

Language Advertisement in Vanguard and Punch Newspapers: A Semantic Approach

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Abstract. This study investigates the semantic features and language strategies employed in advertisements within two prominent Nigerian newspapers, Punch and Vanguard. Anchored in linguistic theories such as the Denotational, Mentalist, Sense, and Use Theories of Meaning, the research explores how lexical and semantic choices shape consumer perceptions and engagement. The study focuses on three advertisements: Wema Bank, The Alternative Bank (Punch), Blue Diamond Logistics, and Lagos Internal Revenue Service (Vanguard).

Findings reveal distinct differences in language use, reflecting the newspapers' editorial styles and target audiences. Punch adopts direct, action-oriented language, appealing to a pragmatic readership by emphasising immediacy and clarity. For example, Wema Bank's "5 for 5 Promo" employs transactional terms like "daily draws" and "N135,000,000 prize," creating urgency and excitement. Similarly, The Alternative Bank uses aspirational phrases like "Be Unstoppable," encouraging empowerment and professional growth.

Conversely, Vanguard employs emotive and sophisticated language, resonating with an urban, aspirational audience. Blue Diamond Logistics emphasises credibility and expertise through terms like "global logistics services" and "30-year track record," projecting reliability and international competence. The Lagos Internal Revenue Service ad promotes its eTax platform using language highlighting civic responsibility and convenience, framing tax compliance as a moral obligation.

The study underscores the role of semantics in aligning advertisements with cultural and cognitive contexts, demonstrating how language constructs meaning to influence consumer behaviour. Advertisers effectively engage diverse demographics by tailoring linguistic strategies to specific audience profiles. Recommendations include a deeper exploration of cultural and regional factors in advertising language and expanding research to digital media platforms.

In conclusion, the nuanced lexical and semantic choices in Punch and Vanguard advertisements exemplify the strategic interplay between language, meaning, and audience engagement in Nigerian print media.

Keywords: Semantics; Advertising; Consumer Engagement; Meaning; Newspapers; Language.

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human life. Without language, people would face significant difficulties communicating with others, resulting in a lack of interaction among individuals. Humans rely on communication as social creatures to build relationships and interact with their environment. Humans cannot separate themselves from language since they need it to communicate with others. Generally, language is divided into two main parts: written and spoken. Written language encompasses all languages used in written texts, while spoken language refers to language used in speech, particularly conversation.

Language is essential in relationships between individuals within a social group, community, or society. According to authors [1], language is the principal means by which people conduct their social lives. In everyday life, people use language for various purposes. Besides using language for communication, people also use it for negotiation, introduction, and socialisation. In other words, language and society are deeply connected through communication.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. As a scientific study, it encompasses various language-related issues, such as its history, development, and the relationship between language and socio-cultural aspects. Several fields of linguistics include morphology, phonology, syntax, and semantics [2]. Semantics studies the meaning of words, phrases, or sentences in a language. Author [3] states, "Semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning." Meaning is one of the most ambiguous and controversial terms in the theory of language, determined by the arrangement of words in sentences.

According to the author [4], the meaning is described as follows:

- 1) The message that is intended or expressed or signified;
- 2) The idea that is intended. Verbal communication is an everyday activity where we exchange information by speaking and hearing.

Non-verbal communication involves exchanging information through expressions and body language, while written communication uses symbols, letters, and text to convey information. Paraverbal communication involves changes in tone

or volume, such as raising our voice when angry or lowering it when sad.

Advertising campaigns are produced to achieve specific purposes the advertiser desires. In advertising, attracting people involves various strategies, such as using beautiful models, funny pictures, catchy lines, and attractive colours. Sometimes, marketers use foreign languages, mainly English, to create a "cool effect" and avoid formality in casual conversation [5].

This study investigates the semantic aspects of language used in advertisements in *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers. Semantics, a part of linguistics, focuses on the relationship between signifiers (words, phrases, signs, and symbols) and their meanings. Author [6] defines linguistics as the study of human language and semantics as the study of meaning.

