

A Pragmatic Analysis of Slangs in Nigerian Social Media Advertising

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pragmatic functions of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising, focusing on how these expressions shape consumer engagement and brand perception. The objectives are to analyze how slang functions pragmatically in ads and to evaluate its impact on brand relatability. Guided by pragmatic theory and relevance theory, this research adopts a qualitative eclectic approach, using purposive sampling to select 21 ads, 7 each from Facebook, Instagram, and X. Findings reveal that slang terms like “Awoof” (bonus or freebie) play significant roles in establishing cultural resonance, positioning brands as both modern and relatable. Pragmatically, slang builds rapport, fosters a sense of community, and conveys authenticity, making ads feel conversational and appealing to the local audience. By using familiar language, brands strengthen audience connection, enhance relatability, and encourage consumer loyalty. The study concludes that strategically incorporating social media slang can effectively deepen brand- consumer engagement, presenting brands as culturally relevant and responsive. Recommendations encourage advertisers to monitor trending slang terms and avoid using outdated language that might make the brand appear disconnected from the audience.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of communication and interaction in the digital age. Platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok have become integral to everyday life, serving as vital conduits for information exchange, social interaction, and entertainment. This digital revolution has not only reshaped personal communication but also significantly influenced the marketing and advertising sectors. In the Nigerian context, the rise of social media usage is particularly noteworthy, reflecting broader global trends while manifesting unique local dynamics.

In Nigeria, social media penetration has seen exponential growth over the past decade. The country's young and tech-savvy population has eagerly adopted social media platforms, making Nigeria one of the leading social media markets in Africa. This widespread adoption has created a fertile ground for digital advertising, where brands can reach large and engaged audiences. The interactive nature of social media allows advertisers to engage with consumers in real-time, fostering a two-way communication channel that is more dynamic and responsive than traditional media.

Digital advertising has evolved alongside social media, leveraging its extensive reach and interactive capabilities. Advertisers now utilize these platforms to promote products and services, aiming to connect with diverse audiences in innovative and effective ways. One of the most notable developments in this domain is the use of social media slang—a form of informal, often playful language that emerges organically within online communities. This slang, characterized by its rapid

evolution and context-specific meanings, has become a powerful tool in digital marketing, particularly in regions like Nigeria where linguistic creativity is a cultural hallmark.

Social media slang includes abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons, hashtags, and neologisms that are widely recognized and used within specific social media platforms. These slangs are not just linguistic shortcuts but are imbued with cultural significance and contextual meanings that resonate deeply with users. For instance, phrases like “Naija no dey carry last” (Nigeria doesn't come last) and “E choke” (an expression of overwhelming surprise or excitement) have become part of the digital lexicon in Nigeria, reflecting the vibrancy and dynamism of Nigerian online culture.

The strategic use of social media slang in digital advertising can significantly enhance the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. By incorporating these slangs into advertisements, brands can create content that feels more authentic and relatable to their target audiences. This approach can increase engagement, foster a sense of community, and enhance brand loyalty.

However, the use of slang also presents certain challenges. Advertisers must navigate the fine line between appearing current and relatable versus coming across as inauthentic or alienating segments of the audience who may not understand or appreciate the slang.

The impact of social media slang on digital advertising is a multifaceted issue that involves understanding both the linguistic aspects and the broader cultural context. It requires an examination of how these slangs are used to construct meaning, convey messages, and engage audiences. This study investigates the pragmatic

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implications of social media slang on Nigerian digital advertising. It explores how these colloquial expressions influence the effectiveness of advertisements, shaping consumer perceptions and engagement. By examining the integration of social media slang into digital advertising strategies, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and marketing in the Nigerian digital sphere.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread use of social media slang in digital advertising, there is a paucity of scholarly research focusing specifically on its impact within the Nigerian context. The informal nature of social media slang presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for advertisers. On one hand, it can enhance relatability and foster a sense of community among target audiences. On the other hand, it risks alienating certain demographic segments and undermining the perceived professionalism of brands. Moreover, the rapid evolution of social media slang necessitates continuous adaptation and monitoring by advertisers. Understanding the pragmatic functions and cultural relevance of these slangs is crucial for crafting effective advertising messages that resonate with Nigerian consumers. This study seeks to address these gaps by conducting a comprehensive analysis of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising, elucidating its pragmatic effects, and providing insights into how advertisers can strategically leverage social media slang to optimize engagement and effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and categorize prevalent social media slangs used in Nigerian digital advertising.
2. To analyze the pragmatic functions/speech acts of these slangs in the context of digital advertising.
3. To evaluate the influence of social media slang on consumer engagement and brand perception.

