LITERATURE, LINGUISTICS & CRITICISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conflicting debates about marketization of higher education: Pakistani universities as a case in point

Ambreen Shahnaz1* and Samina Amin Qadir1

Abstract: Universities are shaping and reshaping their discursive practices to reconstruct their socio-academic orientations in education by using management, corporate and governance discourse styles of the corporate sector. In this context, this study explores the opinion of genre specialists about the inculcation of market forces into academia. The researcher contacted six genre experts from six Pakistani public (two pre-70s, two post-70s) and private sector (two) universities to find variations and similarities in opinions regarding the marketing practices in universities of diverse backgrounds. Through Bhatia’s Applied Genre Analysis, the interviews of the genre experts revealed that the pre-70s public sector universities consider “word of mouth” more important than the marketing strategies; however, post-70s public sector and private sector universities are of the view that promotional content affects the decision of students. The findings show that the specialists have developed quite a mature attitude towards marketing. However, there was a unanimous consensus that pressure of marketization is too strong to resist and the universities have surrendered before this pressure; however, higher education should follow the higher ethical values as compared to general marketing trends. It is hoped that the recommendations by the experts can be applied to write the promotional content of universities.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ambreen Shahnaz is a PhD scholar at Fatima Jinnah Women University and serving at COMSATS University as a lecturer. The researcher completed her M.Phil. with a specialization in gender and language and won gold medal. Her areas of interest are CDA, gender and language, and genre analysis. She has five publications in international journals and presented paper in 4 international conferences. The present research contributes to the broader debates regarding presence of marketization of higher education.

Dr. Samina Amin Qadir is Vice Chancellor since March 2011 at Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi. She taught in three universities of Pakistan at post-grad levels: Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad; Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan; Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi. She has completed 5 research projects and attended 75 conferences along with 42 publications. She has supervised 92 Masters thesis, 14 M.Phil. thesis and 9 PhD thesis.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Subject: Qualitative research; Interviews; Genre Experts; Promotional Content; Universities

This article narrates the perspective of the expert professionals of the universities regarding the presence of promotional discourse in academia. The readers would get to know as to why marketing practices are being adopted by the higher education institutes and how much do they affect the performance and productivity of the universities. The findings will also give an insight into whether the marketization of the higher education is an ethical activity in a purely academic environment.
1. Introduction
The traditional role of universities was to maintain their prestigious status and to contribute to society by dissipating knowledge. The sole and noble purpose of higher education was to create non-utilitarian knowledge, encourage human development and produce great scholars (Askehave, 2007; Kwong, 2000; Zhang, 2017). This longstanding image of the universities was independent of any advertising or branding strategies. The only factor upon which the public sector universities would rely on was the performance of their students in the practical and professional world. Consequently, higher education largely remained “insulated” from marketization aspects until the past decades (Zhang, 2017, p. 64).

However, the role of the universities has changed in the 21st century and they are transformed into business entities (Prisacaru & Coradjo, 2018; Yang, 2013). Despite all the arguments and debates regarding the marketization of higher education, universities are spending more and more resources on marketization by redesigning their logos, catchy slogans and attractive advertising campaigns. With this market-orientated approach, universities have started adopting various promotional genres to reach their stakeholders in an effective way. In Pakistani context also, higher education is a market that is in a persistent change and a strong and well-branded university is believed to influence the decision-making process of prospective students (Abbas, 2014). Due to the emergence of many public and private sector universities, a cut-throat competition is found to recruit the brilliant students (Rehman, 2012). Hence, various marketing strategies are adopted to dissipate knowledge regarding courses, achievements, quality faculty, campus facilities and environment. However, there has always been a long-term debate whether the universities should be administered like business or should the students be taken as a client (Mehmood, Aftab, Mushtaq, 2016). It is mainly due to the fact that universities are considered as a non-profit organization; therefore, the business aspect of universities usually collides with the missionary image of academic institutes.

