Genre Analysis of a Pakistani Footwear Brand Website: An Investigation of Content and Structure

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to undertake a genre analysis of a Pakistani shoe brand website to evaluate the strategic arrangement of its structure and content. Since the advent of online shopping, content like product descriptions and webpage orientation have become increasingly important. The primary goal of this research is to evaluate the website's structure, content, and alignment to explain how it is made convenient for online buyers. Bhatia's moves analysis of the sales letter is employed to identify the strategic approach that drives buyers to shop online. In this study, the seven moves are as follows: establishing credentials, introducing the offer, giving incentives, referring to the enclosed document, requesting additional conversation, applying pressure tactics, and concluding politely. For this purpose, the qualitative interpretative technique is utilized to assess the website's content and structure. Screenshots of the website have been used to examine the contents and how it is organized on the page. Finally, it is deduced that the website appears to be managed logically; nonetheless, it is required to provide detailed descriptions of products to make it more user-friendly.

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1. Introduction

With the quickening pace of technological advancement, where the internet has changed the prospects of life, websites are not only sources of disseminating information but are also integrated into e-commerce sites. These transmissions led to the formulation of a new discourse community for the user's genre of websites, which vary in their content and structure according to the targeted audience they address. Similarly, over the years, Pakistan’s popularity of internet shopping has grown significantly (Farrukh & Shehzad, 2019), but there has been limited investigation in the genre to assist future improvements in the structure and content of such websites to make them more convenient for shopping. In this article, a Pakistani shoe-wear brand is under investigation by
employing Bhatia’s model for genre analysis to explore the strategic alignment of all the components to fulfill the needs of its customers.

Online shopping has several advantages for both the purchaser and the enterprise. For shoppers, it saves a lot of their time, and they can compare and contrast their selected items with many other options that are available in the same store or at competing stores. Secondly, all the products of a specific store are available at the place, so anyone could shop easily without the restriction of time and hustle to move from store to store. Although online businesses have flourished immensely over the past two decades, still more investors prefer businesses that create either their websites or make their services accessible through social media platforms. The peculiarity of online sales and shopping was at its peak during COVID-19 and was one of its kind and a way of survival during the lockdowns (Srivastava, 2021). During the hard times when there was a shutdown, the businesses with online accessibility were at an advantage over those that only relied on the traditional physical shopping phenomenon.

Undoubtedly, online purchasing services make a business accessible to a variety of customers in a way that is otherwise not possible based on spatial and temporal boundaries. Also, it allows the stakeholders to address different demands of the consumers and a way more items to launch, so it can get a competitive advantage over other companies. Therefore, all these factors pave the road for more profit generation in business, the business so it is important to pay attention to this critical genre. However, possible insecurity is the doubt of customers (Andersen & Le wen, 2017) about how to make them rely on that products that have not touched and felt as they have done in physical or face-to-face shopping. For this purpose, language plays a crucial role in persuading the purchaser that this is the product thus, looking for, thus the functionality of e-commerce businesses is sole description of products.

The phenomenon of online shopping and businesses is accelerating in Pakistan day by day; approximately all the local and renowned brands are offering the services of online shopping through their websites. But this genre of e-commerce websites is still unexplored (Javed & Khan, 2014), whereas this study could be helpful for future entrepreneurs to establish and design better websites for their customers. Improvements in the content and structure of existing websites can make them more user-friendly and attract more customers.

Swales (1981) defined "genre" as an identifiable communication event defined by a set of communicative purpose(s) acknowledged and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it happens on a regular basis. Most of the time, it is highly organized and conventionalized, with limitations on permitted contributions based on their objectives. Positioning, shape, and functional value are all significant factors. These constraints, however, are frequently utilized by the discourse community of leading practitioners to attain private ambitions within the context of socially recognized objectives.

Genre analysis represents a genuine interest in the use of language to achieve specific communicative goals, rather than a detailed extension. Genre theory covers a lot of common ground in spite of the seeming different orientations. The recurrence of typical rhetorical situations, consistency of communicative purposes, or a generalized structural potential is not mutually exclusive. Far from it, these are mutually inclusive (Bhatia, 1996). This study will investigate a Pakistani shoe brand by employing Bhatia’s (1993) technique of move analysis to explore the
structure and content of the website to persuade the buyers. The study will answer the following questions:

How the website is strategically structured to address the demands of customers?

