different types of advertisements, but the researcher will discuss a few essential types, especially those the advertisers commonly use. The following are the important types of advertisements.

Newspapers and Magazines Advertisements

Newspapers and magazines are the traditional and very effective types of advertisements. Before the advancement in technology, most of the literate people used to read newspapers and magazines. In this technological world, some people still read newspapers and find advertisements for different things. Plenty of people still reach the market to get their morning newspaper.

Outdoor Advertising

Outdoor advertising is a type of advertising that is also known as out-of-home advertising (OOH). It is simply any advertisement made visible to consumers outside of their homes. Outdoor advertising is a mass-market medium like broadcast advertising and intends to support messaging and branding efforts.

Brand Advertising

There is a strong relationship between brand and advertising. To know about this relationship, first, we need to know that it is usually textual and visual advertising. Such advertising is intended to achieve a higher level of consumer discovery of a definite brand.

Television Advertising

Television advertisement plays an integral role in this modern world. Different agencies, companies, and education departments use television as a primary tool to advertise their products and services. We can see advertisements for different things on television. Each department wants to advertise its product on television because most people watch TV.

Schools

Schools play a crucial role in this modern world. According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education is a fundamental human right. Pakistan also adopted this charter in 1948. Education is necessary for every person. Diverse institutions exist, like government schools, private schools, technical institutions, and madrassas. These institutions have three key pillars: teachers, students, and curriculum. In Pakistan, one is government schools, and the other is private schools. Private schools are famous for most students and their parents due to their better education system, knowledge creation, test criteria, etc. The researcher explores why parents choose costly private schools over free government schools. Private educational institutions play a prominent role in eradicating illiteracy and enhancing the skills of students and teachers by providing a better academic environment (Awan and Saeed, 2014).

Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of a sign. A sign is anything that communicates meaning to the viewers. The meaning we can communicate through signs may be intentional, such as a word uttered with a specific meaning, or unintentional, which may be through a symptom. Semiotics explores signs and symbols as a significant part of communication. It also studies the non-linguistic part of the language system. According to Irvine (2005), all the symbolic systems, such as images, script, and gesture, function like a second-order text or language in a specific culture. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the mode of writing is one of the forms of visual communication.

However, the present study deals with signs and symbols and their use in different advertisements of private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Usually, semiotics study the roles of signs that they play in society.

An Overview of Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis has recognized itself as a humanities and social science field. It is an important field and a recognizable approach to language study or program

(Wodak, 2011). The critical analysis of discourse or critical discourse analysis refers to a dissimilar collection of socio-theoretical perspectives on discourse in society surrounding various applications and approaches in discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis and advertisements

There is a strong relationship between critical discourse analysis and advertisement. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a unique approach in discourse analysis (DA) in which critics deeply think about every word in a text and suggest reasons why writers have used this specific vocabulary, the structure of the text, and the power and ideology that have been used behind the text.

Advertisement is marketing, an economic or social process, information communication, or process and affiliation technique. Advertisers use different semiotics devices to advertise their products, jobs, etc. Schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions also employ semiotic strategies in advertisements.

Works already done

In their article, Kotler and Armstrong (2011) noted that an advertisement is a presentation or promotion of goods, services, or impersonal ideas from an identified sponsor. Bolatito and Ojenike (2012) focused on how advertisements affect brand selection. Some scholars discussed content analysis in their studies. Abernethy (1992) concluded from his study that magazine advertisements are more informative than television advertisements. In his study, Awan (2012) noted that all countries have different school systems, which can also be found in our country "Pakistan." Awan and Saeed (2014) concluded from their study that private schools, private colleges, private universities, and all private institutes play critical roles in Pakistan's education system.

Research Methodology

The researcher uses Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model for the present study. The data were analyzed through Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model.

Research design

The present research study is qualitative as it attempts to analyze the semiotic devices used in the advertisement used by private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In order to present a detailed account of the semiotic resources used in advertisements and of the particular dominant interests and hidden ideologies behind the employment of the particular semiotic devices in private school advertisements, the study has adopted a qualitative approach.

Data collection

The data have been collected from the advertisements of 2023 given by only the private schools in KP province. Two districts have been selected from Kohat division. District Kohat and Karak were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The six most famous private schools have been selected from these selected districts through simple random sampling. After selecting districts and private schools, fresh advertisements of 2023 were downloaded from the selected private schools, and then these advertisements were analyzed using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model. Each dimension has been referred to in the practical analysis of the advertisements.