Research Questions

To guide the investigation, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most commonly used social media slangs in Nigerian digital advertising?
2. How do these slangs function pragmatically within advertisements?
3. What is the influence of social media slang on consumer engagement and brand perception in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework for this study focuses on understanding the dynamics of social media slang within the context of Nigerian digital advertising. Social media slang, characterized by informal language, abbreviations, and emojis, has become a significant element in online communication. This section will explore key concepts such as digital advertising, social media slang, and their intersection in the Nigerian digital advertising landscape.

Social Media Slang

Social media slang refers to the informal language and expressions that evolve and spread rapidly across social media platforms. These slangs often include abbreviations (e.g., LOL for “laugh out loud”), acronyms (e.g., BRB for “be right back”), and other creative language forms (e.g., “lit” for exciting or excellent). According to Crystal (2001), “Language on the internet has taken on new forms and structures, creating a unique and evolving lexicon.”

In the Nigerian context, social media slang incorporates local languages and cultural nuances, making it distinct. For example, “Japa” (to run away) and “Pepper Dem” (to show off) are popular Nigerian slangs that have found their way into social media conversations. These terms not only reflect the linguistic creativity of Nigerian youths but also their socio-cultural realities.

Digital Advertising

Digital advertising encompasses all promotional activities conducted online, including search engine marketing, social media advertising, email marketing, and display ads. It is characterized by its ability to target specific demographics and measure campaign effectiveness through analytics.

According to Kotler *et al.* (2017), “Digital marketing offers unparalleled opportunities for businesses to reach their audiences with precision and at scale.”

In Nigeria, digital advertising has grown significantly due to increased internet penetration and the widespread use of mobile devices. Brands leverage various digital platforms to engage with consumers, often using localized content and strategies to resonate with the Nigerian audience.

Intersection of Social Media Slang and Digital Advertising

The intersection of social media slang and digital advertising is where brands utilize informal language and expressions to connect with their audience. This approach is particularly effective in Nigeria, where young people dominate social media usage. By incorporating popular slang into their advertisements, brands can appear more relatable and authentic to their target audience.

For instance, the use of the slang “Soro Soke” (Speak up) in advertising campaigns during the #EndSARS movement highlighted how brands could align with social movements and resonate with the socio-political sentiments of the youth. This strategy not only boosts engagement but also enhances brand image as being socially conscious.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study on the use of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising incorporates Pragmatic Theory. Pragmatic Theory in linguistics is concerned with how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication. This framework is particularly useful in understanding how

informal language and slang impact the effectiveness of digital advertisements.

Pragmatic Theory

Pragmatic Theory, a branch of linguistics, focuses on the ways in which context contributes to meaning. The pragmatic theory of language was developed by J.L. Austin, H.P. Grice, and John Searle. Austin introduced speech act theory in the 1960s, showing how utterances perform actions like promising or ordering. Grice, in the 1970s, focused on implicatures, highlighting how meaning is inferred from context and conversational principles. Searle expanded these ideas by classifying speech acts and emphasizing the role of intention and context in communication. Their work is fundamental for understanding the practical use of language in real-world interactions.

According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics involves “the study of language usage and how the principles of communication are put into practice.” This theory examines how speakers convey meaning through context, presuppositions, implicatures, and speech acts.

In the context of digital advertising, Pragmatic Theory can explain how social media slang, when used strategically, can enhance message comprehension and engagement. The informal nature of slang often carries implicit meanings and cultural references that resonate with specific audiences. For Nigerian digital advertising, understanding these pragmatic elements is crucial for creating effective and relatable content.

Context and Interpretation

One of the key aspects of Pragmatic Theory is the role of context in interpretation. Context includes the physical setting, social norms, cultural background, and the relationship between the communicators.

In Nigerian digital advertising, the use of slang such as “E choke” (a term popularized by Nigerian musician Davido to express excitement or surprise) is loaded with cultural significance that may not be immediately apparent to outsiders. However, for the target audience, this phrase conveys a shared cultural experience, enhancing the ad’s impact.

According to Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, effective communication relies on the assumption that participants are cooperating to achieve mutual understanding. Advertisers using social media slang rely on the shared knowledge and cultural context of their audience to convey meanings that go beyond the literal interpretation of words. This shared context allows for the use of implicatures, where the intended meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated.

