



Color Psychology and Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Pakistan Super League (PSL) Team Logos

Dr. Syeda Arooj Zehra Rizvi¹

¹Department of Graphic Design, University College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, Email: arooj.cad@pu.edu.pk, ORCID: 0009-0007-5506-9506

Email: arooj.cad@pu.edu.pk, ORCID: [0009-0007-5500-5500](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5500-5500)

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Article History:		<i>This study conducts a multimodal discourse analysis of the eight Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise team logos for Season 11 (2026), examining how color psychology, iconographic choices, and typographic systems construct regional identity, cultural meaning, and brand narratives within Pakistani sports communication. Drawing on Barthes' (1957) triadic semiotic model of denotation, connotation, and myth, integrated with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) theorization of color as a semiotic mode, the research treats each team logo as a visual text encoding layered cultural, political, and commercial meanings. The image based corpus comprises all eight franchise logos alongside their extended visual identity systems, including slogans, jersey color palettes, and mascots. Findings reveal that PSL logos operate as a deliberate cartography of Pakistani cultural identity, assigning each franchise a distinct regional archetype through visual vocabulary rooted in Sufi mysticism, Mughal heritage, Pashtun warrior culture, and Sindh's maritime bravado. The color system reveals a regional differentiation through franchise specific palettes. Notably, the two newest franchises, Hyderabad Kingsmen and Rawalpindiz, disrupt the established semiotic conventions of the original six teams, signaling a generational shift in how Pakistani sports brands negotiate cultural authenticity and global modernity. The study contributes to an underexplored intersection of color psychology, sports communication, and Pakistani visual culture, offering a framework for understanding how franchise cricket leagues construct meaning through design in postcolonial South Asian contexts.</i>
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Corresponding Author:		
Dr. Syeda Arooj Zehra Rizvi		
Email:		
arooj.cad@pu.edu.pk		

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Introduction

The Pakistan Super League (PSL), established in 2015 by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), has become one of the most prominent Twenty20 cricket leagues in the world. In its eleventh season

(2026), the league expanded from six to eight franchises, each representing a major Pakistani city and carrying a distinctive visual identity system comprising logos, color palettes, slogans, mascots, and jersey designs. These visual elements are not merely decorative branding tools; they function as complex semiotic texts that encode cultural narratives, regional identities, and ideological propositions about what it means to belong to a particular Pakistani city and, by extension, to Pakistan itself.

Color, as Elliot and Maier (2014) argue, is present in almost every aspect of human life, affecting beliefs, feelings, and decision making. Within the sporting context, color carries particular weight. Weiß et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive meta analysis of 69 studies on color in sport, finding a statistically significant medium effect size ($g = 0.56$, $p < .001$) for color's influence on human behavior in sports settings, with the colors red and blue emerging as significant moderators. Schleifer and Tamir (2023) further contend that in an era of commercialized sports, team color remains the clearest and most consistent symbol of team identity, serving as a visual anchor that preserves fan identity across seasons of changing players, coaches, and ownership structures. Yet despite the demonstrated significance of color in sports psychology and fan identity, no dedicated study has examined the visual identities of PSL franchise logos through a systematic semiotic or multimodal lens.

This gap is particularly notable given the cultural density of PSL's visual design system. Unlike the Indian Premier League (IPL), which draws primarily on Hindu mythology and corporate modernism, or the Big Bash League (BBL), which employs meteorological and nature themed naming, PSL's franchise identities are grounded in a distinctly Pakistani cultural vocabulary encompassing Sufi mysticism, Pashtun honor codes, Baloch warrior heritage, and Sindh's aquatic and maritime association. The logos of teams such as the Lahore Qalandars (featuring a whirling Sufi dervish), Quetta Gladiators (a Roman style gladiator helmet), and Peshawar Zalmi (a traditional Peshawari turban) constitute rich visual texts that merit scholarly analysis.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a multimodal discourse analysis of all eight PSL 2026 franchise logos, examining how color, iconography, typography, and symbolic elements construct meaning at multiple semiotic levels. The research is guided by two primary questions: (1) How do the color palettes and visual elements of PSL team logos construct regional and cultural identity through denotative, connotative, and mythological signification? (2) What role does color psychology play in the multimodal discourse of sports branding within the Pakistani cultural context?