In this context, this research will enlighten the readers about the controversy regarding the presence of marketing practices in higher education by exploring the perspective of the expert members of the promotional genres in academia through Bhatia’s Applied Genre Analysis (1993). Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2004) suggest that insightful information from the experts of the discourse community can enhance the objectivity of the information. Bhatia (2004) is of the view that analysis of any genre demands more than examining linguistic features and discoursal pattern. It also demands the contextual knowledge in which the genre is produced and the attitude and behavior of the discourse community towards the genre. Thus, the interviews help the researchers to validate the findings regarding linguistic features (Flowerdew & Wan, 2010). Besides, there is a growing body of research on marketization and marketing in higher education, marketing planning and university selection requirements (Beerli Paacio, Diaz.Meneses and Perez Perez, 2002; Hamsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006a; Maringe & Foskett, 2002); however, overall, the literature related to marketization in higher education seems to be limited (Chapleo, 2010; Hemsely-Brown and Oplatka, 2006b).

1.1. Statement of the problem
The 1990s can be termed as the decade of globalization, competition, and commercialization in Pakistani higher education (Riaz, Jabeen, Salman, Ansari, & Moazzam, 2017). However, despite the ever-increasing importance of the issue of marketization in higher education, previous researches into promotional discourse and educational change are quite limited (Amjad & Shakir, 2014; Askehave, 2007; Hui, 2009; Osman, 2008; Xiong, 2012; Zollo, 2016). This area of research is considered to be important for various members of society, such as heads of universities, faculty members, researchers, advertisers and most notably students (Bono & Shakir, 2015). In Pakistani context, there is a dearth of research on the marketization of higher education institutions (Abbas, 2014). In this context, some of the
researchers have undertaken the linguistic analysis of the promotional content of higher education (Amjad & Shakir, 2014; Arshad & Shakir, 2014; Bano & Shakir, 2015; Nasir & Shakir, 2015); however, this study is innovative in a way as it takes the specialist information regarding the marketization aspect of university promotional content. Thus, the reader will get the prestigious opinion of the experts who are involved in the preparation of promotional content. Therefore, this study provides a guideline to the higher education institutions regarding the implementation of market practices and the extent to which they should be used.

2. Literature review

“Marketization” is an ideological term and its meaning is far from self-evident (Furedi, 2010). Moreover, it is considered a far-reaching process currently running through the most social spheres, and the university sector is no exception (Bertelsen, 2008; Engwall & Weaire, 2008; Fairclough, 1993). Thus, marketization of higher education is conceptualized as following the corporate and commercial practices to run the institutions (Kwong, 2000). The process of marketization entails not only a change in terminology and rhetoric but also a fundamental shift in university policies and practices (Wedlin, 2008).

Recently, marketization of higher education has become quite a famous strategic tool which can be observed in diverse university practices (Ashburn, 2007). However, there are diverse views and the marketization of higher education has been considered an epidemic (Natale & Doran, 2012) as well as a paradigm shift (Newman & Jahdi, 2009).

2.1. Need of marketization in higher education institutes

Through a cynical view, marketization or brands can be considered as created by any agency and are not responsible for showing reality. However, a more sympathetic view may think marketization as a collection of diverse ideas and emotions evoked by an institute due to which marketing may appear less sinister, arbitrary or extravagant (Mighall, 2009). There are various researches that are strongly in favor of marketization of the university and argue that marketing brings the university and the students more close to each other and leads to reduce the dropout rates by increasing the quality of the university (Jevons, 2006). It also enhances the awareness about the existence of the universities by differentiating them from their rivals (Bennett, Ali-Choudhury, & Savani, 2007) especially in an academic environment which encourages the enrolment of students in whatever way possible (Hurt, 2012). Orindaru (2015) also asserts that education has become “a private customer service” pointing out towards the need to integrate market practices with the management of higher education institutions (p. 690).

To take a collective view about marketization in higher education from all the stakeholders of diverse sectors, Molesworth, Nixon, and Scullion (2009) held interviews of vice-chancellors and university heads of marketing or external relation and established an extensive support for marketing as a strategic activity. Gyure and Arnold (2001) and Vander Schee and Boyles (2010) also believe that universities may consider marketing requirements to be related to tactical motivation. It is because the essence of the relationship between students and institutions and the popularity of higher education puts pressure on institutions to make them competitive (Ng & Forbes, 2009). In addition, it is also assumed that marketing helps to create awareness among multiple stakeholders (Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordon, 2009) if implemented successfully using modern communication tools (Chapleo, 2011). Moreover, Joseph, Mullen, and Spake (2012) also determine students’ preference for choosing a modern university with an attractive campus with the latest technology as it turns students into university ambassadors by providing an identity and belonging to a higher education institution (Moel & Ashforth, 1992; Wilkins & Huisman, 2015). Kusumawati, Yanamandram, and Perera (2010) are also of the view that universities need to promote them to highlight their strengths and provide students with reasons to choose a university.