Speech Acts

Pragmatic Theory also involves the concept of speech acts, which are communicative actions performed through language, such as making requests, promises, or declarations. Austin (1962) introduced the idea that

utterances can be performative, meaning they accomplish an action simply by being spoken. In advertising, the use of slang can function as a performative act, signaling in-group membership and solidarity with the audience.

For example, a digital advertisement that uses the phrase “Naija no dey carry last” (Nigeria doesn’t come last) performs the act of instilling national pride and resilience. This phrase, rich with cultural connotations, not only conveys a message but also evokes emotions and values that resonate deeply with the Nigerian audience.

Presuppositions and Implicatures

Presuppositions are assumptions that a speaker makes about what the listener already knows. In digital advertising, presuppositions can be used to create a sense of familiarity and inclusion. For instance, an ad that uses the slang “Wahala for who no get data” (trouble for those without data) presupposes that the audience understands the importance of mobile data in contemporary Nigerian society. This creates a bond between the brand and the audience, as it acknowledges a shared understanding of everyday challenges.

Implicatures, as introduced by Grice (1975), refer to meanings that are suggested rather than directly expressed. When a brand uses the slang “Gbam!” (an exclamation indicating agreement or finality) in its advertising, it implies a sense of decisiveness and confidence without explicitly stating it. The audience, familiar with this slang, picks up on the implied meaning, making the communication more effective and engaging.

Relevance Theory

Developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), Relevance Theory posits that communication is successful when the listener can derive maximum cognitive effect with minimal processing effort. In the context of Nigerian digital advertising, the use of familiar social media slang ensures that messages are processed quickly and effectively. The audience does not need to expend much effort to understand the ad, as the slang terms are already embedded in their everyday communication.

Relevance Theory also highlights the importance of contextual clues in enhancing the relevance of a message. For instance, an advertisement that references popular cultural events or trending slang terms increases its relevance to the audience, as it taps into current conversations and interests.

Relevance to Nigerian Digital Advertising

The application of Pragmatic Theory in Nigerian digital advertising underscores the importance of context, speech acts, presuppositions, implicatures, and relevance in crafting effective messages. By leveraging social media slang, advertisers can create content that is not only relatable but also contextually rich, ensuring that the intended message resonates deeply with the target audience.

As noted by Adegbija (1999), “In a multilingual and multicultural context like Nigeria, the pragmatic use of

language is crucial for effective communication.” The use of social media slang in digital advertising aligns with this perspective, as it demonstrates an understanding of the audience’s linguistic and cultural context, thereby enhancing the ad’s impact and effectiveness.

In conclusion, Pragmatic Theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the use of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising. By considering the contextual and implicit meanings conveyed through slang, this study will explore how such language choices influence consumer engagement and brand perception.

Empirical Review

The empirical review explores previous studies and real-world examples to understand the use of social media slang in digital advertising, particularly within the Nigerian context. This section examines empirical evidence on the effectiveness, challenges, and cultural implications of incorporating slang into digital marketing strategies.

Effectiveness of Social Media Slang in Digital Advertising

Several studies have investigated the impact of using informal language and slang in digital advertising. For example, a study by Chen (2017) found that the use of colloquial language in advertisements significantly increased engagement and positive brand perception among younger demographics. The research indicated that consumers felt a stronger connection to brands that spoke their language, making the advertisements more relatable and memorable.

In the Nigerian context, Adetunji (2019) conducted a survey involving 500 young Nigerians to assess their response to digital advertisements using local slang. The study revealed that 78% of respondents preferred ads that incorporated Nigerian Pidgin or popular local slang over those that used formal English. The findings suggest that using social media slang can enhance the effectiveness of digital advertising campaigns by aligning with the linguistic preferences of the target audience.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative eclectic approach to explore the pragmatic use of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising. The eclectic approach is chosen to allow for flexibility in selecting methods and tools that best capture the linguistic and cultural nuances within the ads. The data, characterized by their graphical nature, were collected through personal screenshots taken from Instagram, Facebook, and X.

The area of study for this research focuses on Nigerian digital advertising across various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and X. These platforms have become critical channels for advertising in Nigeria, making them ideal for examining the impact and usage of social media slangs.

The population of this study consists of selected advertisements that utilize social media slang within Nigerian contexts on the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and X. This selection is based on these platforms’ high engagement rates among Nigerian users and their popularity for digital advertising. The study employs purposive sampling to select advertisements that effectively use social media slang on Facebook, Instagram, and X. A sample of seven ads from each of them will be drawn, focusing on those that prominently incorporate slang relevant to Nigerian digital culture. This targeted approach ensures that the selected ads align with the study’s objective of examining the pragmatics of social media slang in digital advertising.