Literature Review

Color Psychology in Sports Contexts

Research on color's influence in sports has generated a substantial body of literature, though with heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory findings. The foundational study by Hill and Barton (2005), published in *Nature*, demonstrated that athletes wearing red won significantly more bouts in combat sports at the 2004 Olympics, initiating a wave of inquiry into the so called "red advantage". Subsequent research has both supported and challenged this finding. Weiß et al.'s (2024) meta analysis synthesized 69 studies published between 1976 and 2020, employing p curve analysis and random effects models. Their results indicated that color effects in sport are real but heavily moderated by factors including sport type, study design, participant age, and whether colors were worn, perceived in the environment, or perceived on opponents. Critically, they found that physical outcome measures were more strongly influenced by color than psychological or performance measures, suggesting that color operates partly through physiological channels.

Elliot and Maier's (2014) Color in Context Theory (CIC) provides the most comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding these effects, proposing six key principles: that color carries psychological meaning; that viewing color influences psychological functioning; that color responses are automatic and typically processed without conscious awareness; that color associations derive from both learning and innate predispositions; that color perception and affect are reciprocal; and that color effects are context specific. This final principle is particularly relevant to the present study, as it suggests that the meaning of green in a PSL logo may differ substantially from green in a clinical or educational setting, precisely because the sporting and cultural context shapes its semiotic potential.

Robin et al. (2025), in a study with young tennis players in tropical environments, demonstrated that T shirt color (black versus white) had no impact on physical parameters such as body temperature but significantly affected psychological factors including perceived exertion, thermal comfort, and fatigue. This finding reinforces the notion that color's influence in sport extends beyond mere physiology to encompass subjective psychological experience, a dimension particularly relevant to how fans engage with team branding.

Visual Identity and Sports Branding

Visual identity has become a central component of strategic branding in professional sports. Cheurfa (2026), in a semiotic analysis of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) logo, demonstrated how visual elements including maps, geometric patterns, and color palettes construct narratives of unity, pride, and modernity within African sports communication. Her application of Barthes' triadic model of denotation, connotation, and myth revealed that the CAF logo functions not merely as a branding device but as a communicative artifact embodying postcolonial identity and institutional legitimacy. This finding is directly relevant to the PSL context, where franchise logos similarly negotiate between local cultural authenticity and global commercial legibility.

Schleifer and Tamir (2023) argue that sports team colors serve multiple aesthetic functions: identifying figures and distinguishing them from the background on the field; extending the duration of aesthetic emotions through merchandise and everyday display; and enabling spectators to participate in creating the aesthetic experience through their own use of team colors. Their conceptualization of color as a carrier of the "halo effect" (Kahneman, 2011) suggests that fans attribute positive qualities to objects and people simply because they are associated with "their" team's colors. This mechanism helps explain why PSL franchise colors become central to urban and regional identity in Pakistan's major cities.

Ron Bishop (2025), in a foundational semiotic analysis of professional sports logos, demonstrated that logos function as signs that "imply social rapport and social power," and that the fan team connection is frequently "built on colors and logos." Their study, drawing on Baudrillard's theory of simulation and Debord's society of the spectacle, established the scholarly legitimacy of treating sports logos as complex visual texts warranting rigorous analytical attention.