With the rapid expansion and globalization, marketing turned out to be exceptionally essential for the universities (both private and public) in Pakistani context (Alam, Saeed, & Malik, 2016) if they really want to be recognized as compared to their other counterparts as the modern methods of marketing are preferred by Pakistani students (Abbas, 2014). Mehmood
et al. (2016) also show that through the promotional content, higher education institutions can help students participate more, gain the necessary feedback, correct misunderstandings and shape their careers. Ahmad and Dar’s study (2015) also strongly supports students’ preference for marketization choices as highly informational and carefully written text (Amjad & Shakir, 2014) easily influences their decision. However, it is argued that the educational institutes should follow different priorities and goals while adopting the marketing strategies as compared to the corporate world (Alam et al., 2016). In short, there is a general consensus that understanding, developing and communicating institutional brand is of great value to the universities (Duesterhaus & Duesterhaus, 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).

2.2. Hazards associated with marketization in higher education

There is an extensive literature that reflects various challenges associated with the marketization of higher education (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009; Chapleo, 2010; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). For example, Chapleo (2010) warns against adopting the commercial approaches without modifying it to the need of a higher education context. There are several studies that argue that the rhetoric and imagery of promotional content can be deceptive. The major misleading data can be categorized into the following categories: omission of fact and selective reporting; misguiding lexical choices, misleading attributes, misleading endorsement, inconsistencies in facts, errors, carefully prepared comparisons and claims without references (Bradley, 2013).

It is also perceived that high moral values are mostly associated with educational institutes; however, the “rosy prospectuses” that are “misleading” students’ (Mathews, 2014) through their misleading claims (Judson & Taylor, 2014) may lead towards losing the trust of students and university. Marketing may bypass the filter of skepticism through which the young generation typically perceive other advertisements. Many researchers feel that the shift towards marketized university has a deleterious impact on the university (Bennett, 2010) due to which the universities are like machines where there are no more teachers and students but “suppliers” and “consumers”. These changes are considered threatening which are evidently affecting the education culture (Gibbs, 2001; Guthrie & Neumann, 2007). Apart from the misleading imagery and lexical choices, there are some other basic misrepresentations in terms of the purpose of higher education in university prospectuses. In this regard, Gibbs (2007, pp.3–11) also explores “…a general shift from … higher education as a public good to one where it is viewed as an extension of self-interested economic policy”. While talking about the wrong priorities of higher education, Astore (2009, pp.4–9) is of the view that we are sending wrong messages to the students by inculcating in them the ideology that their university experience will increase their “advancement potential” by emphasizing the need for improved “marketization” of our institution so that we can better sell ourselves to students”. Another deceptive aspect of promotional content is the use of numbers and statistics where misleading data can misguide the students. Sometimes, the information is omitted and selective reporting of data is done intentionally to disclose or hide information that is imperative for a correct interpretation of the claim (Hastak & Mazis, 2011). According to Hastak and Mazis (2011), the confusion due to semantic issues can mislead the clients about the claim.

Taberner (2018) investigated the degree of impact of marketization on the English HE sector with a particular focus on the effect of marketization on the faculty nature of work in six English universities, i.e. ancient and post-1992. The interviewees were of the view that management appeared to focus too much on economic efficiency in terms of students’ intake than the quality of education. Due to marketization, “the academic voice has been gradually eroded” (P.20) and many academics have lost their status as teaching professional and have been marginalized.

However, it is believed that the academia should follow the higher ethical values while adopting the marketing strategies (Bradley, 2013). Firstly, because the advertised material is
expected to be life-changing and cannot be tested before purchasing. Secondly, the university marketing is for the vulnerable group. Third, universities should be conscious of the high standards in marketing as it is going to build their status and reputation in terms of the scholarship. These findings corroborate with the results of Cucchiara, Gold, and Simon (2011) who also assert through their qualitative study as to how marketization is affecting the education sector and its communication style. However, the researcher agrees with Lynch (2006), Cucchiara et al. (2011) and Bradley (2013) that marketing practices in the university should carry the responsibility of public expectation by carefully presenting the evidence. Sharrock (2010, pp.365–367) also points out that intellectual honesty is basic for professional identity and social responsibility. In short, universities should try to articulate and develop their brand quite clearly by developing harmony and acknowledging the presence and contribution of the university and the faculty (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007, pp.942; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002).