Communication is essential in human life, and language is a typical attribute of humans. According to the author [7], communication is embedded in human culture, and as society changes, so does the culture. Communication involves transferring thoughts or messages to another party for understanding and action. Advertising, a form of marketing, involves paying for space to promote a product, service, or cause. It aims to reach potential customers and influence their perceptions, opinions, and purchasing behaviour.

Advertising objectives have historically been to achieve direct sales by persuading consumers to buy. It involves communicating a message to sell by informing, influencing, and reminding potential customers of a product's value [8]. Advertising is responsible for promoting goods and services, increasing product knowledge, persuading target audiences, and maintaining brand awareness [9].

This paper analyses the semantics of advertising language in newspapers, focusing on selected advertisements from *Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers. The study of semantics is a broad, multidimensional domain within linguistics, encompassing numerous definitions and interpretations.

Meaning and History of Advertising. Advertising is a form of mass promotion aimed at raising awareness about the uses and benefits of a product, making it available to those who need it, and ultimately increasing sales. According to authors [9], advertising encompasses all written or verbal communication directed at a target audience and paid for by a sponsor to sell or market a

product or service. The essence of advertising is to entice existing and potential customers to take action, whether to continue purchasing or initiate a new purchase. Authors [10] describe advertising as a method of communication that encourages viewers to make purchasing decisions about products or services, providing essential information and serving as a crucial factor in the economic development of traders and companies.

Generally, advertising promotes goods, services, businesses, and ideas, typically sponsored by a known entity. It involves crafting a message to sell a product, idea, or service. With the widespread use of media, advertising has become a dynamic concept. Media for advertising include newspapers, periodicals, posters, neon and fluorescent signs, billboards, television commercials, laser projections, and high-rise inflated figures and objects. The primary goal of advertising is to attract, modify, change, and influence public opinion.

In today's global society, newspaper advertising remains attractive, exciting, and innovative, playing an integral part in our daily lives. Businesses use advertising to encourage sales and generate revenue. Slogans are commonly employed in advertisements to capture customers' attention; every element in advertising matters: colours, background images, the person or animated image displayed, the choice of words by the advertiser, font size, and more.

The advertising field continues to grow and evolve as brands heavily rely on media for various marketing purposes, such as increasing revenue, generating knowledge, and creating market awareness. Advertising plays a vital role in shaping the ever-changing norms of society, both nationally and internationally. As the influence of advertising on people's lives grows, there is increasing attention to its many positive and negative effects [11]. Advertising thrives on persuasion, with marketing communication in the form of advertising [12]. Authors [13] further argue that advertising involves persuading an audience or consumer to take action related to a product, idea, or service.

Statement of the Problem. Advertising is a powerful tool for influencing consumer behaviour and perceptions. However, the effectiveness of advertisements heavily relies on the language and semantics used. Despite the widespread use of ads in Nigerian newspapers such as Punch and Vanguard, there is a noticeable gap in research

focusing on the semantic elements of these advertisements and their impact on consumer engagement. Existing studies have concentrated mainly on the visual and strategic aspects of advertising, with limited attention to the detailed semantic analysis of the language used in newspaper advertisements. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the semantic features in ads from these two newspapers, exploring how these features influence the effectiveness and reception of the ads.

The main *objectives* of this study are:

- 1) To identify and analyse the semantic features of language used in advertisements in Punch and Vanguard newspapers.
- 2) To compare the semantic elements in advertisements between the two newspapers.
- 3) To examine how these semantic features influence the effectiveness of the advertisements.
- 4) To provide insights into how advertisers can improve the use of language in newspaper advertisements to enhance consumer engagement.