Semiotics and Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Visual Texts

Barthes' (1957) semiotic theory, as articulated in *Mythologies* and subsequently in *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964), offers a triadic model distinguishing denotation, connotation, and myth as three orders of signification, a framework that has proven especially productive for visual identity analysis. Rohmani et al. (2024), applying this framework to the English Premier League's "Big Six" club logos, demonstrated its analytical productivity for sports visual identity, revealing how verbal and nonverbal signs construct representations of identity, history, and community in football branding.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002; 2006) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* extends semiotic analysis into multimodal territory through three metafunctions. The representational metafunction addresses what is depicted: narrative processes involving action and reaction versus conceptual structures involving classification and symbolism. The interactive metafunction examines the relationship between the image and the viewer through contact, social distance, and point of view. The compositional metafunction addresses how elements are arranged through information value, salience, and framing. Their subsequent theorization of "Colour as a Semiotic Mode" (Kress, 2002) identifies six distinctive features enabling systematic color comparison, detailed in the Theoretical Framework below.

Machin's (2007) *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis* provides practical tools for analyzing the "hidden meaning of images," treating visual elements as semiotic resources whose meaning potential is activated through social use. Lemke (1998) contributes the principle of multiplicative meaning making, wherein multimodal combinations produce emergent meanings that exceed the sum of individual semiotic contributions. Applied to PSL logos, this principle suggests that the combination of, for instance, a Sufi dervish silhouette (iconography), neon green (color), and the word Qalandar (linguistic mode) creates a meaning complex greater than any individual element conveys in isolation.

Color Symbolism in Pakistani Cultural Context

Color analysis within Pakistani visual culture must account for a layered symbolic system where Islamic prescription, Sufi mysticism, South Asian folk tradition, and contemporary commercial convention intersect. Green occupies the most privileged position in Pakistani cultural semiotics. It is the color associated with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), which appears in Quranic descriptions of paradise and cloths of paradise dwellers (Medissem & Kacimi, 2025). On Pakistan's national flag, the green field represents the Muslim majority. In Sufi tradition, green represents *nafs al mutma'innah*, the soul at peace, the highest stage of spiritual attainment. It is simultaneously the color of Pakistan's national cricket team, creating a semiotic layering where sporting, national, and spiritual meanings converge.

Yellow and gold carry associations with divine illumination, prosperity, and Mughal architectural splendor. In Sufi mysticism, yellow represents the "light of faith" (*Nur al Iman*) (Medissem & Kacimi, 2025). Red, unlike its Western funeral connotations, carries strongly positive associations in Pakistani culture with fertility, love, and marriage. Blue connects to trust and protection (through the *nazar* tradition of warding off the evil eye). Purple signifies transformation and royalty. Black holds sacred significance through its association with the *Kiswah*, the covering of the Ka'bah. Pakistani truck art, as a distinctive vernacular visual tradition, demonstrates how these color meanings are deployed in maximally saturated combinations as expressions of devotion and joy.

Theoretical Framework

The present study integrates two complementary analytical frameworks to address both culturally interpretive and formally systematic dimensions of PSL logo design. Barthes' (1957) triadic semiotic model, outlined in the literature review, structures the analysis through sequential phases of increasing interpretive depth, moving from literal visual description (denotation) to culturally informed association (connotation) to the revelation of ideological propositions naturalized as self-evident truths (myth). This progression is particularly suited to sports logos, where visual elements that appear merely decorative in fact perform significant cultural and political work.

The secondary framework is Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) theorization of color as a semiotic mode, which provides systematic tools for comparing color deployment across the corpus. Their six distinctive features of color (value, saturation, purity, modulation, differentiation, and hue) enable rigorous, reproducible analysis of how each franchise's color palette constructs interpersonal meaning. Together, these frameworks allow for analysis that is both culturally interpretive (through Barthes) and formally systematic (through Kress and van Leeuwen), addressing the multimodal complexity of sports logo design within its specific Pakistani cultural milieu.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative interpretive research design, employing semiotic visual analysis as the primary methodological approach. The design follows the precedent established by Cheurfa (2026) in her semiotic analysis of the CAF logo and Rohmani et al. (2024) in their Barthesian analysis of Premier League club logos.