3. Methodology

3.1. Selection of sample and its justification

The researcher generated data through a purposeful sampling technique. According to Patton (2002: 230), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth”. Purposeful sampling is also suitable for all those researchers who want to do research on promotional material (Askehave, 2007; Fairclough, 1993; Hui, 2009). The researcher conducted six interview sessions with those who are responsible for creating the marketing discourse of university to understand the marketing practices from their point of view. Participants were selected from the three groups of universities, i.e. group one is of pre-70s public sector, group two is of two post-70s public sector and group three is of private sector universities.

Group one is a set of public sector universities that were established before 1970 and located in diverse regions of Pakistan. All universities in Group one are classified by the diversity of Arts and Sciences disciplines. These institutions have similar control (public), high level of undergraduate enrollment and are essentially Flagship Universities in their respective regions. They also share high research activities and have greater residential settings.

Group two is a set of public sector universities that were established after 1970. These universities are also located in diverse regions of Pakistan. All universities in group two are also marked by the diversity of arts and Science disciplines.

Group three is a set of private sector universities. As the majority of private sector universities have been established after the 90s, no further group could be established under this category in terms of the date of establishment. The selected universities are also located in different provinces of Pakistan. These universities also offer diverse Arts and Sciences disciplines.

The distribution of institutions into groups aligns with the research questions that guided this study. This placement of samples helped the researcher to investigate similarities and dissimilarities among three different types of universities. Furthermore, the major reason for the limited sample is the qualitative nature of research (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). There were total six participants from six universities, i.e. Iqra University (IU), Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU), Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST), COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) and University of Peshawar (UoP).

3.2. Theoretical framework

Bhatia’s (1993) Applied Genre Analysis not only provided a detailed framework for move-analysis but also emphasized the context of genres in which it takes place. The model has been given below (Table 1):
As Bhatia (1993) points out that one can take any step as per need from the above-mentioned model, the researcher is specifically interested in the specialist information. Thus, Bhatia’s genre approach is the most suitable analytic approach for the present study as it takes up socio-cultural and psycholinguistic aspects of text construction and interpretation to answer the question “why are specific discourse genres written the way they are” (Bhatia, 1993, p.47).

3.3. Tools of data collection

The data were collected through interviews to get information about the purpose, content and organization of the promotional content. Senior marketing personnel and the concerned departments who deal with marketization of university were selected as they were considered to be the representative experts who can define the fundamental characteristics of relevant matters by drawing on their specialist knowledge (De Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Tremblay, 1982). The names and references of the interviewees have been kept hidden for maintaining confidentiality.

Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted to get the opinion regarding university marketing practices. Semi-structured interviews are considered to be the most suitable (Jawad, Hassan, & Rasli, 2012) to explore the complex issues penetrated (Chisnall, 1992; Gummesson, 2005) in line with other marketization studies (Hankinson, 2004). These types of interviews also give liberty to the interviewees to freely elaborate and even go off-topic to provide more valuable and genuine data. The normal duration of the interviews was not more than 30 min. The researcher kept an interview guide during interviews; however, the respondents were allowed to expand upon concepts and ideas according to their own choice. The researcher audio recorded the interviews with the prior approval of the interviewee. The data regarding the interview are given under the major questions.

4. Data analysis

The interviews served to explain or demystify the professional practices and to seek all that “we need to know about how expert professionals construct, interpret, use and exploit genre conventions in the performance” (Bhatia, 2015, p.19). The five major questions were asked to take the information; however, as the interviews were semi-structured, the researcher got to know about many related issues linked to promotional content. The data have been categorized under the following headings.