1. How the content of the website can be improved to make it convenient for the shoppers?

Websites are very revelatory in substantiating the image of any business, and further efforts to make its products easily available to the customers make them very popular among the general public. Similarly, all Pakistani brands have well-established websites to facilitate online shopping. This study will elaborate on the design of the shoe brand website Stylo and its organization to make it user-friendly for the targeted audience. The study will help new enterprises build their websites in a more efficient way to attract more purchasers. This research aims to:

1. To explore the strategic structure and content of the website and the way it addresses the demands of customer.
2. To suggest some descriptions that will make online shopping more convenient for purchasers.

The current genre-based analysis only investigates the Pakistani shoe wear brand Stylo; moreover, it only focuses on the shoe section of the brand not the clothing.

2. Literature Review

Bhatia (1997) revealed that the study of language, its use, and how it is applied in various contexts is a component of genre analysis (Bhatia V. K., 1997). As an approach to uncover structural patterns in texts, genre analysis has resulted in a profusion of research that gives knowledge of genre across academic fields. Additionally, different genre analysis techniques have also been developed by academics and used with both spoken and written materials. In recent years, the prominence of genre analysis and discourse analysis has exploded. Singh et al. (2012) conducted a study to elaborate that the contrastive rhetoric study and genre analysis have subsequently acquired more attention, with studies focused on textual or structural analysis. A genre analysis, in comparison to contrastive analysis, focuses primarily on generic structures and rhetorical functions such as moves, stages, schematic, or generic structures. Describing and accessing structural patterns in a genre is a reflective study that reflects how a language is utilized by language users, whether it is intended for academic usage, scientific discourse production, or professional written communication (Singh, Shamsudin, & Zaid, 2012).

The trend of e-commerce businesses has gained momentum over the past few decades, and so does the interest of researchers in marketing and presentation of their products on online platforms earned significance. Keeping in view the context of Pakistani purchasing perspectives; Farrukh and Shehzad (Farrukh & Shehzad, 2019) reaffirm that it has become vital to establish a reliable image of commercial enterprises online. It is done by establishing credentials so that customers can rely on services provided by the brand. As there is no physical presence of either product or guarantee of the stuff; in order to combat the insecurities of customers and backing them up with alternatives is the responsibility of the company.

Bhatia (2012) elucidates that innovations and technological advancements developed a new genre for analysis where the role of language is more prominent in professional settings. There has been tremendous growth in research efforts in disciplinary domains such as law, medicine and healthcare, accounting and management, and science and technology (Bhatia, 2012). There is
Currently, a greater understanding of the function of language not only in the development and distribution of disciplinary knowledge but also in the conduct of professional activities. Therefore, language plays a crucial role when it comes to persuading and gaining the trust of the customers. Therefore, genre analysis of commercial websites is a field of great interest as creativity is confined in this domain every enterprise has to play on the same pattern. In his methodological issues in genre analysis, Bhatia (1996) illustrates professional genres are more conform than literary genres, hence comparative studies can help to enhance the chances of development and better portrayal of information (Bhatia, 1996).

In this regard, Javed and Khan conducted research on consumers’ perceptions while shopping online delineating the application of strategies while designing the website is such a delicate task. The use of words incorporating cultural and social norms of the target audience, being aware of their emotions, and putting them on the display strategically needs an eye for detail. So what makes a website better for purchasers is its content; detailed descriptions of products, high-resolution images, and videos of how to handle appliances. Whereas in the case of fashion stores; size guides, the material used in manufacture, how to style them, and what events will be appropriate to use these products is described by blogs nowadays (Javed & Khan, 2014).

Moreover, Usunier et al. (2010) magnified the influence of social context in business websites and agrees on the fact that the sociocultural knowledge of the target audience holds a significant position in the success of online enterprises. As making selling online differs from selling goods or services face-to-face and it determines the shopping behavior of consumers. In this regard, the interests, festivals, culture, and even the geographic location of the target audience matter. By examination of the academic and professional "practice" show that the majority of academics and professional experts participate as part of their daily routine within what Bhatia refers to as a "socio-pragmatic space". Therefore such professional genres invariably work for the analysis of professional genres to be executed while at the same time expanding the scope of the formulation, interpretation, and usage of professional genres (Usunier & Roulin, 2010).

It is conventional to adopt the approach of critical genre analysis as it is a comprehensive extension, confirmation, or application of one linguistic paradigm or another. Moreover, it demonstrates a genuine interest in the use of language to achieve specific communication aims. It is not an extension of linguistic formalism in this sense but preferably provides a grounded account of language behavior in specific social, academic, and professional contexts (Bhatia V. K., 1996). Therefore interpreting the competitors’ websites, new and existing businesses can get an edge over the others by adopting their layouts and patterns of persuasion with a blend of innovation.