Corpus

The corpus comprises the official logos of all eight PSL Season 11 (2026) franchises: Lahore Qalandars, Karachi Kings, Islamabad United, Peshawar Zalmi, Quetta Gladiators, Multan Sultans, Hyderabad Kingsmen, and Rawalpindiz. Additionally, the corpus incorporates the extended visual identity systems of each franchise, including official slogans and taglines, primary and alternate jersey designs for the 2026 season, official mascots (where applicable), and the league level PSL logo for Season 11. All visual materials were collected from official franchise websites, the PCB's official PSL communications, and verified sports media sources between February and March 2026. Each logo was treated as a self contained visual text composed of multiple semiotic resources including shape, color, iconography, and typography.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through three sequential phases corresponding to Barthes' (1957) three orders of signification. In Phase 1 (Denotative Inventory), each logo was systematically described at the literal level. In Phase 2 (Connotative Analysis), culturally informed associations were identified for each denotative element, drawing on the color symbolism framework established in the literature review. In Phase 3 (Mythological Interpretation), the analysis examined how connotative meanings are naturalized into ideological narratives about regional and national identity. Concurrently, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) color framework was applied across all eight logos for systematic cross franchise comparison.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis is organized franchise by franchise, with each logo examined through Barthes' triadic model, followed by a cross franchise synthesis of color semiotic patterns.

Figure 1: Composite image of all eight PSL 2026 team logos arranged in a grid



Note. Official logos of the eight PSL Season 11 franchises. First row: Lahore Qalandars and Islamabad United. Second row: Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings, Third row: Quetta Gladiators and Multan Sultans. Fourth Row: Rawalpindiz and Hyderabad Kingsmen. Source: Official PSL franchise communications, 2026.

Figure 2: Lahore Qalandars



Note. The logo features a silhouetted Sufi dervish, cricket stumps, wickets and ball. Source: lahoreqalandars.com.

At the denotative level, the Lahore Qalandars logo depicts a silhouetted figure performing the Sufi sema (whirling) dance, dynamically integrated with three cricket stumps and a cricket ball. The palette consists of red (#FA2700) and black (#010000) with white outline articulation. Below, the team name appears in English alongside the slogan “Dama Dam Mast” in Urdu and transliterated English. Connotatively, the dervish figure invokes the Qalandar spiritual tradition, specifically Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, the 13th-century Sufi saint whose devotional lineage anchors Lahori cultural consciousness. The slogan “Dama Dam Mast Qalandar,” derived from the qawwali attributed to this saint, connotes ecstatic spiritual surrender and selfless devotion. Kress and van Leeuwen’s warm-cool polarity frames red as dynamism and passion, while black grounds the composition in

solemnity and tradition. At the mythological level, the logo naturalizes the assertion that Lahore's collective identity is inseparable from Sufi mysticism, transforming a historically specific religious tradition into an eternal, "natural" marker of urban belonging. The merger of the dervish and cricket stumps further mythologizes cricket itself as a devotional practice; a secular replacement for spiritual ecstasy that channels the same fervor and selflessness the Qalandar archetype embodies.

Figure 3: Karachi Kings



Note. A roaring golden lion against a blue field with bold typography. Source: karachikings.com.pk.

The Karachi Kings logo features a roaring lion rendered in gold against a sapphire blue (#0752C2) field, with the team name in white and gold typography. Denotatively, the lion and crown motif signal royalty and dominance. Connotatively, the blue palette connects Karachi to the Arabian Sea and the city's identity as Pakistan's largest port and economic capital. Gold signifies commercial prosperity. The lion, a creature associated with courage and territorial authority, represents Karachi's oft cited "resilience." The myth constructed here is one of royal commercial power, where economic dominance and cosmopolitan confidence are rendered as Karachi's inherent character rather than a branding decision. The low value, moderate saturation blue, following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) framework, projects formality and institutional authority rather than playfulness, aligning with Karachi's self image as Pakistan's corporate and financial heart.

Figure 4: Islamabad United



Note. A shield like logo with a lion in the center surrounded by design elements and the team slogan, "United we win." Source: isbunited.com.

