Study of Information Generating Linguistic Features in Online Brands of Pakistani Fashion Blogs

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Abstract

This research studies the function of language of online university prospectuses through 1st dimension, i.e.,involved versus informational production, of multidimensional analysis modeled by Biber (1988). A corpusbased methodology is used. Corpus has been collected from Online Pakistani fashion brand's blogs, and fashion blogs of male and female categories having their two products clothes and shoes were selected. Multidimensional tagger (v 1.0) is used to tag andanalyze the data. Scores and co-occurrences of linguistic features are calculated quantitatively and are interpretedqualitatively through 1st dimension of multidimensional analysis. The results show that onlinefashion blogs fall in the category of informational production. Among two categories of shoes and clothes of male and female, blogs on male clothes were extremely informational as compared to the blogs of female clothes, in the same way blogs on female shoes are more informational as compared to male shoes. Among all categories blogs on male clothes are extremely informational due to the excessive use of nouns, adjectives and preposition etc. Highly informational text indicates that blogs were written with keen interest and care.

Keywords: Online fashion blogs, Brands, Multidimensional analysis, Corpus, Co-occurrence of linguisticfeatures, Informational features, involved features

1. Introduction

Marketing, branding, fashion, and internet are closely interlinked to each other. Internet is now-a-day's need in every field of life. Same is the case with fashion branding. Fashion brands advertise themselves and their products through internet. Internet marketing through different social net-works (Facebook, twitter, yahoo, webpages, blogs etc.) has become the common phenomenon. Blog is also one of them. Blog is one of the online source of information. The word blog comes from weblog, a log published on the Web, so blogs are known as weblogs, but shortly used as blogs (Tiainen, 2011). There are different kinds of blogs (Academic blogs, news blogs, personal blogs, and fashion blogs). A fashion blog can cover many items such as specific items of clothing, accessories, and celebrity fashion choices (Cate, 2006).

The present study is on linguistic features of fashion blogs of famous fashion brands. And fashion blogs used to be enriched with lots of information about product along with image that creates and enhanced consumer's interests. In fact fashion blogs are strategic ways of the publicity of fashion brands (Glover, 2006). Blogs are replete with many kinds of features, i.e. information, story ideas, diary writing style, simple clear layout, tips and they contains thick background information (Glover, 2006; Sedeke, 2012).We can say that blogs with such rich features are casually considered indicators of latest news about phenomenon as that idea is strongly supported by Farrel and Drezner (2007) "The real value of searching the net, including blogs, is that you get a live picture of what people are thinking about certain issues. It means that you can predict if there is going to be an issue that's going to grow and become something you need to respond to before it gets to the mainstream press" (Farrel & Drezner , 2007, p.25).All the past researches studied blogs as promotional tool through genre analysis, content analysis, CDA. Linguists and non-Linguists have studied blogs keeping in view different fields.

Up till now blogs from different areas have been investigated such as academic, marketing, general blogs, and social blogs with respect to the field of linguistics and non-linguistic.

In non-linguistic field work on marketing blogs have been done (Dewan, 2001; Dhār, 2007; Onishi, 2012). Herring, Scheidt, Bonus and Wright has (2004) examined characteristics of blog's authors, and for that purpose, investigation was carried out through features of blogs. Structural features of academic blogs have been discussed by Tiainen (2011, p .32). General Blogging has been carried out with different perspectives as behavior of consumers towards products in blogs, blogs in social research, and sentiment analysis of Japanese blogs by (Hookway, 2008; Kulmala, 2011; Ptaszynski, 2012).

If we talk about the research works in the field of linguistics we will see that up till now a lot of work has been done with different perspectives. Such as linguistic and communicative features of blogs, characteristics of blogs, and register analysis of blogs, have been investigated in different studies by Stuart (2006), Herring, Scheidt, Bonus and Wright has (2004), Daems, Speelman & Ruette (2013) respectively. Very

few researches on online fashion blogs cover the area of linguistics and particularly language. There were few research questions at the start of research these are:

2. Research Questions
This research will answer the following major question:
- Is the language of fashion blogs Informational or Interactional?
- Is there any difference between fashion and other blog's language?
- Is fashion blog's language resembles with the language of adds?