4.1. Reasons behind marketization

The experts are of the view that they need marketing because they want to inform the students and the parents that they are the best choice for offering “the best” courses, “the best” environment and “the best” academic programs. Through the promotional content, the universities share their strength in terms of faculty portfolio, technical facilities, lab facilities, courses, research productivity and rankings. The promotional content also helps to guide the students about the admission schedule, entry requirements, semester fee and rest of the university proceedings.

| Table 1. An applied genre analysis theoretical framework (Bhatia, 1993) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Step** | **Description** |
| 1 | Placing the given genre-text in a situational context |
| 2 | Surveying existing literature |
| 3 | Refining the situational/contextual analysis |
| 4 | Selecting corpus |
| 5 | Studying the institutional context |
| 6 | Linguistic analysis |
| 7 | Specialist information in genre analysis |

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ranging from the first day of the university till the last. In this regard, the genre experts from pre-70s universities asserted that

We do not need much promotion as our universities are students’ first preference and they seek admission in the other universities only when they do not fulfil the merit criteria of our universities.

On the other hand, the post-70s and private sector universities did not deny the importance of marketing while giving preference to high-quality education and other academic standards to be successful.

4.2. The major sources of marketization
The pre-70s universities consider the news of the university in the newspaper through the third party as the major source of marketing. The news can be related to any achievement or university day to day proceedings. The major sources of marketing among the universities are newspapers, social media, Google adverts, workshops, conferences, banners, websites, brochures, exhibitions, newsletters, souvenirs, billboards, career counselling sessions and FM radio. Moreover, admission ads are considered the most important by the pre-70s universities as they think that the students are already aware of the “big names” of these universities and the universities do not spend much money and human resource on promotional content to be known by the students as their major concern is to ensure information to the prospective students about admission dates. For this, they mainly rely on newspaper ads besides social media and websites. For example, QAU representative was of the view that

We have a quota for each area and it is considered the best approach to reach backward areas through newspaper where the students might not have access to the internet.

Likewise, the official from UoP told that

We usually receive more than twenty thousand applications against two thousand seats. In this context, marketization of the university loses its importance.

However, they also pondered that marketing is the need of the time and the university is trying to be up-to-date specifically through the website.

4.3. Consultation with advertising agencies
The majority of the genre experts told that advertising agencies are contacted to prepare designs. One of the specialists from QAU told that

Every department individually compiles the data and the individual department decides as to which strength, in term of labs, technical facilities, faculty portfolio, courses and courses codes are to be presented in prospectus.

For the final version, the content is given to advertising agencies to make it more attractive and effective. However, one university from the private sector and one from the pre-70s public sector told that they do not consult advertising agencies; rather, they rely on their own staff.

4.4. Counter check of information
The genre experts believe that all the universities are using exaggerated language and asserting that they are the best choice but the real thing is to quantify the information and to provide the solid figures to prove it. One of the experts from pre-70s universities told that

If someone says it’s the best and it has never been declared in rankings, then who is going to trust. It should show a declared position or ranking.
One genre specialist from private sector informed that

When I joined this university three years back, the information related to fee etc. was considered confidential. The students used to come to the admission office to know about the fee structure. We planned that we don’t need to hide the overall fee and subject wise fee as the students ultimately get to know about it and they have to pay it.

All the specialists believe that technical information related to the course information, the codes of courses, etc. should be cross-checked and the universities should ensure that fake information is not provided in promotional content.

4.5. Reasons behind scarcity of prospectuses
The majority of the universities do not provide the prospectuses in hard form to the students nowadays. Instead, students are provided with admission guide or brochures. The university representatives gave two reasons behind this: First, the prospectuses are too lengthy and the students do not appear to be interested in lengthy content. Instead, they want to take short information regarding disciplines, eligibility criteria and the fee structure. For this, admission guide or brochures which are the contracted version of the prospectuses are considered more suitable as they convey the required information in 30 to 40 pages. Second, by providing the prospectuses in soft form, the universities have decreased the processing fee of admission as the admission guide or brochures, being short, are provided free of cost. Previously, the universities used to take charges of the promotional content from the students. Answering the researcher’s apprehension whether the universities will publish prospectuses in future, one of the university representatives from post-70s universities informed that

It is not possible to deny the importance of the prospectuses. The limited hard copies of prospectuses are still provided to all the important offices and organizations for promotional function and the soft copy is always available on the university website.

However, all the specialists informed the researcher that they are either offering or in the process of providing the online admissions for students’ convenience.

4.6. Most influential characteristics of promotional content
The experts argue that the promotional content is not just for promotion; rather, it provides the roadmap and tells the dos and don’ts of admission. A promotional content can appeal to the students if the university is successful in telling the prospective students how this institution is better than others. One of the university representatives reflects that

The information regarding rankings, facilities, fee structure, facilities, recognition and achievements can be important for students and parents.