Islamabad United presents a distinctly martial visual identity centered on a lion emblem. Denotatively, the logo depicts a frontal lion's head with a mane rendered as dramatic radiating bursts in orange (#FF6600), red (#DC143C), and yellow (#FFD700). The emblem sits within a shield formation, with "Islamabad" inscribed above in maroon script and "United We Win" anchoring the composition below. The team's jersey identity is dominated by deep crimson red with darker maroon geometric patterning, accented by three gold championship stars. Connotatively, the lion invokes regal authority and untamed power and leadership in an emblem that positions Islamabad as the nation's apex institution. Kress and van Leeuwen's warm-color framework maps the radiating mane's orange-red-yellow spectrum to explosive aggression and dominance. The shield anchors this volatility in institutional authority. The three gold stars function indexically, marking three PSL championships as evidence of competitive supremacy. The crimson jersey intensifies this aggression, saturating the player's body in the color most consistently associated with athletic dominance. Mythologically, the logo naturalizes Islamabad's claim to metropolitan supremacy through the lion archetype: the capital's power is rendered as animalistic, primal, and irrepressible. The "United We Win" slogan merges national unity rhetoric with competitive victory, proposing that Islamabad's dominance is simultaneously a natural law and a collective patriotic achievement.

Figure 5: Peshawar Zalmi



Note. A traditional Peshawari turban atop Peshawar Zalmi wordmark with Pashto language text KHPAL TEAM in the banner at bottom. Source: peshawarzalmi.com.

The Peshawar Zalmi logo is anchored by the depiction of a traditional Peshawari turban (patke) resting atop the wordmark, a composition that fuses Pashtun cultural identity with English language typography in a single image. Below the main team slogan appears "Khpal Team" in Roman English. The slogan "Khpal Team" is used by Peshawar Zalmi to awaken a sense of association, pride, and ownership among fans, representing the team as "their own" rather than just a franchise. The primary colors are Chrome yellow (#FFC40C) and black (#010000). Connotatively, the turban is a powerful marker of Pashtun male identity and honor (ghairat), while "Zalmi" (youth in Pashto) foregrounds generational energy. The inclusion of Pashto slogan performs a deliberate act of linguistic representation, asserting regional language. Yellow, the highest value chromatic hue in the palette, carries Sufi associations with the light of faith while simultaneously projecting warmth and optimism. Through repetition across eleven seasons, this visual system has made Pashtun martial youth feel like Peshawar's natural identity rather than a strategic branding construction. The franchise's nickname, "Yellow Storm," extends this constructed identity into the realm of natural force.

Figure 6: Quetta Gladiators



Note. A Roman style galea helmet in gold crest, flanked by crossed cricket bats. Source: quettagladiators.com.pk.

The Quetta Gladiators logo features a Roman style galea (gladiator helmet) rendered in gold, flanked by two cricket bats positioned to resemble gladiatorial swords. The primary colors are American violet (#551B8C) and light gold (#B39854). Denotatively, the helmet surrounded with flames and crossed bats are all war symbols. Connotatively, the gladiator imagery invokes combat, endurance, and the willingness to fight against overwhelming odds, resonating with Balochistan's history of resistance and the strategic significance of Quetta as a frontier garrison city. The war cry "Kai Kai Quetta," derived from the battle cry of the Baloch Regiment during World War II, directly anchors the cricket franchise to Baloch military heritage. The positioning line, which is written in Urdu script "Shaan-e-Pakistan" translates to pride of Pakistan.

Purple, a combination of red (passion) and blue (depth), carries connotations of royalty, nobility, and the exotic mystique associated with Balochistan. Balochistan province is home to a variety of high-value, purple-hued minerals such as fluorite (typically purple or violet), amethyst (a violet form of quartz), and rare earth elements including bastnaesite. It also boasts abundant gemstones like different tourmaline types, azurite (deep blue to violet), plus major reserves of industrial minerals such as chromite. In Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) terms, the low value, moderate saturation purple projects gravitas and distinction rather than playfulness. In Barthes' terms, the logo renders constructed martial identity as an inherent quality of the region, presenting Quetta as a land of warriors where combat readiness is not a brand choice but a natural condition.