Theoretical Framework

As the main focus of the present study was to analyze the advertisements used by private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model was adopted.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough (1992) believes that every communicative event comprises three dimensions: firstly, text, which could be found in different forms such as images, writing, spoken symbols, etc. Secondly, discourse practice deals with how diverse texts are produced and consumed. Thirdly, a social practice which is the embodiment of social structure. It means discourse has a relation with society.

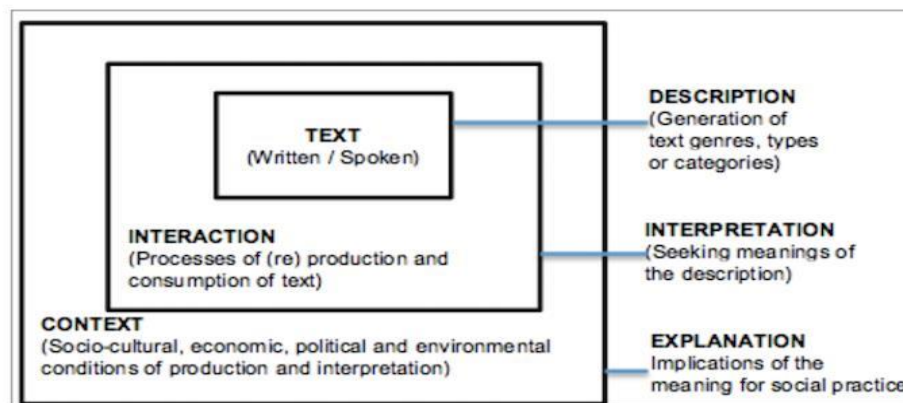


Figure 1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (1992, p.25)

Text

According to Fairclough (1992), linguistic features such as vocabulary choices (wording), grammatical construction, and text structure should be described and systematically analyzed in the description stage. In the present study, the researcher has analyzed the semiotic devices, different symbols, and signs used in advertisements of private schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in the text analysis stage.

Discursive Practice

According to Fairclough (1989), interpretation deals with the correlation between diverse texts and communication with those consumers who perceive the text as the end product of the production process and as a resource in the interpretation process. In this stage, the interrelationship between text and discourse and their production and consumption should be investigated.

Social Practice

Fairclough (1989) states that explanation, the third and last stage, is concerned with studying the interrelationship between social context and interaction. It studies how the production and interpretation processes are socially determined. It also studies their social effects.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model. The first section of the data analysis describes the selected advertisements of private schools

in KP in general, particularly in Kohat division. The second section deals with the interpretation of the selected advertisements, and the third section describes the social practice of the selected advertisements of private schools in KP.

Description

As discussed above, the description stage of Fairclough's 3-D model deals with describing the text's lexical-grammatical features and semiotic elements. The advertisements published by private schools in KP contain many semiotic resources and lexico-grammatical features. The figures below are presented to explain them.

The advertisement in Figure 2 is given by the most famous private school in the Kohat district. The advertiser has used some semiotic devices in this advertisement. In this advertisement, the advertiser has used blue and white colours in the background. In the top left corner, the advertiser uses red colour. He used blue, red, yellow, and white colours for writing in this advertisement.



Figure 2 Advertisement by Rehber Education Services Figure 3 Advertisement by 5 Star Public School

In the advertisement in Figure 3, the advertiser has used a white background and different colours for writing. He has used red, yellow, and black colours in the school name, while for writing other things in the advertisement, he has used blue colour.

Like in the above advertisement, the advertiser has used different colours in the advertisement's background in Figure 4. In the school name, the advertiser has used large fonts for the first word, "Quaid," whereas he has used average font sizes for the remaining naming words. In the advertisement, the advertiser mentioned the programs they offer in their school.



Figure 4 Advertisement by Quaid Inter College

Figure 5 Advertisement by Allama Public School

In the advertisement in Figure 5, the school's owner has used the wall as a source to advertise his school. In this advertisement, the owner uses pink colour for the background. He also uses red, blue, and black colours for writing. He has used large fonts for writing the school's name, whereas he has used typical font sizes.