If the students are looking for a practical degree, they want to find where they will stand in the market after the completion of the degree and for the research students, the information regarding research productivity of the university is the most important factor. The expert professionals also give importance to the quantification of the information. Declaring any university as the best is not sufficient for students as they need solid facts and figures.

4.7. Influence of promotional content on students’ decision
The majority of the experts believe that decisions are not made due to promotional content as the beauty of promotional content does not decide the number of students in the university. However, two university officials, i.e. one from post-70s and one from private sector universities agreed that

the promotional content like information about the university, facilities, environment and visiting places can affect the choice of students.
4.8. Satisfaction level with the current approaches of marketing

All the universities discourage too much marketization aspects in purely academic activity. They criticized the overuse of visuals and colors by the universities. The university representatives believe that

Impressive marketing, video making and flowery language are not what the institutions need to be successful in the real sense.

Interestingly, CUI, whose prospectus was too colorful, also discouraged the bright colors and showed the researcher their 2019 prospectus which used soft color. All of them agreed to follow the philosophy of straightforwardness and truthfulness of the information as aggressive promotional content lead towards a lack of trust. People do not trust exaggerated language and manipulation of words as the words can lose their meanings in this way. The majority of the experts believe that the students do not want to read the lengthy promotional content; instead, they need to-the-point information about fee structure, eligibility criteria and the disciplines. Thus, the specialists were in favor of a shorter form of promotional content either in the form of an admission guide or brochures. However, they also indicated the need for students’ representation in the university promotional contents. Regarding the formal writing style, they gave two major justifications:

First, it’s easy to handle the descriptive sentences. As the universities do not hire any linguist for content writing, it is difficult to write in an informal style. Second, in Pakistani culture, the complex and formal style is more appreciated and it creates a more sublime impression of the university.

4.9. Reasons behind less representation of students

Regarding the absence or less representation of students’ voice in terms of visual and content, the experts said that it is due to the culture of Pakistan. The universities prefer to show their leaders as compared to students as it creates an impact. People seem to trust these authentic figures in academia as they serve the purpose of a brand. One genre expert also revealed that

Sometimes the pictures of higher authorities are provided due to their own wish as they want to see themselves on the promotional content.

4.10. Major recommended modifications in the promotional content

The experts are of the view that change is natural in any document with the passage of time. One of the experts from pre-70s universities told that

Improvement is required in term of specifying it to individual faculty. I think its fine in present condition as well but the scope of development is always there according to time.

The major recommended modifications are: first, the informal and simple language style should be adopted as students appreciate the simple language. Second, more visuals should be added as they tell about the universities’ services and the future perspective of students. Third, the lengthy promotional content should be condensed in form of short brochures and admission guide to provide relevant and to-the-point information to the students as according to the experts students like simple and straightforward information.

They think that gone are the days when students used to read the detailed history of the university, welcome messages, etc. Now, they come with a definite mindset and they only need quick and short information regarding admission. Fourth, the experts think that they need to be more truthful and straightforward and should not hide overall fee and subject wise fee as ultimately students contact the admission office to get this information; so, it is better to provide it systematically. Fifth, they think that soft colors should be used in the university promotional contents to maintain a difference between academia and the rest of the advertisements.
4.11. Hazards associated with marketization of higher education

The genre specialists believe that marketing is carried out to remain in the competition as the rest of the universities have indulged in this practice, and if one university does not go for marketization, it will appear odd. Nonetheless, marketing is not the end in itself and it is only one of the strategies among many others to be successful. The professionals have strong faith that they are academia and they need to promote the same values and philosophies as the students cannot be guided by only marketization. One of the genre experts from private sector universities added that it's the capitalist time where the people are surrounded by a lot of marketing to the point of propaganda which becomes a source of uncertainty and doubt.

The university officials reflect that the most important thing for any marketer is to invest on academia, resource persons, faculty, facilities, conducive environment and the students' training and grooming. Many university officials told that they did not like to invest much in promotional contents now; instead, they want to spend the same amount on quality improvement of education. All the genre experts unanimously believe that this is the “word of mouth” which is their major source of marketing. The specialists told the researcher that the students’ interview regarding the factors that influence their university choice revealed that “reputation” in the society is the major factor that attracts them towards any university. Nowadays, students are more sensitive towards rankings and recognitions. One of the genre experts added that the students are even aware which university is offering its best services in term of ranking and excellence in any particular department and which one is the weakest department of that very university.