3. Literature Review
Blogs provides opportunity of online communication, information, and choice to its available audience. "Blogs are the latest genre of Internet communication" (Herring et al., 2004, p. 1). Internet sales through blogs, presents convenience, information about product, and free choice of selection of product to its customers. Kaye (2005) says about blogs that they offer their users opinion and information regarding respective fields and gratified their needs with the hopes that they are being satisfied (as cited in Kornejava, 2012, p. 18). Social media, advertisement and blogs are interlinked to each other, as social media is the basic way of all turns.Fashion brands take the support of fashion blogs in order to get their products advertise. Except that there are several reasons advertising in fashion blogs:
- Increment in product sale and profit
- To maintain brand's image or real place
- To make updates about new changes in the products according to new demands
- To introduce their new product by mentioning the good performance of other products of same company
- To intense the value of their products
  (Manohar, 2011 . . . as cited in Matikainen, 2009, p. 29).

Blogs have been studied on many perspectives using different methodology in different areas like academic, marketing, politics, advertisement and fashion. Up till now researches on blogs with the methodology of Netnography, survey and interview have been conducted. For example, Tiainen (2011, p. 33) has investigated the academic blogs. Analysis of formal features, blogs author's characteristics and structure of language carried out in that research. Blogs are a source of developing fluency and lexical complexity in writing. This idea has been explored by Fellner (2006). Blogs are considered effective tool of learning and communication in educational field that idea was explored by (Song & Chan, 2008). Arnot (2011) has explored the idea that blogs are basic tool of transitional communication and information. Corporate Blogs are characterized as a source of positivity and openness: full of positive ideas about advertisement, and the way they use quite informal and open. That claim was explored by the studies of (Cho & (Placeholder1) Huh, 2010; Mazurek, 2008) where they selected blogs and analyzed them by interview and questionnaire. Onishi and Manchanda (2012) explored blogs on the perspective of marketing activity, blogging and sales. They have made comparison of new and traditional media. As their major assumption was whether new media effects traditional media or not? A text mining analysis was used, and the result revealed that the new media get fame from traditional media and effect the traditional one as well. Allen and Austin (2011, p. 7) analyzed the content of political blogs, they concluded that blog is such kind of place replete with divergence and unique opinion that they offer to convince their audience. Blogs are used to be a source of informal communication, and hybrid in its nature. This idea was explored by (Herring et al., 2004). Linguistic and communicative features of weblogs have been analyzed by Stuart (2006). Tilburg (2012) has explored fashion blogs as the source of advertisement and positive information. Kulmala (2011) examined fashion blogs, and the behavior of consumers and companies towards products. Detterbeck, Lamoreaux and Sciangula (2012) worked on the information seeking behavior of fashion blogs.

There are two or three studies on fashion blogs that have been analyzed by (Marianne, 2011; Tilburg, 2012; Kulmala, 2011) but their studies were either based on qualitative mode or survey research. No such direct research is available on fashion brand's blogs dealing with the methodology of Biber to analyze their language. So having all above reasons the present study will be conducted with the methodology of MD analysis by Biber, by using first dimension i.e. 'involved versus informational production'

4. Methodology
4.1. Research design
This study is corpus-based study for the establishment of online fashion blogs as informational orinvolved register. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to study online fashion blogs through Dimension 1, i.e., involved versus informational production, of multidimensional analysis proposed byBiber (1988).

4.2. Corpus building

The sample for the present study is comprised of 470 fashion blogs equally collected from each fashion brand. As two products (clothes and shoes) of males and females are selected, so data is collected in such manner: 115 blogs of males' shoes brands and 125 blogs of males clothes brands, same has been done with females brands: 115 blogs of shoes brands and 125 blogs of clothes brands. So in this way 235 blogs are from males fashion brands and 235 blogs from females fashion brands. And total 470 blogs. Before saving the data in relevant files, clarity of data was very important and crucial step. Being the quantitative research, the present research required textual data only. So before saving the data from online fashion blogs to word file, all numerical or extra values, bullets, pictures, graphics, headings, signs, names of the writers or contributing persons, hyperlinks, email addresses etc. were deleted from the data. Each word file was firstly converted into text file because multidimensional analysis tagger (MAT) accepts only 'txt' formats as input.

4.3. Data analysis

Multidimensional analysis tagger (MAT) v.1.0 was used to tag the data. 'The multidimensional analysis tagger (MAT) is a program for Windows that replicates Biber's (1988) for the multidimensional functional analysis of English texts, generally applied for studies on text type or genre variation' (Nini, 2013, p. 01). As present research has studied the online prospectuses through Dimension 1, i.e., involved vs. informational production, so few linguistic features are studied. This dimension is having two poles, i.e., positive and negative. The highest score marks the text as 'involved' and the lowest score declares the text as 'informational' text.