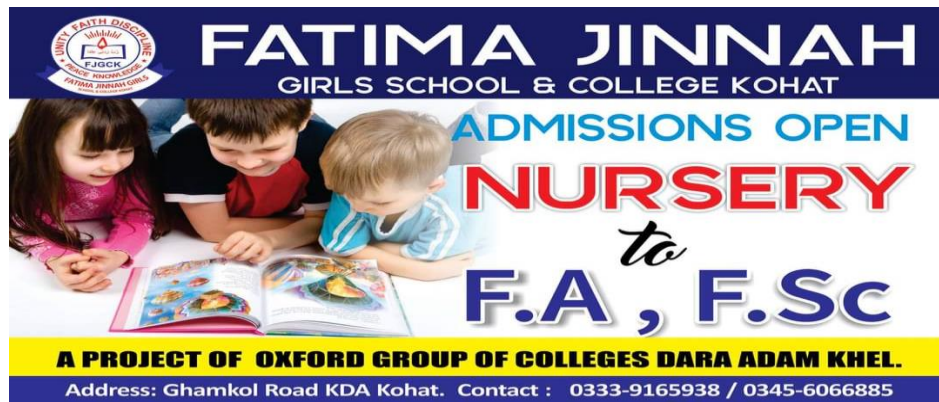


Figure 6 Advertisement by Fatima Jinnah Girls School & College

The Owner of Fatima Jinnah School has used different colours in the background and different colours for writing in the advertisement in Figure 6. He has also drawn their school monogram in the advertisement in Figure 6. Moreover, the pictures of small kids have also been given in the advertisement in Figure 6. The owner of school has used blue colour for background and white colour for writing the school name.

A private school in Shakardara town, district Kohat, has given the advertisement in Figure 7. In this advertisement, the advertiser uses blue colour in the background and red and white colours to write the school name. The school's owner has given the school a monogram in the advertisement. Apart from that, we can also see pictures of beautiful small kids in the advertisement. The advertiser has used chiefly white colour for the background and black colour for writing other information in the advertisement.



Figure 7 Advertisement by Persona Model School and College

In the advertisement in Figure 8, the advertiser has used different colours in the background and different colours for writing different information in the advertisement. He used red colour in the background and white colour as semiotic devices for writing the school name in the advertisement. The school's owner used a white background and black colour for some writing in the advertisement.



Figure 8 Oxford Group of College



Figure 9 Oxford Group of Colleges Kohat

The owner of "Oxford Group of School and College" has used yellow colour in the background and various colours as semiotics devices for writing in the advertisement in Figure 9. The school advertiser has used pictures of top boys and girls along with their board roll numbers and marks in the advertisement.

In the advertisement in Figure 10, the owner of this school uses a dark blue colour in the background. In the advertisement, he also used two blurry pictures of a girl and a boy. Moreover, he used different colours to write different things in the advertisement. He has drawn the monogram of the school in the advertisement. This private school advertiser has used white for the school name.

In contrast, in the advertisement in Figure 11, the advertiser has used a half-blue/sky colour as a semiotic device for the background. He also uses different colours to write other important information in the advertisement. He used black colour for writing things on a white background in the advertisement. He used black colour to write the school name. In addition, he used large fonts to write the school name.



Figure 10 Advertisement by Blue Birds Academy



Figure 11 Advertisement by Al Huda School and College

The researcher can find female students' pictures and books in their hands in the mid-advertisement. Moreover, several female students sit on chairs in the advertisement's background.

Quite differently from other advertisements, the owner of "Dils School and College" has used a few semiotic devices to persuade children to be admitted to his private school in the advertisement in Figure 12. He has chosen red colour for the background and other colours for writing other things in the advertisement.



Figure 12 Advertisement by Dils School and College Figure 13 Advertisement by Brain Ford Science school

In the advertisement in Figure 13, the owner of 'Brain Ford Science School and College' has used blue colour as a semiotic device for the background and different colours for writing other kinds of information in the advertisement. He has used three different colours in the school name. The advertiser has used red colour to write the name of the school's managing director and qualifications. He also used red colour to write phone numbers in the advertisement.

Interpretations

At this stage, the lexico-grammatical features and semiotic elements are interpreted concerning the very context of production and interpretation. Here, we relate the different elements to context. In this section, the same advertisements are referred to discuss the different elements concerning their context.