Figure 7: Multan Sultans



Note. A mounted sultan wielding a cricket bat styled as a sword, with a Sultan written in bold capital letter at the base. Source: multansultan.com.pk.

The Multan Sultans PSL Season 11 (2026) logo depicts a mounted sultan wielding a raised cricket bat as a sword, set against Royal Blue (Pantone 286 C / #005EB8) symbolizing authority and ambition, with Green accents (Pantone 348 C / #00A651), a Golden stroke (Pantone 123 C / #FDB827), and bold Green-Yellow team lettering (Pantone 397 C / #C9E76F). Denotatively, these elements inventory a dynamic equestrian warrior fused with cricket iconography on a unified color field. Connotatively, the fearless sultan astride his steed evokes Multan's five millennia of dynastic rule and "Madinat-ul-Auliya" (the city of saints) saintly heritage, embodying commanding leadership, momentum, and conquest; the bat-sword merges martial legacy with unchallenged field authority; Royal Blue nods to the city's famed blue pottery and the blue-gold tiles of Shah Rukn-e-Alam shrine; Green signals loyalty and transformative "toofan" (storm like) spirit of regional cricketers; Gold crowns Mughal splendor, agricultural abundance, and a rising legacy of honor. The star is green and it reminds one of the star on the Pakistani flag. Mythologically, this naturalizes a depoliticized narrative of sultanic dominance blessed by Sufi spirituality, distilling complex history into a brand declaration of South Punjab's destined cricketing royalty harmonizing regional power with Pakistan's cricket saga.

Figure 8: Hyderabad Kingsmen



Note. A golden crown atop a warrior helmet within a shield formation, surrounded by two lightning bolts on each side. Source: Official PSL communications, 2026.

The Hyderabad Kingsmen, debuting in PSL Season 11, present a logo combining a golden crown with a warrior helmet positioned within a shield formation. Primary colors are black and gold for the home identity, with deep maroon and gold accents for the away kit. Denotatively, crown, helmet, and shield compose a cluster of martial and royal signifiers anchored in chromatic formality and institutional reserve.

Connotatively, the crown references Hyderabad's historical status as the capital of Sindh under the Kalhoru and Talpur dynasties, invoking centuries of courtly patronage and cultural refinement. The warrior helmet invokes martial prowess and defensive capability, while the shield formation grounds both symbols within a protective, institutional framework. Following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) framework, the low-saturation black and moderate-saturation gold palette projects institutional gravitas and historical preservation rather than youthful disruption. The shield visually encases Sindhi heritage within a bounded, commemorative space.

The ideological work here merits particular attention: historical grandeur is projected onto a franchise with no competitive history, naturalizing Hyderabad as an inherent seat of dynastic power. The team name "Kingsmen," drawn from British aristocratic lexicon, invokes Sindhi courtly tradition while simultaneously evoking the colonial English social hierarchies that historically dominated South Asian cities. This "postcolonial nostalgia" effect encodes a paradox:

Hyderabad claims pre-colonial dynastic authority while adopting the linguistic register of its colonizers, reflecting the ambivalence of contemporary Pakistani nationalism toward inherited imperial structures. The New Balance partnership further signals aspirations toward global premium positioning, suggesting that Hyderabad's regional historical claims require international commercial legitimacy.

Figure 9: Rawalpindiz



Note. A bold angular wordmark with lightning bolt/star shape in orange with black and neon green outline. Source: Official PSL communications, 2026.