Data will be collected from social media platforms Instagram, Facebook, and X. Content analysis will serve as the primary instrument for data collection. This involves the systematic coding of language features and pragmatic elements in the ads, paying close attention to slang terms, intended meanings, and context-specific interpretations. Screenshots and archives of advertisements will be used to collect and analyze data, ensuring that the slang terms are captured accurately in their authentic, intended settings. Data will be analyzed using pragmatic and discourse analysis techniques to identify the contextual meanings and implied messages within the advertisements. Attention will be given to how social media slang impacts engagement, user relatability, and cultural resonance in Nigerian digital advertising.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents and interprets data on the use of social media slang in Nigerian digital advertising. By examining advertisements collected from popular social media platforms- Facebook, Instagram, and X. Each ad is displayed with a contextual interpretation that highlights the pragmatic strategies used to connect with Nigerian audiences.

Data Presentation

Data Contextual Interpretation

In Nigerian Pidgin, “Gbedu” is slang for music, particularly upbeat, rhythmic, and loud party music. It can refer to any song or beat that gets people excited and ready to dance. Overtime, “gbedu” has also evolved to mean a great time or enjoyable experience, often associated with lively events or gatherings.

The phrase “On-the-Go” is an assertive speech act that reinforces the speaker’s mobility, suggesting that users can enjoy high-quality, immersive sound wherever they are. By implying portability, the ad positions the speaker as a tool for freedom and spontaneity, allowing users to create a lively atmosphere anytime and anywhere.

This aligns with the desire for flexibility and mobility in enjoying music, making it clear that the speaker is built to accommodate the dynamic, on-the-move lifestyle of its audience.



Figure 1:

“Steeze” is a slang term that combines “style” and “ease.” It’s often used on social media to describe a sense of coolness, confidence, or effortlessly trendy appeal. “steeze” suggests that even though Chowdeck’s offering is substantial and filling (“REFUEL OVERLOAD”), it still maintains a sense of style and sophistication. This is also an assertive speech act. Satisfaction and “steeze” aligns the brand with youthful, trend-focused consumers who want to enjoy life’s pleasures without compromising on quality or image

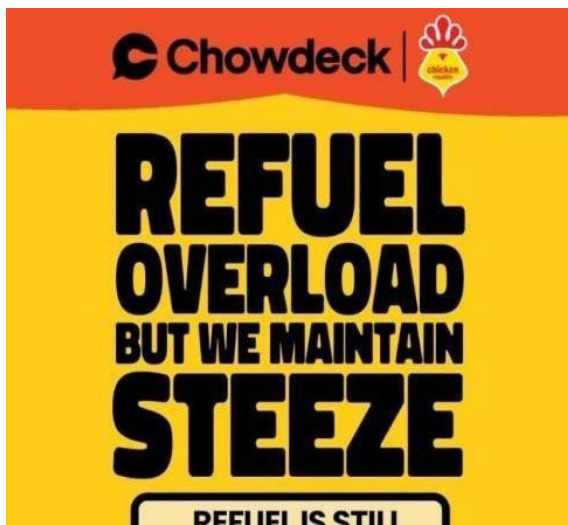


Figure 2:

The slang “NA MAN YOU BE!” communicates a sense of respect, affirmation, and confidence. This is also an assertive speech act. When a brand like Odogwu Bitters uses this phrase, it speaks directly to its target audience—primarily young, vibrant adult males who value authenticity in their social interactions. Bitters are often marketed with attributes traditionally associated with toughness or fortitude, appealing to an audience that values strength as a core characteristic. It affirms one’s masculinity.



Figure 3:

“GET UP” acts as a motivational command, urging someone to rise or become active, conveying urgency and energy. This is an authoritative speech act. “EPIC SHIT” captures a sense of grandiosity or significance; “epic” implies something extraordinary, while “shit” is a casual way to refer to experiences or activities. Together, it suggests that the planned actions are not just ordinary but rather adventurous and noteworthy. This ad uses the slang “epic shit” to convey a sense of excitement, ambition, and the desire to accomplish something extraordinary. Here, “epic shit” implies boldness, high energy, and adventure, appealing to an audience that aspires to be daring and impactful.