5. Results and discussions

As Biber (1988) declares that texts used to be different from one another due to many reasons as they have different functions what they perform in texts. The texts can be of any kind, formal or informal, abstract or non-abstract, narrative or non-narrative, informational or involved. And as the present study revolves around Dimension 1 'Involved vs. Informational Production'. Negative and positive scores shows the flow of Dimension, as Negative scores show that text is informational and positive scores shows that text is involved in its nature. While there are some linguistic features some of them falls in negative category some in positive category, and co-occurrence of these linguistic features tend to affirm that what sort of the text and in which pole it is falling. The given figure confirms that all the online fashion blogs are informational in their nature because they all carry high negative scores as compared to positive scores.
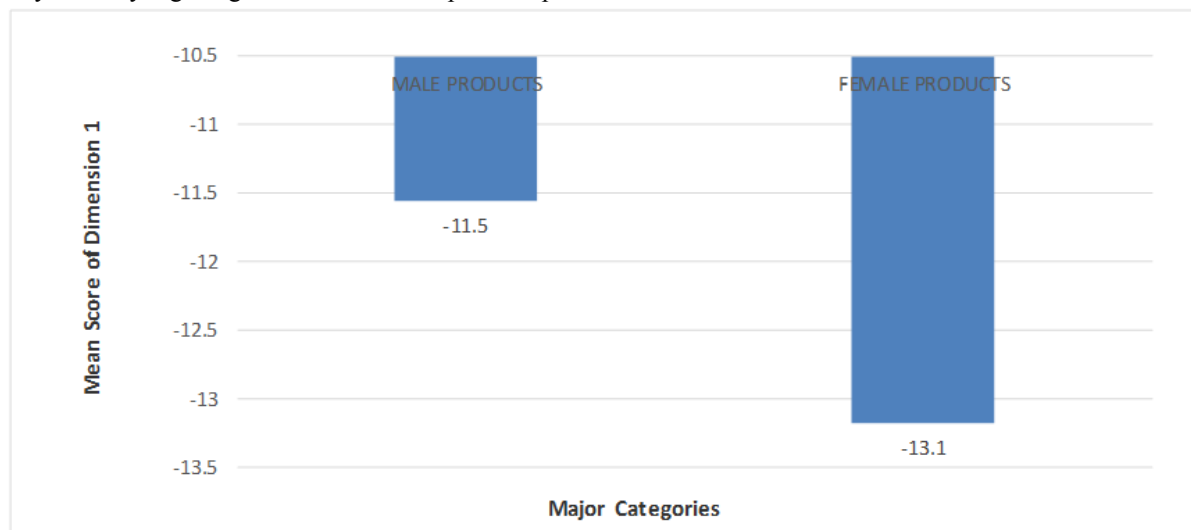

Figure 1. Comparison of Blogs of Major two categories: Males and Females products with respect to Dimension 1: Involved vs. Informational Production