The Rawalpindiz logo represents the most radical departure from PSL's established semiotic conventions. Unlike the other seven franchises, which employ representational iconography (dervishes, lions, helmets, horsemen), the Rawalpindiz logo is primarily typographic: a bold angular "PINDIZ" wordmark set against a striking orange background with a sharp lightning bolt or star shape outlined in neon green. Denotatively, the elements are a stylized wordmark, a lightning bolt, and a chromatic field of orange. Unlike its predecessors, the Rawalpindiz identity eschews representational heritage iconography entirely, instead privileging contemporary graphic abstraction. Connotatively, the orange projects energy, disruption, and urgency. The colloquial "Pindiz," derived from local Rawalpindi slang, performs linguistic informality unprecedented in PSL branding. The Rawalpindiz logo naturalizes a narrative of youthful disruption and street culture authenticity, constructing Rawalpindi not as a city of historical heritage but as a site of contemporary urban energy. This represents a deliberate counter narrative to the antiquarian mythologies of the other franchises.

Cross Franchise Synthesis: Color as a Semiotic System

Systematic color comparison across all eight logos, following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) framework, reveals several structurally significant patterns in the PSL's visual identity system. In terms of hue distribution, the eight franchises collectively deploy green, blue, yellow, red, purple, orange, black, and gold, covering a broad chromatic spectrum.

Saturation levels reveal a notable divide between the original six franchises and the two newcomers. Islamabad United's red and Rawalpindiz's orange represent the highest saturation values in the corpus, projecting youthful intensity. By contrast, Quetta Gladiators' purple violet and Karachi Kings' sapphire blue operate at moderate saturation levels, projecting institutional

gravitas. This saturation gradient maps onto an implied formality spectrum, where lower saturation encodes tradition and authority while higher saturation encodes modernity and energy.

Value (lightness) follows a similar pattern. Peshawar Zalmi's yellow is the highest value chromatic hue in the system, making it the most visible on screen and in stadium settings. Hyderabad Kingsmen's black is the lowest value element, creating maximum visual contrast with its gold accents. This contrast aligns with Schleifer and Tamir's (2023) observation that color's primary sporting function is to distinguish figures from background and create identification boundaries in dynamic visual environments.

The differentiation feature, which measures whether designs are monochromatic or polychromatic, reveals that all eight franchises operate on a dual color system (primary hue plus gold or a contrasting accent), with the Rawalpindiz introducing a third color (neon green accent on orange) that breaks the binary convention. Modulation varies significantly: the Multan Sultans and Karachi kings employ gradient applications of color, while the rest use flatter, more uniform color fields. Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) higher modulation tends to encode naturalistic sensory richness, while flat application encodes abstraction and modernity.

Discussion

The findings reveal several theoretically significant dimensions of how PSL logos construct meaning through color and multimodal design.

Logos as Cartography of Pakistani Cultural Identity

The eight PSL franchise logos collectively constitute what may be termed a semiotic cartography of Pakistan, where each city is assigned a distinct cultural archetype through visual vocabulary. Lahore is rendered as Sufi and ecstatic, Karachi as commercially royal, Islamabad as nationally authoritative, Peshawar as Pashtun and youthful, Quetta as martial and noble, Multan as dynastic and saintly, Hyderabad as aristocratically Sindhi, and Rawalpindi as street smart and disruptive. These are not natural or inevitable associations but, in Barthes' (1957) terms, myths: ideological constructions presented through the naturalizing power of visual repetition across eleven seasons of intensive media exposure. The assignment of specific cultural archetypes to specific cities through color and iconography performs a nation building function, creating a colorful mosaic of regional identities that are, paradoxically, unified by their shared participation in the PSL structure.

The Tension Between Unity and Differentiation

Green functions as the system's anchoring color, appearing in the league logo, the Multan Sultans' logo, the Lahore Qalandars kit and outline stroke of the Pindiz logo. Each franchise simultaneously deploys a distinctive hue, yellow for Peshawar, purple for Quetta, blue for Karachi, orange and red Islamabad United, and neon green and orange for Rawalpindi, to assert regional distinctiveness. This productive tension between chromatic unity (green as national anchor) and chromatic differentiation (franchise specific hues) mirrors a broader tension in Pakistani national life between the centripetal pull of national identity and the centrifugal assertion of regional and ethnic distinctiveness. Color, in this analysis, is not merely decorative; it is a vehicle for negotiating one of Pakistan's cultural dynamics.