Figure 4:

“Awoof,” which refers to a bonus, freebie, or something received without cost. “Another Tuesday,” suggests a regular occurrence of exciting offers, implying that consumers can expect consistent rewards and bonuses every week. This is also an assertive as a speech act This creates anticipation and encourages customers to look forward to Tuesdays as a day of special deals, enhancing customer engagement and loyalty.

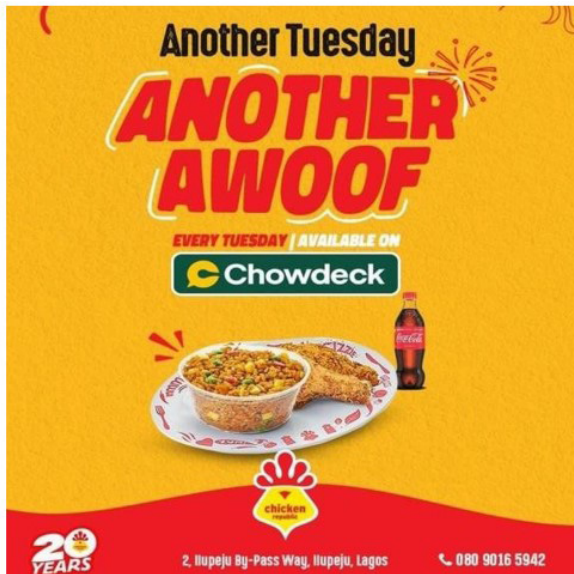


Figure 5:

“NO CAP” is a slang expression that means “no lie” or “I’m being serious,” often used to emphasize honesty or truthfulness in a statement. It indicates that the speaker is genuine in their assertion and is not exaggerating. “E SWEET WELLA” is a phrase derived from Nigerian Pidgin, meaning “It is very sweet” or “It is really enjoyable.” This expression is often used to describe food, experiences, or feelings that are particularly delightful or pleasurable. Together, the phrase conveys strong enthusiasm or approval that the meal is delicious. The speech act employed in this ad is expressive.



Figure 6:

“Your money no go hang” translates to “your money won’t get stuck” or “your money will be secured”. This is another assertive speech act. This implies that using this card ensures reliability and ease of access to funds,

reassuring customers that their financial transactions will be smooth and hassle-free. This ad promises users a seamless experience free from the common delays in Nigeria’s electronic banking systems. It also implies that transactions with this card will be instant and reliable, addressing a frequent pain point for Nigerians, funds often get “stuck” due to network issues or high transaction volumes and this can cause delays sometimes that takes hours or days.

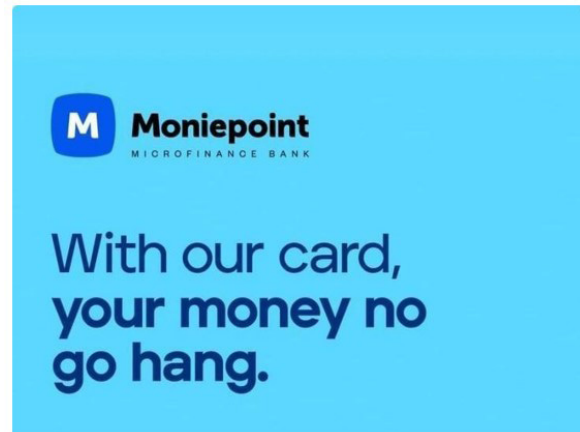


Figure 7:

“IDAN” refers to a term of endearment or respect in Nigerian slang, often used to indicate someone who is outstanding or a boss. It elevates the product by associating it with excellence or superiority, making the herbal mixture appear even more desirable. This is an authoritative speech act. The ad, “Na the real Idan,” uses the slang “Idan” a Nigerian term that roughly translates to someone who is influential, powerful, or highly skilled. In this context, “Na the real Idan” means “This is the true master”, implying that the product is authentic, top-tier, and unmatched.



Figure 8:

“E DEY ENTER YA EYE?” translates to “Does it enter your eye?” in English, a colloquial way of asking if

something is appealing or satisfying, often used to express pleasure or delight in food. In this context, it suggests that the shawarma being referred to is exceptionally good, flavorful, or visually appealing. The speech act employed here is one of assertive.



Figure 9:

The phrase “NA COLLABO!” is a slang expression derived from Nigerian Pidgin, where “NA” translates to “is” or “it is,” and “COLLABO” is a colloquial term for “collaboration.” This is an expressive type of speech act. In context, “NA COLLABO!” conveys excitement or acknowledgment about a partnership or joint effort, between the JMK premium noodles and the JMK turkey bites. The ad appeals to Nigerian consumers’ enjoyment of flavorful food pairings, presenting the two products as complementary and more enjoyable together. This approach positions the products not as standalone items but as a matched set, encouraging consumers to buy both for a complete culinary experience.