The figure shows that fashion blogs of both categories are falling in the pole of negative scores means the fashion blogs are informational in their nature as having negative scores. Both products contain negative scores: -11.5 and -13.1. And co-occurrences of linguistic features makes the whole difference, as in this respect Biber (1988) has argued "Dimensions are bundles of linguistic features that co-occur in the text and become the cause of some underlying change" (p. 55).
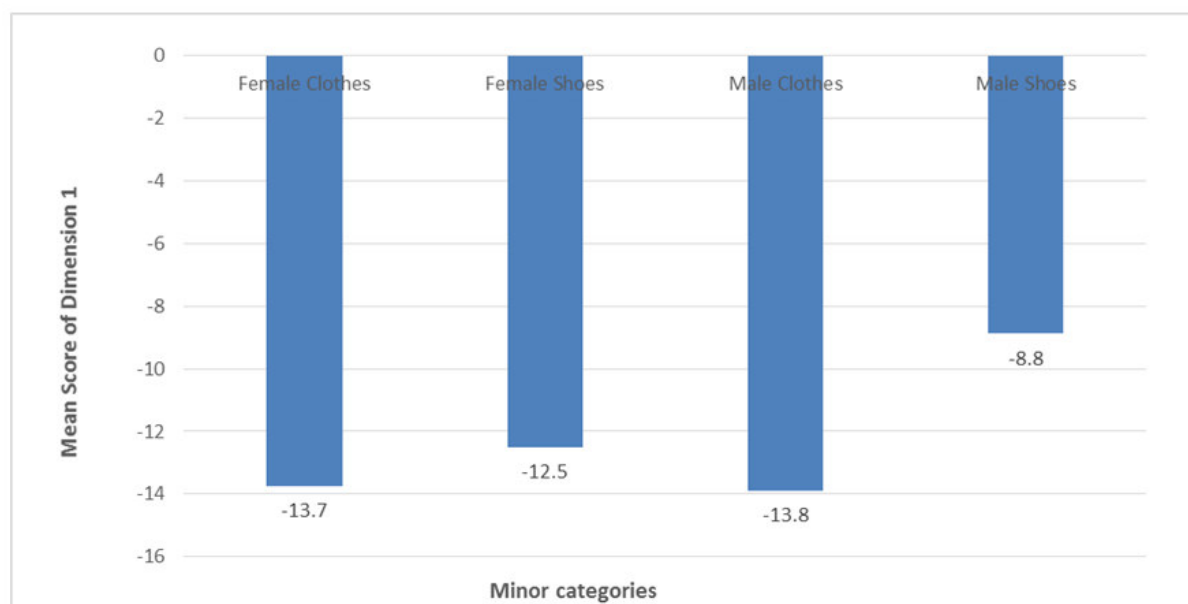
Figure 2. Comparison of Blogs of Minor Categories: Males' shoes & clothes and Females' shoes & clothes with respect to Dimension 1: Involved vs. Informational Production

The above figure revealing the true nature of all minor categories that, they all are informational in their nature. Further, the comparison is showing that fashion blogs about clothes of both genders are more informational than shoes.

5.1. Interpretation of Dimension 1

To interpret and understand this dimension it is necessary to know each and every detail of that dimension: how negative and positive scores affects changes in results. As dimension 1 'Involved versus Informational Production' consist of twenty seven linguistic features of both types: positive and negative. Negative features are five: NN (noun), PIN (preposition), JJ (attributive adjective), AWL, and TTR (Type Token Ration. If they are frequent in number than they become the cause of the declaring the text highly informational, and in the same way if positive features are occurring frequently than the text would be highly interactive. But at the same time text could not be negative and positive. In this regard Biber (1988) has argued that the co-occurrence of linguistic features make the text positive or negative, if the text is containing highly negative features, the positive features would be automatically low in ratio and vice versa. Positive and negative features are just like two axis of the scale, having positive and negative numbers. So in the interpretation of Dimensions it is co-occurrence of linguistic features that makes the whole difference. And this is the very thing that clear the text type, whether the text is positive or negative/ informational or involved.

5.2 Comparison of the Present Study Corpus with Biber (1988) work

After the detailed analysis of whole research on fashion blogs of male and female products, there is a need of comparison with the study of Biber's work (1988). As the idea of the present research has been taken from Biber's work on all dimensions of MD Analysis, Biber selected 23 different genres from different fields of life, from them 17 genres were taken from written aspect whereas, 6 were from spoken genre. Among those studied genres by Biber there is no genre related to fashion blogs, but this study has covered only one dimension 1 'Involved vs. Informational Production'.

Involved

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20 ——  Personal letters

15 ——  Interviews

10 ——

 5 ——
              Romantic prose
 0 ——  Mystery and adventure fiction
              Professional letters

-5 ——
              Science fiction

-10 ——  popular lore, editorials, hobbies
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Online Fashion Blogs (-12.5)

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-15 ——  Academic prose, press reportage