In the advertisement in Figure 2, the advertiser has used large fonts and capital letters for the school name "REHBER EDUCATION SERVICE." He also used the blue colour to write the school name. In addition, the owner used a white background in the advertisement because the blue colour is more visible on a white background. The size of the school name is written comparatively large because the viewers first look at the school's name. In one corner of the advertisement, the advertiser uses a red background and white colour for writing because the white colour is more visible on a red background. In this advertisement, one can also find the monogram of the school. The advertiser used a yellow background and black for writing "Register Now."

The school owner has employed a few semiotic devices in the advertisement in Figure 3 to attract children to take admission to this advertised school. The owner has used the wall as a source to advertise their school because everyone can see the wall.

In the advertisement in Figure 4, the advertiser uses a yellow background for the school name, whereas he uses black and blue colours to write the school's name. The main reason is that these colours are more visible on a yellow background. In the school name, the writer has mentioned "Girls," which means it is for girls and has a separate block for boys. In the advertisement, the advertiser uses different colours for the background and various colours for writing and other things to attract children and their parents to apply to the advertised school.

Similarly, in the advertisement in Figure 5, the advertiser has used a wall as a source to advertise their school instead of online media because some people have no facilities to look at advertisements of private schools. Similarly, some older people do not know how to use social media apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Messenger. The school owner has used the wall to advertise their school because everyone can see the wall. He

has used a large font size for the school name because it is more visible to the on-lookers. He has used three different colours in the school name because these are semiotic devices used to attract the children and their parents to take admission to the advertised private school. He used pink colour in the advertisement's background and red, black, and blue colours for writing different things because all these colours are more visible on a pink background.

In the advertisement in Figure 6, the owner of Fatima Jinnah School has employed pictures of wonderful kids to persuade children and their parents to take admission in their school. Some parents and children are impressed by pictures of small kids; therefore, the advertiser has used pictures of small kids in the advertisement. In the advertisement in Figure 6, an advertiser also used school monogram.

Like other schools, in his advertisement in Figure 7, the owner of Persona Model School has used different types of semiotic devices to attract more and more children to take admission to the advertised private school. In this advertisement, the school's owner has used blue in the background and red and white colour for the school name because red and white colours are more visible on a blue background.

In the advertisement in Figure 8, the school owner has used a red background and white colour for the school name because, on a red background, the white colour is easily seen by everyone.

The owner of "Oxford Group of School and College" has used two colours, red and black, in the school name in his advertisement in Figure 9. The school's name is written using large fonts to make it easily visible to the general public from quite a distance. He has used one picture of a boy with his marks and one picture of a girl with her marks because he wants to attract a more significant number of children to be admitted to this private school.

In contrast to others, in the advertisement in Figure 10, the owner of Blue Birds Academy uses dark colours in the background because it is shining, and the other colours are easily visible. He has drawn a picture of the backside of a girl, and the girl has raised her hand to attract children to take admission to this school. In the advertisement in Figure 10, the advertiser has drawn black and white pictures of the girl because most people do not like pictures of girls in advertisements. Therefore, we can only see the girl's backside in the advertisement. The school's owner has used yellow to write "ADMISSION NOW OPEN" to persuade children to be admitted to this advertised school.

The advertiser has made the advertisement in Figure 11 well because he wants to persuade more and more children to be admitted to this school. He has drawn a picture of female students in the center of the advertisement. There are some other female students in the background of this picture. The advertiser has used these pictures to attract children and parents who focus more on their children's dressing and health.

The owner has used large fonts for the school name in the advertisement in Figure 12 because he wants to attract students to take admission to the advertised school. The advertiser has drawn the monogram of this private school through which he wants to motivate more and more children to be admitted to this school.

Like others, the owner of "Brain Fort Science School and College" has used three different colours in the school name in the advertisement in Figure 13 because he wants to catch the attention of more and more students. The advertiser has used a large font size for the school name, whereas he has used standard size for other writing because the main reason is that he wants the viewer to first look at the school name. The school owner has used all those colours for writing visible on the blue background.