Figure 10:

“Enough of cho cho cho” suggests a dismissal of excessive talk or frivolous discussions. “Cho cho cho” could refer to idle chatter or gossip, indicating impatience or frustration with conversations that lack substance. “Show workings” implies a request for transparency or evidence. This is a directive speech act. This ad emphasizes the need to save and not make unnecessary statements.



Figure 11:

When someone refers to themselves or another person as “Oga at the top” it implies they are the leading figure in a specific area or the best at what they do. This is an assertive speech act.

“Oga at the top of spicy burger” serves to position the brand as a dominant player in the fast-food market in Nigeria. Nigerians are known for their love of bold, flavorful foods, often characterized by the use of various spices and peppers. This ad taps into that preference, positioning the spicy burger as an ideal choice for those seeking exciting and robust flavors.

By highlighting spiciness, KFC not only meets local culinary expectations but also aligns with the identity of Nigerian cuisine.



Figure 12:

“Japa” means to flee or escape, often used in the context of leaving Nigeria for better opportunities abroad. “Howfar” (another Nigerian Pidgin term) casually inquires about the audience’s plans, creating a relatable, conversational tone. This is a commissive speech act. This ad appeals to the aspirations of Nigerians looking to migrate, often driven by reasons like career growth, education, economic stability, or quality of life improvements. By positioning themselves as facilitators in these Japa journeys, this brand aligns with the audience’s hopes and ambitions for a fresh start, promising support in achieving their relocation goals.

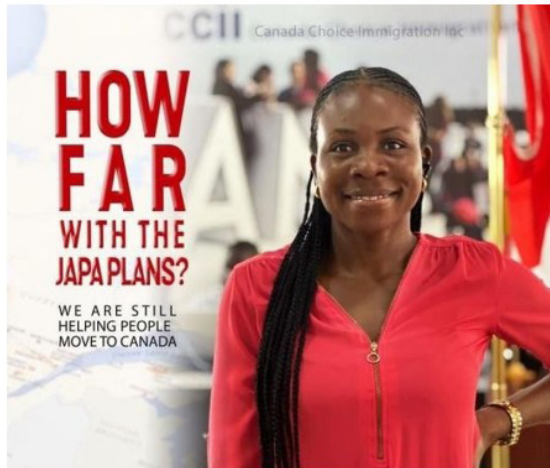


Figure 13:

“NO CAP” is a slang expression that means “no lie” or “I’m being serious,” often used to emphasize honesty or truthfulness in a statement.

The mention of the “yellow cap” specifically refers to the packaging of the Freshyo drink, which is a key visual element in the ad. This is an expressive speech act. By emphasizing the yellow cap, the brand not only makes the product easily identifiable but also associates it with the exciting promotions of free airtime and cash gifts.



Figure 14:

“DEY PLAY!” is an exclamatory statement that translates to “They are playing!” This expression often conveys disbelief or frustration about a situation where someone isn’t taking things seriously or is being overly casual in a context that might require more attention or seriousness. This ad employs an invitational speech act. This ad likely suggests a playful yet serious commentary on someone’s financial habits or attitude towards money. It can be interpreted as an admonishment for not being prudent or cautious enough with money. This ad humorously nudges users to stop “playing” with their finances and start using the app’s features for bill payments and savings, highlighting the app as a smart, practical choice for managing money.

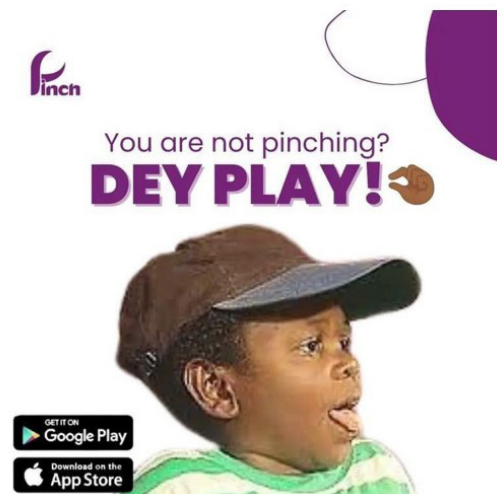


Figure 15:

“SAPA” is a Nigerian slang term meaning intense financial hardship or lack of money. Here, “Fear of SAPA” implies a preventive action against financial instability. The phrase is a humorous but cautionary warning, appealing to the audience’s experience or fear of being broke.