While reflecting critically on genre analysis Bhatia (2012) portrayed Critical Genre Analysis (CGA), as an instrument to "demystify" professional activity. This precise outlook focuses on generic conventions as well as professional practices; explaining openly or implicitly articulated meanings in genres or socially acknowledged communication purposes, and "private intentions" is intriguing. CGA also addresses the dictatorial power and impact of technology in professional life in the age of computer-mediated communication. Professional practices thereby bring clarity to accomplishments in particular professional settings and become standardized as long as the members of the professional community continue to adhere to the norms that are disseminated by the members of a specific professional discourse community (Bhatia V. K., 2012).
Bhatia’s approach of moves analysis (1993) in promotional sales letters is utilized to analyze the website under study. It includes namely: establishing credentials, introducing the offer, offering incentives, referring to an enclosed document, inviting further communication, using pressure tactics, and ending politely. The main purpose of employing these strategies and moves is to promote the products and persuade the readers to buy your product that is possible by eliciting a response from them (Bhatia V. K., 1993).

3. Research Methodology

Genre analysis unravels the cohesion and functionality of discourse at multiple levels. It decodes the content and its orientation on the website. In order to analyze the website of Stylo the qualitative interpretive paradigm is used; researchers employed the critical genre analysis approach by Bhatia to decipher the structural construction, and evaluate the layout, and its content. For this purpose screenshots of the website's screen are used to elaborate on all the seven moves described by Bhatia for the genre of sales letters (Bhatia V. K., 1993).

4. Moves Analysis

4.1 Move 1: Establishing Credentials

Consumer loyalty and brand trust are intertwined, and both enable organizations to achieve long-term competitive advantage. In order to maximize the organization’s revenues, trust also helps the company to investigate fresh possibilities for the company’s long-term growth. Here is the snapshot (figure 1) of the website Stylo that shows the copyrights of the brand.

In order to indicate that this website is from a credible source and that the proprietor has all the rights, a copyrights tag is positioned at the bottom of the page. Secondly, the immediate portrayal of the company’s logo at the start and the web link domain name under the brand’s name shows credibility appeal on the brand’s part. Similarly, displaying the official contact number, email address, privacy policy, about us section, help, and chat all contribute to building a credible image of the brand.
Thus it is a reliable online shoe store website that can be trusted and contacted in case you need help after or during shopping.

4.2 Move 2: Introducing the Offer:

On the opening of the website first glimpse that shopper gets to see in the header is the offer of free delivery nationwide upon shopping for more than a specific amount. Then on the homepage, first of all, particular categories are shown in the header then there will be the living images of the products and services. One of the images displays the blessed Friday sale offer that offers 20 percent flat off. Further down, offers appear to swiftly inform visitors of what is going on and what the seller is providing. Firstly it will display the best-selling products with the pictures and prices of the items, which show the trending shoes frequently bought by visitors. It will motivate the purchaser and boost his confidence in the products that these items must have met the expectations of previous clients, so it is safe to shop from the site.

![Figure 2: Introducing the Offer]

Secondly, a bold section showing the sale category is right below the bestselling products. This section takes up more space on the page, and the word sale is written five times vertically on the right side. In the sales section, value is emphasized by highlighting that all products placed in this section are under rupees fifteen hundred. It is human nature to go for less and discounted prices while shopping and as there is no option to bargain online so keeping in view the need of shoppers brand itself offers fewer prices.

4.3 Move 3: Offering Incentives

Since Stylo is shoe selling brand and the website under inspection is an e-commerce website whose purpose is basically to sell its products to visitors. For this purpose, Bhatia (1993) describes additional three categories in his genre analysis to examine the incentives. It includes offering products or services, essential detailing of the offer, and indicating the value of the offer. All three factors are paramount for convincing visitors to shop.

a. Offering product/services

The homepage of Stylo exhibits all the services and products offered by the company. First and foremost, visitors will notice several sections just beneath the logo; it quickly exposes all of the categories of related products that it sells in the header. For instance, categories like sales, women,
wedding collection, kids, apparel, bags, jewelry, fragrances, and accessories are in the header. Within each category, there are subsections to make it easy to find the desired product quickly. The nodes of the website are illustrated below.