Social Practice

Advertising is a social practice; it influences the public's mind. In social practice, some important factors such as ideology, power, and identity are taken into detail to explain the relationship between socio-cultural perspectives fully. In the above advertisement, the advertiser has written that there are separate classes for male and female students. Behind this sentence, there is a religious ideology, which is that it is difficult for KP people to accept co-education for their male and female students. The advertiser uses semiotic devices to persuade children and their parents to be admitted to the advertised school. For instance, *in* the advertisement in Figure 3, the owner has used large fonts for the school name because the viewers first look at the school name in the advertisement.

In the school name in the advertisement in Figure 4, the advertiser has written "Quaid Girls Inter College," which means that there is a separate section for boys. In Pashthun society, most people prefer not to admit their children to schools providing co-education. Therefore, the advertiser has written separate sections for girls and boys in the advertisement.

In the advertisement in Figure 5, the owner employs different semiotic devices to persuade many children and their parents to be admitted to the advertised school. The above advertisement in Figure 5 is well decorated because some children and their parents look at the highly decorated advertisements and then decide to take admission to that school.

In the above advertisement in Figure 6, the school owner has used various types of semiotic devices to attract children and their parents to take admission to their school. The owner has written that there are separate classes for male and female students because people of KP do not like co-education. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, some parents send their children to private schools with separate classes. They do not accept co-education for their children.

All the semiotic devices used by the advertiser in the advertisement in Figure 7 have some specific ideologies behind them. In this advertisement in Figure 7, the owner uses pictures of small kids, which our society accepts. The people of our area do not like the pictures of their female children to be painted in different kinds of advertisements, which is why most of the advertisers of KP do not use pictures of female students.

The advertisement in Figure 8 is well-decorated because the general public is usually impressed by well-decorated advertisements. The owner of Oxford Group of School and College has used various semiotic devices for various purposes. He has used pictures of a boy and a girl and their marks. He did so because some people look at students' highest marks and then decide to admit their students to those schools. In the advertisement in Figure 7, the advertiser uses all those semiotic devices our society accepts.

The owner of the school and their team have used those semiotic devices in the advertisement in Figure 8, which are related to our society. The advertiser has used all those generally acceptable strategies for our society.

The owner of "DILS SCHOOL AND COLLEGE" decorated the advertisement in Figure 9 because some people are impressed by well-decorated advertisements. He has written that there are separate sections for boys and girls because most people in Pashthun do not like co-education.

Findings

The findings from the advertisements of private schools are presented in bullet points below:

- i. Cute baby girls' pictures as semiotic devices were found in most of the advertisements of private schools in KP.
- ii. Usually, all of the advertisements of private schools in KP have drawn the monogram of their schools in the advertisements. A Monogram of private schools was found in all advertisements of private schools in Kohat division.
- iii. Diverse colours of background were found mainly in advertisements of private schools in Kohat division.
- iv. The advertisers also use boys' pictures in school advertisements. It was found in several advertisements that private schools used for their admission publicity.
- v. Boys' and girls' pictures, along with their marks in Matric or FSC, were found in some advertisements which were used by private schools advertisers.
- vi. The name of the private school was found in large fonts frequently in all of the advertisements for private schools in KP.
- vii. Different colours were found in writing in the advertisements of private schools in KP.
- viii. The pictures of books used were found in the most advertisements of private schools in KP.
- ix. Some advertisers have drawn buildings of schools' pictures, which were found in the advertisements used by private school advertisers.
- x. Some advertisers have used the wall as a source to advertise their schools, which was found in various advertisements of private schools in KP.
- xi. Different sections, separate classes, and separate buildings were found in some advertisements of private schools which were situated in KP province of Pakistan.
- xii. Various education related things, such as school bags, capes, pens, markers, highlighters etc., were found in the advertisements of private schools in KP.
- xiii. Most of the selected advertisements of private schools in different districts of KP were found well because in order to attract a large number of children take admission in these private schools.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that advertisers use different colours in the private schools advertisements in order to attract students and their parents to take admission in the private schools. Different education related things, such as like school bags, capes, pens, markers, highlighters etc., are used by private schools in their school advertisements to persuade children and their parents take admission in the advertised school. Furthermore, the private school owners use boys' and girls' pictures along with their marks in Matric or FSC in advertisements because they know that the people of kohat division are impressed by the students' highest marks. They use pictures of cute kids and beautiful buildings in order to attract students. Moreover, they also use other semiotic devices in order to persuade the potential students into taking admission in the respective schools.

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