This study seeks to answer the following *research questions*:

- 1) What are the predominant semantic features used in advertisements in Punch and Vanguard newspapers?
- 2) How do the semantic features in advertisements differ between Punch and Vanguard newspapers?
- 3) How do these semantic elements influence the effectiveness of the advertisements?
- 4) Based on the findings, how can advertisers improve the use of language in newspaper advertisements?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Advertising, often dubbed the "official art" of industrialised nations, saturates newspapers and other mass media, creating a structured and pervasive presence that shapes public perceptions and economic systems. It is a powerful force that uses imagery, language, and narrative to propagate ideologies that align with consumerism and capitalist interests. Authors [14] note that newspaper advertisements are integral to media output and significantly influence the cultural and economic landscape. By promoting the consump-

tion of goods, advertisers reinforce the capitalist system, which thrives on continuous production, consumption, and waste. In this sense, newspaper advertisements serve not only to sell products but also to maintain an economic ideology that perpetuates consumption-driven growth.

One of the key criticisms of advertising, especially in newspapers, is its tendency to mislead or oversimplify information to entice consumers. While people appreciate some ads for their creativity, they often dismiss others as trivial or annoying. However, all advertisements serve an underlying ideological function regardless of aesthetic quality. Author [15] argues that advertising shapes consumer beliefs and desires, often promoting unrealistic ideals and manipulating emotions. With their broad reach and relatively low cost, newspaper ads have become powerful tools for advertisers to embed these values in the public consciousness. Advertising's ability to blend information with persuasion creates a fertile ground for perpetuating ideologies prioritising material wealth and consumption over social welfare and collective well-being.

The critique of advertising extends to its role in shaping consumer needs and wants, often promoting unnecessary or harmful products. According to the author [16], advertising plays a pivotal role in creating "false needs" in consumers, encouraging them to prioritise private acquisition over genuine human necessities like healthcare and education. Newspaper advertisements frequently suggest that happiness and success are achievable through material possessions, thus reinforcing a consumerist mindset. These ads often divert attention from critical societal needs by aligning individual success with consumer goods. Author [17] points out that such advertisements promote "conspicuous consumption," which encourages individuals to define their identity and social standing through material possessions, a trend that newspapers help perpetuate through their vast advertising spaces.

However, defenders of advertising argue that it is economically essential and has brought numerous benefits to society. Advertising stimulates economic activity by promoting mass-produced goods, creating employment, and improving living standards. As a traditional medium, newspapers play a crucial role in this process by offering a platform for businesses to reach a broad audience. Authors [18] contend that advertising

serves an essential economic function by fostering competition and providing consumers with information about products and services. In this context, newspaper ads are viewed as vehicles that help consumers make informed choices, thereby contributing to the market's overall efficiency. Moreover, proponents assert that consumers are not passive recipients of advertising messages and can ignore or reject ads that do not resonate with them, indicating that advertising does not brainwash individuals into making unwanted purchases.

The language of advertising has become ubiquitous, shaping not only how we view products but also how we communicate about everyday life. Author [19] asserts that the language of products and services has replaced much of the discourse on other subjects, highlighting the dominance of consumer culture. Since the 1920s, advertising has shifted from merely describing products to creating images and narratives that resonate with consumers more deeply [20]. This shift has profoundly affected how products are marketed in newspapers, where ads no longer focus on the functional aspects of a product but instead highlight the emotional and psychological benefits associated with ownership. Authors [21] further argue that modern advertising taps into the subconscious, appealing to consumers' desires for security, prestige, and social advancement. Therefore, newspaper advertisements are critical in shaping consumer behaviour, cultural ideals, and societal norms.

Despite the sophistication of modern advertising techniques, not all advertisements align with positive social values. Some promote a consumer culture that degrades societal norms by equating personal worth with material possessions. Authors [22] emphasise that advertising often perpetuates ideologies prioritising consumption over more enlightened and socially beneficial goals. In newspapers, this can be seen in ads emphasising luxury goods and status symbols, encouraging readers to aspire to lifestyles defined by wealth and material success. These advertisements contribute to a cycle of consumption that promotes individualism and competitiveness at the expense of collective well-being. Authors [23] argue that advertising fosters a consumerist ideology that shapes not only individual desires but broader social values, positioning consumption as the primary avenue for achieving personal fulfilment.

