

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**PERSUASIVE MULTIMODAL  
METADISCOURSE IN MALAYSIAN  
UNIVERSITY DIGITAL  
PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS: A  
COMPARATIVE CORPUS**

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## ABSTRACT

Research on textual metadiscourse in academic contexts is extensive, yet multimodal metadiscourse in Malaysian universities' digital promotional materials remains underexplored. Given the reliance of such materials on both language and imagery to persuade prospective students, this study examines how textual and visual resources jointly construct persuasion. Focusing on digital promotional booklets from Malaysian Public Universities (n = 10) and Malaysian Private Universities (n = 8), the project adopts a Corpus-Assisted Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CAMDA) design that integrates quantitative profiling with qualitative interpretation. Sampling was purposive: English-medium, recruitment-oriented booklets collected from official university websites. Drawing on Hyland's (2005) Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse, the analysis aligns interactive elements (Transition Markers, Code Glosses, Frame Markers, Evidentials, Endophoric Markers) and interactional elements (Attitude Markers, Engagement Markers, Self-mentions, Boosters, Hedges) with image-specific realisations based on De Groot et al.'s (2016) Model of Visual Metadiscourse and Photographic Realizations. Coding produced frequency profiles (per 100 words for textual occurrences and per panel/image unit for visual elements) and subcategory distributions. Inter-coder agreement was established prior to full coding, and the Mann–Whitney U test compared distributional properties between corpora, complemented by a close rhetorical analysis of representative text–image constellations. Findings show that all major interactive and interactional categories generally across modes, with interactional resources generally outweighing interactive ones. This suggests a stronger institutional preference for engaging readers than for organising propositional content. Overall, this multimodal lens offers a balanced account of how textual and visual choices co-construct persuasion in university marketing and underscores the need for content designers, marketing teams, and admissions units to systematically integrate multimodal metadiscourse strategies in promotional communication.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the researcher's motivation in studying the textual and visual aspects used in Malaysian universities' digital promotional materials, as these elements are pivotal in the construction of persuasion. This is then followed by the statement of the problem. The purpose for the present study, research objectives and research questions that guide this study are then presented. Next, the significance and the scope of the study are presented. Definition of terms are explained in the last section of this chapter

### 1.2 Background of the Study

Malaysia's goal of achieving high-income nation status by 2030 depends on the development of skilled human capital (Lee, 2023; World Bank, 2021). Thus, Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a central role in preparing the future workforce with the qualifications, knowledge, and competencies required for employability and national competitiveness (Bikar et al., 2023; Vinayan, Harikrishnan & Ling, 2020). Consequently, reskilling and upskilling have become essential in responding to rapid technological change and the evolving demands of Industry 4.0. World Economic Forum (2023) has projected that nearly half of current job skills will transform within five years. Therefore, HEIs must not only produce a skilled workforce but also promote lifelong learning opportunities that enable individuals to adapt to changing labour-market requirements (Wahab, Rajendran & Swee, 2021). This objective requires the development of agile and academically fluid learners who can structure their own academic growth in order to adapt with the ever-changing employability needs.

To reach these goals, universities must communicate the value of their academic programmes to prospective students at the decision-making stage. Traditionally, HEIs have used offline channels such as fairs, brochures, and advertisements. However, with