Generational Disruption and the Evolution of Pakistani Sports Semiotics

The contrast between the six original franchises and the two 2026 newcomers reveals a significant semiotic shift. The original six logos all employ representational iconography drawn from Pakistani historical and cultural heritage: a Sufi dervish, a lion, a national emblem, a Pashtun

turban, a gladiator helmet, and a mounted sultan. These icons anchor team identity in the past, constructing regional belonging through shared historical memory. The Hyderabad Kingsmen partially continue this convention (crown, warrior helmet). Rawalpindiz, however, break decisively from representational tradition, offering a purely typographic and graphic identity rooted in street culture, digital aesthetics, and colloquial language. This shift mirrors broader generational changes in Pakistani visual culture, where younger audiences engage with global streetwear, esports, and social media aesthetics that privilege bold typography, gradient effects, and non traditional color combinations over heritage iconography. As Zhang et al. (2025) found in their eye tracking study of running shoe preferences, color preferences among younger consumers are shifting toward warmer, more saturated, and gradient based palettes, a trend the Rawalpindiz identity directly addresses.

Color Psychology and the Pakistani Cultural Context

The study's findings both support and complicate established color psychology frameworks. Elliot and Maier's (2014) CIC theory posits that color meanings are context specific, and the PSL corpus confirms this empirically. As the literature review established, green operates in the Pakistani context as a convergence of national and sporting signification. Similarly, Weiß et al.'s (2024) meta analytical finding that red and blue are the most significant color moderators in sport finds a complex echo in PSL: Islamabad United's red kits and Karachi Kings' blue palette do indeed carry the competitive associations documented in the literature, but they also carry culture specific meanings (red as bridal auspiciousness, blue as Arabian Sea connection) that shape their semiotic potential in ways not captured by Western psychological models. This suggests that color psychology frameworks developed primarily through Western experimental paradigms require cultural contextualization when applied to South Asian sports branding.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the eight franchise logos of the Pakistan Super League constitute a rich semiotic corpus in which color, iconography, and typography construct layered meanings about regional identity, cultural heritage, and national belonging within Pakistani sports communication. Through the application of Barthes' (1957) triadic semiotic model and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) framework for color as a semiotic mode, the analysis revealed that PSL logos function not merely as commercial brand markers but as visual texts that naturalize cultural myths about Pakistani cities and regions.

Key findings include the productive tension between chromatic unity and regional differentiation; the contrast between heritage based iconographic strategies in the original six franchises and the street culture disruption introduced by the Rawalpindiz; and the culture specific meanings of color that complicate the application of Western color psychology frameworks to South Asian sports contexts. These findings contribute to the intersection of color psychology, sports communication, and Pakistani visual culture studies, addressing a gap in the scholarly literature on how franchise cricket leagues construct meaning through design.

The study's limitations include its focus on a single season's visual identity system without longitudinal analysis of logo evolution, and its restriction to researcher led interpretation without audience reception data. Future research could productively extend this work through fan perception studies employing eye tracking technology (Zhang, 2025) or through comparative analysis of PSL and IPL visual identity systems. Additionally, analysis of the PSL trophy's annual redesign, which traces a journey from international production (Swarovski) to domestic

craftsmanship (Mahfooz Jewellers), would enrich understanding of how national identity is performed through sports material culture.

Ultimately, the PSL's visual identity system demonstrates that in contemporary Pakistan, the cricket franchise logo has become a site where color, culture, commerce, and identity converge. As Schleifer and Tamir (2023) argue, in an era of commercialized sports where players and coaches change frequently, team color remains the 'clear and consistent symbol of the team that preserves the identity of the fans.' In the Pakistani context, these colors preserve not merely team identity but regional, cultural, and national identity, rendered visible and reproducible through the medium of sports design.

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