LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY THROUGH CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN UZBEK FREELANCERS' BRANDING

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Abstract: *This research investigates how conceptual metaphors are employed by Uzbek freelancers to construct and project their professional identities in online platforms. The study draws on the theoretical framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), emphasizing how metaphorical language shapes self-branding narratives. Data were collected from 30 Uzbek freelancers' profiles on popular platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, and local freelance networks. The analysis reveals that identity construction often relies on metaphors related to journey, growth, and craftsmanship, highlighting the role of culturally rooted conceptualizations in self-promotion.*

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, self-branding, identity, Uzbek freelancers, linguistic representation*

Methodology: A qualitative research method was applied, involving purposive sampling of freelancer profiles from both international and domestic platforms. The textual content of profiles was coded and analyzed using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). Metaphors were categorized based on conceptual domains, and frequency counts were used to identify dominant metaphor types.

Results & Discussion: The findings indicate that "career as a journey" is the most frequently occurring metaphor, followed by "skills as tools" and "branding as art." These conceptualizations not only help freelancers differentiate themselves but also convey professionalism and commitment. The discussion suggests that these metaphorical patterns reflect both global self-branding trends and local cultural influences.

Conclusion: Conceptual metaphors serve as powerful tools in the identity-building process of Uzbek freelancers. Understanding these metaphors can contribute to developing more effective self-presentation strategies and improving cross-cultural communication in the global marketplace.

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