![Image of website with categories]

**Figure 2 Offering product/services**

Right below the header, a spirited demonstration of all the products is displayed through full-screen photo text “living” images to grab the attention of the customer visiting the website for the first time. Stylo shows the blessed Friday sales offer, and then according to season, it offers a winter collection. Apart from this winter is considered to be the season of weddings in Pakistan hence it also incorporates the wedding collection into its sorts. It gives a glimpse of all the services that the company has to offer so that visitors can quickly get an insight. Thus, Stylo comprehensively integrates the regional and social context of its buyers while offering its services.
b. Essential detailing of the offer

Moreover, to persuade the buyers, the seller must provide all the essential details of the product so that visitors can buy with satisfaction. Stylo displays high-resolution images of the products, and moving the cursor over the photograph zooms out to give the consumer a deeper
appreciation for the stuff they are scanning. Secondly, it shows the price and discount levied on the products. In addition to this, it proposes a size chart with the standard sizes of the UK, USA, and local manufacturers. Thirdly, it explains the shipping and returns policy to the users to gain the confidence of the clients. So that in case of mishaps or unexpected products, buyers can contact the company. Not only this, even before purchasing a customer have some queries related to services he can ask the question by availing ‘ask a question’ option.

**Figure 5: Essential detailing of the offer**

c. Indicating value of the offer

According to Bhatia (1993), it is significant to declare the value of the offer, to make the buyer admit he is spending money for the value of goods. In this regard, Stylo’s homepage displays a sales offer where, on blessed Frida, buyers will get a flat 20% off that will be on all items. Secondly, it indicates that all products will be sold under Rs. 1500 sale section. Thirdly, opening a product by clicking on it shows, the screen the actual price and the percentage of discount, offered as shown in the figure. Moreover, it also tells how much stock is left; for example, the figure attached below says that only one item is left in stock. It pushes buyers to make a quick decision regarding the product, whether they should buy it or not. Similarly, reduced prices add to the value of products and compel buyers to purchase these products.

**Figure 3 Indicating value of the offer**
4.4 Move 4: Referring to enclosed documents
The brand alludes to its blog post near the bottom of the homepage, where several style guides are provided to help visitors get the most out of the services.

4.5 Move 5: Inviting further communication
As seen in Figure 1, there is a "get in contact" area at the bottom of the page where brands provide hyperlinks to their social media pages so that customers may follow what's happening there. Second, when the client visits the site, a pop-up window appears, asking for the user's email address and permission to sign up for the newsletter. It is a vital step in developing a relationship with the targeted audience, as well as keeping track of the buyers and delivering updates on their interest in the store's new launch or sales, among other things.

![Figure 4 Referring to Enclosed Documents](image)

4.6 Move 6: Using pressure tactics
It is elaborated in the earlier moves that a brand persuades its visitors through multiple price reductions by employing sales strategies. It incorporates knowledge of social and spatial contexts, i.e., weddings and the winter season, in the live image section. Similarly, the number of items left in stock is also mentioned so that buyers can make a quick decision before they miss out.

Stylo has not represented its product adequately, like many other online shoe-selling brands in Pakistan. A screenshot of an American sandal shop, "Crocs," is attached below to draw a comparison between the approaches of the two brands. Its product descriptions are exceptional and much needed, as they illustrate how the sandal feels after wearing it. It does not rely on the picture alone but also incorporates explanatory content. It mentions the size of the heel, style of the sandal, and manufacture of the sandal. Instead of moving to blogs within the product description, it gives the consumer an idea of how to style it. Indeed, it is a crucial pressure tactic and should be adopted by the Stylo. However, a few tactics, like all below 1500 RS, Friday off, and no items left in stock, are operated by Stylo.
4.7 Move 7: Ending politely

However, when someone shops from the website on checkout, the company thanks the customers for shopping from their site. Similarly, after the confirmation of the order and after successful delivery of the order, the customer receives either an email or SMS from the brand saying ‘thank you. Along with this, the brand asks for feedback and reviews of the customer’s experience to improve its services. It leaves a remarkable impression on buyers that they will again consider buying from the same brand, as the suggestions and opinions of customers are welcome.

5. Conclusion

The application of Bhatia’s move analysis to the website of Pakistani shoe brand Stylo revealed that the website is strategically organized to meet the demands of customers, which is in line with the global trend of online shopping. Since women make up the majority of the company’s target market, the decision to use the color pink as a theme supports the objective. After that, moving on to the alignment of the website’s components in the header, all the sections and their pertinent subsections are displayed, making it simple for customers to find the products they want in the appropriate section. The services, deals, and offers are displayed at a glance immediately beneath them through the living images. The section on top-selling products is followed by a bold section on sales that occupies more space on the page and is therefore more noticeable as you scroll down. Customers prefer lower prices, so prominence is important. However, the webpage also includes blogs about styling guides near the bottom. Contact details and links to the brand’s social media pages are provided at the bottom, demonstrating its credibility.

Last but not least, insufficient product descriptions are drafted as a flaw in the website's content. It is advised that new businesses adopt the detailed and expressive evocative patterns of international brands' product descriptions. Additionally, the website's exploration demonstrates the multi-dimensional nature and diversity of this genre’s features and capabilities.

References