By framing “Sapa” as something to be feared, this ad emphasizes the importance of proactive financial management, encouraging consumers to take control of their savings to avoid future distress. This is an assertive speech act.

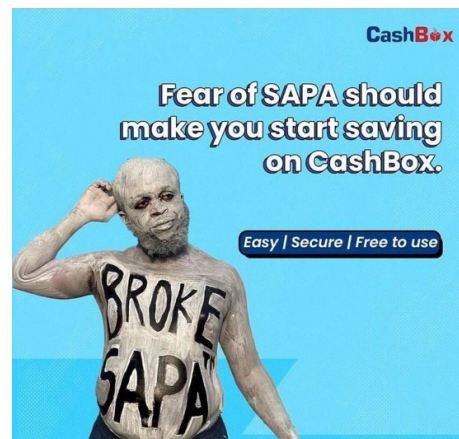


Figure 16:

“Awoof,” which means “something given for free” or a “bonus” that comes without cost. In this context, saying “Auntie B does awoof” is an expressive speech act which suggests that Auntie B’s food brand provides customers with added value. Specializing in pasta and semolina, Auntie B positions her products as not only filling but as generously portioned, affordable, or offering occasional deals that feel like a bonus. This appeals to customers who appreciate value and abundance, signaling that buying from Auntie B means receiving more than expected, whether in quantity, quality, or affordability.

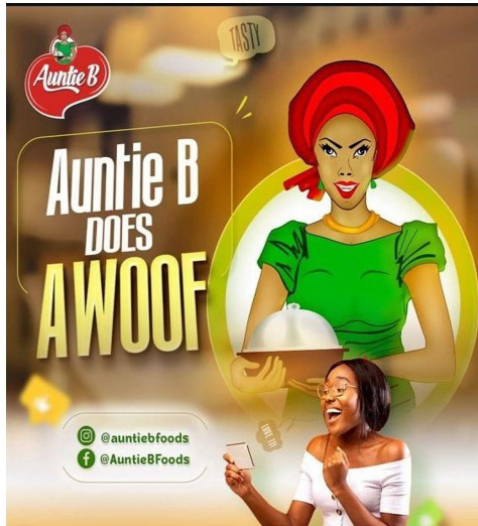


Figure 17:

“NO WAHALA,” translates to “no problem” or “no stress.” This expression is assertive and captures a sense of relief and ease.

This ad implies that if users have no physical cash, they can easily top up their airtime directly from their bank account, offering a simple, cashless solution. This creates a sense of convenience and relief, showing that the network has anticipated users’ needs and provides seamless options to keep their communication uninterrupted, regardless of cash availability.



Figure 18:

“Waka” means “to go” or “to move.” It implies plans for a lively outing or adventure, particularly on a Friday night, which is often associated with social activities and relaxation after the week. The question indicates excitement and anticipation for the upcoming weekend. The ad expression is one of exhortation thus employing the invitational speech act.

This ad connects with a youthful audience excited about social outings and nightlife. By asking if the “waka” is loading, it implies that consumers should prepare for their weekend plans, emphasizing the importance of having a reliable payment card to facilitate their activities.



Figure 19:

This ad uses the Nigerian slang phrase “No gree,” which translates to “Don’t agree” or “Don’t let” in standard English, implying resistance or refusal. Pragmatically, “No gree” serves as a directive, urging the audience to take action against germs by refusing to let them persist by using their bleach. This use of slang creates a tone of toughness and assertiveness, encouraging consumers to view germs as something to combat actively.



Figure 20:

This ad uses the slang term “soft life,” which in Nigerian and broader pop culture refers to a lifestyle of ease, comfort, and minimal stress—essentially the pursuit of an enjoyable, luxury-filled life.

Pragmatically, the text in the ad is an expressive speech act. “Soft life” appeals to audiences’ aspirations for comfort and quality, tapping into a popular ideal of financial stability and the enjoyment of life’s pleasures. In this context, “soft life is coming to your area!” is designed to build excitement and anticipation, suggesting that an opportunity to experience this desirable lifestyle is imminent.



Figure 21:

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the Most Commonly Used Social Media Slangs in Nigerian Digital Advertising?