The universities need to prove the results by fulfilling HEC (Higher Education Commission) criteria and by the alumni flourishing in the industry as a practical evidence of the success of any institution if they want to exist in the market for a longer time.

5. Summary of findings

This study helped the researcher to explore the perspective of the expert members of the promotional genre. Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2004) suggest that insightful information from the experts of the discourse community can enhance the objectivity of the information and show the behavior of the discourse community towards the genre which is very important to understand the nature of any genre. The survey results show that professionals have formed a fairly mature attitude towards marketing. In this regard, this study does not corroborate with the earlier study conducted by Abbas (2014) who also held interviews of various experts in the Pakistani universities and found the need for robust marketing. Though there seemed to be a support for marketization as a strategic activity for the benefits associated with it, a majority of the experts in this study were in favor of spending more resources on improving the overall quality of education than spending lavishly on promotional aspects. It was observed that post-70s universities were more in favor of marketing as compared to the private sector and pre-70s universities. Generally, the experts like and want the universities to be promoted and known by the people through their high-quality standards in education and learning. Marketing has been considered only one factor among many others to survive in the hyper-competitive environment and to be recognized among the counterparts. A majority of the experts think that promotional content does not change the decision of the students.

In this regard, the specialists discourage usage of glossy colors and highly promotional or misleading data. They assert that the parents and the students want to know basic information. The experts also admitted that they intentionally give more importance to buildings and university high-ups as the students like the universities to be associated with the “big names” and “majestic buildings”. However, some of the professional experts admitted that more presence of students should be incorporated into visuals and content. Nonetheless, it is generally believed that the real success of the university has been linked up with up-to-the standard education. The widely held belief was that
reducing higher education to only market practices will not lead towards ultimate success. It is also noteworthy that the researcher observed the usage of corporate vocabulary quite frequently during the interviews. The words like “market”, “product”, “provide”, “offer”, “client” and “business” have been used by the professionals time and again which is another sign of absorption of marketing terminology and philosophy in the world of academia. It is also interesting to mention here that despite realizing the importance of quality education and discouraging the market forces, the universities are indulged in various marketing strategies. They are spending a huge amount on various types of promotional contents. Shortly, the supporters of marketization argue that the process of marketization will turn universities into more efficient and responsive to need of the students, parents, economy and society while those who opposed it on the basis of pedagogic, intellectual and cultural consequences also agree that there is no turning back from marketization as it has become unavoidable (Hall, 2018).

6. Conclusion
All the experts have the unanimous view that the universities cannot be promoted through promotional contents only. However, marketization is considered necessary to be in the “business” as marketing is common among all the universities and if any university doesn’t go for it, it will be considered awkward. The genre experts are of the view that it’s good enough if the other people are saying positive things about any university as the university's promotional content might be considered a “propaganda”. They are inclined to spend more on providing the resources and conducive educational environment to the students and the faculty than lavishly expending on promotional material like promotional contents. In this regard, the post-70s public sector universities are more inclined towards marketization trend as compared to pre-70s and private sector universities.

6.1. Limitations and prospects of future research
For the purpose of this study, only six universities have been taken into account. The scope of the interviews can also be increased by including more sample universities to generalize the opinion of the relevant persons involved in the preparation of the prospectuses. The next limitation is that the data have been collected through interviews leaving all the other conventional methods of data collection, e.g. questionnaire or observation. In the present context of the growing marketization of higher education, it is imperative to explore the opinion of the prospective students regarding the marketing materials. Questionnaires and interviews can be used to elicit the response of the students to know about their needs and the strategies they want to see in the prospectuses. The input of students can help to understand how they take the text, process the information and make a final decision. It can also help to know how a promotional text can effectively achieve the desired communicative purpose. The future researchers can also observe the effect of promotional content on universities’ admission ratio over the period of years.

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Author details
Ambreen Shahnaz 1
E-mail: ambreen@ciitwah.edu.pk
Samina Amin Qadir 1
E-mail: r.s.a.qadir@gmail.com
1 English, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

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