-20 ——  official documents (-18.1)
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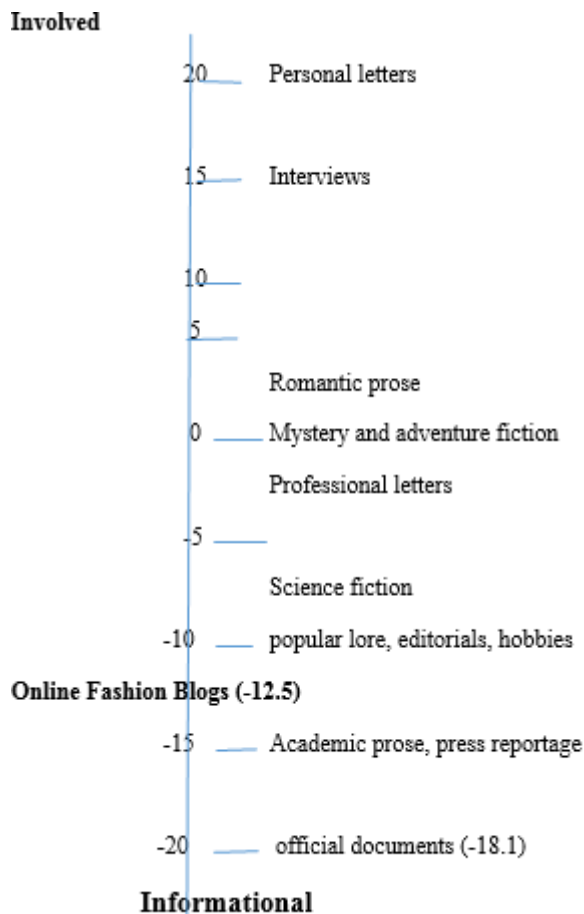
Informational

Figure 5.1 Mean score of Dimension 1 and other Genres selected and used in Biber's study

It is evident from the figure 5.1 that online fashion blogs falls in between press reviews and editorials. Figure shows that fashion blogs are more like editorials as having close negative scores. Editorials mean scores on Dimension 1 of MD analysis are -10 and fashion blogs' scores are -12.35. Thus having too close scores are the true indicators that both genres are closely related to each other as compared to press reportage as the scores of press reportage are -15. If we talk about Editorials they used to be replete with high information. The conclusion of the whole discussion is that the indications and mean scores have proved that online fashion blogs used to be highly dense in information.

6. Conclusion

By the comparison of different products and categories it came to clear that blogs on clothes of both genders male and female are more informational whereas, blogs on shoes of both genders: male and female are less informative. And comparison of the results of present study and Biber's work have also been made, which has unveil that language of fashion blogs' is nearly like the language of editorials due to the high scores in negative pole on Dimension 1. Comparison of present research with print media advertisement, Direct Mail Letters, Spoken register (Conversation) , online university prospectuses and home pages of organizational websites has also been made, which shows that all sort of promotional genres used to be informational as their basic and major purpose is to provide information on time to their users, listeners, customers, and viewers. One basic point that become clear to researcher is that written registers are used to be replete with nominalizations: more Informational rather than Involved. Study on Direct Mail Letters (proved too much helpful).

There were some research questions at the start of the research, which leads the researcher towards present research. At the start major research question that arise was about the language of fashion blogs: whether they are Informational or Interactional? As there were some controversial comments about blog's language. So, after conducting that research we got the answer of our question that the language of fashion blogs tend to be more Informational as compared to Involved.   As the basic purpose of blogs or fashion blogs used to impart thick information about what they are blogging.

The 2nd question of our research was:
- *Is there any difference between fashion and other blog's language?*

The answer of that question has also become clear during literature review and at the time of making comparison with different registers. The study of Daems, Speelman and Ruette (2013) on blogs of Humanities and Sciences has clear our ambiguity, as they have taken blogs from different genres. The result of the present study and that research has proved that the language of blogs can varies. The language of Blogs is based on specific type of Information and communication according to their concern and purposes, so it can varies.

The 3rd research question of our study was:

- *Is fashion blog's language resembles with the language of ads?*

The answer of the question is yes, the language of fashion blogs and ads used to resemble to each other as both have same purpose: to transfer information about products. The research of Shakir (2013) is the evidence of the answer of our question, as the study was conducted on print advertisement. And the result of that study shows that print advertisement tend to be Informational. At the end of our research we got answers of all research questions and objectives. As at the end we identify that blogs used to be replete highly informational data. They fall in the pole of Informational Pole. As far it is concerned about the 2nd objective of the research question we got the answer of that question as well. Data of fashion blogs was highly negative, having -12.5 mean scores which has proved that Fashion Blogs lies in Informational Production of 1st Dimension "Involved vs. Informational Production".

The present research will also help the writers of non-native of English. As there are so many countries where English is used as second language, so for those that will be very informative to know how to write blogs or other promotional register. The present study will also help in studying the different important functions of linguistic features and their roles according to environment and setting.

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