The data analysis reveals that certain social media slang terms are widely used in Nigerian digital advertising due to their cultural relevance and ability to resonate with the local audience. Terms like “sapa” (describing financial hardship humorously), “awoof” (something free or discounted), “no wahala” (no problem), “soft life” (aspiring to a comfortable and stress-free lifestyle), and “Idan” (a powerful or influential person) Japa (to escape or flee) are especially common in advertisements. These terms create a relatable and familiar tone, reflecting everyday experiences and aspirations, making them powerful tools for establishing brand rapport with Nigerian audiences. The popularity of these terms suggests that advertisers are intentional in using slang to build connections and communicate in a language that feels authentic and relatable to their consumers.

Research Question 2: How Do These Slangs Function Pragmatically within Advertisements?

The ads employ different forms of speech acts as expounded by Allan (1994). The speech acts employed in the text of the ads are Assertives, Authoritatives, Expressives, Directives, Expressives and Invitationals. Paramount among these speech acts is the usage of assertives more. This is because assertives have truth value and expresses the speaker’s belief in the proposition.

Pragmatically, these slang terms perform multiple functions that enhance ad effectiveness. First, they serve as markers of solidarity, fostering a shared cultural identity between brands and consumers. By using slang like “sapa” and “awoof,” brands acknowledge common economic struggles and desires, which helps create a sense of understanding and empathy.

Additionally, slang is used to stimulate action or urgency—phrases like “no dull am” and “no gree” prompt consumers to act quickly or make decisive purchases, creating an effective call to action. Slang also helps establish an informal and conversational tone, which breaks away from the conventional, formal language often found in advertising. This approach enhances brand relatability, presenting the brand as an accessible part of the consumer’s social world. These pragmatic uses allow brands to build emotional engagement and use language strategically to persuade by aligning their messages with everyday language, values, and humor.

Research Question 3: What is the Influence of Social Media Slang on Consumer Engagement and Brand Perception in Nigeria?

The use of social media slang in advertising significantly influences consumer engagement and brand perception. By incorporating familiar terms, brands become more relatable, establishing trust and emotional connection. Consumers often perceive brands that use slang as modern and culturally attuned, which boosts brand perception positively and increases engagement levels, such as likes, comments, and shares. For example, brands that use terms like “awoof” in promoting luxury items or discounts see higher consumer interaction, as the messages align with popular ideals of value and ease as seen in the appendix A.

This use of slang contributes to a brand’s authenticity, making it appear more approachable and encouraging brand loyalty among consumers who appreciate these traits. Slang-laden advertisements are shared more readily, as they feel authentic and resonate with everyday humor and language, organically expanding brand reach. Thus, slang significantly enhances both brand perception and consumer engagement by appealing to cultural relevance and establishing familiarity.

CONCLUSION

The application of pragmatic theory and relevance theory in this study provided a robust framework for analyzing how slang terms are strategically used in Nigerian digital ads. Pragmatic theory, helped uncover the multifaceted roles slang terms play in advertisements. For instance, slang terms often act as speech acts that convey solidarity, empathy, or urgency. The findings illustrate how the pragmatic function of these terms aligns with brand objectives, allowing advertisers to communicate messages in ways that feel familiar and trustworthy to consumers. Similarly, the study applied the relevance theory to show how Nigerian consumers readily identify with terms

embedded in their social and cultural context, making these ads more relevant and impactful.

In terms of consumer engagement and brand perception, the findings showed that social media slang positively influences how consumers interact with and perceive brands. Consumers view brands that incorporate relatable slang as modern, accessible, and culturally attuned, which builds brand loyalty and fosters a sense of community among consumers who share these language cues. Findings from the study also show that slang terms employed in Nigerian digital advertising make use of speech acts prominent among which is assertives.

The study recommends as follows:

1. Social media language evolves quickly, and what is trendy today may lose relevance tomorrow.

Advertisers should regularly monitor trending slang terms to stay current and avoid using outdated language that may make the brand appear disconnected from its audience. Keeping pace with language trends enables brands to maintain cultural relevance, which is essential for sustaining consumer interest and engagement.

2. While slang can make a brand appear approachable and modern, excessive use can dilute professionalism or alienate certain demographics, especially older consumers or those less familiar with current slang. Advertisers should balance slang with clear messaging to ensure broad audience comprehension while preserving the brand's core identity.

3. To maximize the impact of social media slang, advertisers should align language with visual elements in their ads. For example, using "soft life" in an ad with calming, aspirational visuals reinforces the message of luxury and comfort. Consistent integration of visual cues with relatable language enhances message clarity and strengthens brand identity, ensuring that the brand's messaging resonates on multiple levels.

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