The study of advertising language, particularly in newspapers, is deeply intertwined with pragmatics, which explores how meaning is communicated in specific contexts. According to the author [24], pragmatics focuses on speaker meaning, making it a valuable tool for understanding how advertisers craft messages that resonate with their target audience. In newspaper advertisements, pragmatics helps decode how seemingly neutral language can carry implicit meanings that shape consumer perceptions. For instance, an ad for a luxury product may not explicitly claim that purchasing the item will enhance social status, but this message is conveyed through context, imagery, and tone. Author [25] argues that pragmatics allows for a deeper understanding of how consumers interpret the subtle cues in advertising, particularly when the ads are strategically placed in newspapers where space is limited and messages must be concise.

Moreover, the success or failure of an advertisement often hinges on its ability to communicate meaning effectively within a given context. Author [26] notes that ads rely heavily on context to shape consumer interpretation; this is particularly true in newspapers, where the placement of an ad, whether on the front page or in a specialised section, can significantly influence how the message is received [26]. Readers may perceive an advertisement for a health-related product as more credible when it appears in the health section of a newspaper rather than elsewhere. Authors [23] emphasise that context plays a critical role in how consumers decode advertising messages, making pragmatics an essential framework for analysing the language of advertising in newspapers.

Despite ongoing debates about its societal impact, advertising remains a cornerstone of modern economies. Those who defend advertising argue that it promotes economic growth by encouraging innovation and competition, leading to better products and lower prices. In newspapers, advertising helps support the financial viability of the publication while providing readers with valuable information about local goods and services. Authors [27] argue that advertising contributes to market efficiency by informing consumers and helping businesses reach their target audiences. In this sense, newspaper advertisements can be considered integral to the economy and the media landscape, offering benefits beyond the individual consumer to the community.

In conclusion, the language of advertising in newspapers serves economic and ideological functions. While advertisements help promote goods and services, they reinforce broader societal values related to consumption, individualism, and material success. Critics argue that advertising creates false needs and encourages wasteful consumption, but defenders maintain that it is essential for economic growth and market efficiency. A pragmatic analysis of advertising language reveals how ads communicate meaning, particularly in the context of newspapers, where ads must be concise yet impactful. As newspapers continue to serve as a platform for advertising, it is essential to examine these ads' role in shaping consumer behaviour and broader social values. Ultimately, newspaper advertisements are more than just tools for selling products; they are key players in the ongoing dialogue between commerce, culture, and ideology.

Semantic Features in Advertising. The semantic features of advertising are critical in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. In advertising, semantics refers to meaning derived from the words, phrases, and sentences used to convey a message [3]. The study of semantics in advertising reveals how carefully chosen words inform and manipulate consumer emotions and decisions. For instance, advertisements in Nigeria's Punch and Vanguard newspapers employ specific linguistic strategies to attract consumers and influence their purchasing decisions. As the author [28] noted, semantics is about the signification of signs, which includes how words and images interact to create meaning in ads.

An example from The Punch newspaper's advertisement for Peak Milk uses various semantic and lexical choices to create a strong brand image during the holiday season. The phrase "Merry Peakmas" is a playful blend of the words "Peak" and "Christmas," which aims to connect the brand with festivity and joy. Another slogan, "Make it a Peakmas every morning," suggests that the product should be part of everyday life, extending the festive association to daily routines.

The choice of words like "Merry," "Peakmas," and "every morning" appeals to emotions, creating a sense of warmth and family while subtly encouraging frequent consumption. The positioning of the images, of a person holding Peak products and holiday-themed decorations, reinforces the idea of celebration and togetherness.

In another Peak Milk ad, the phrase "Bruised and pierced for us," coupled with the spilt milk can and a nail, symbolically references Christ's crucifixion, leveraging Easter's cultural significance. This ad engages viewers through a mixture of religious symbolism and product marketing, making it memorable through an unconventional comparison. The #GoodFriday hashtag connects the ad to a specific holiday, associating Peak with reflection and tradition.

Below are the images for the Peak Milk advertisements.

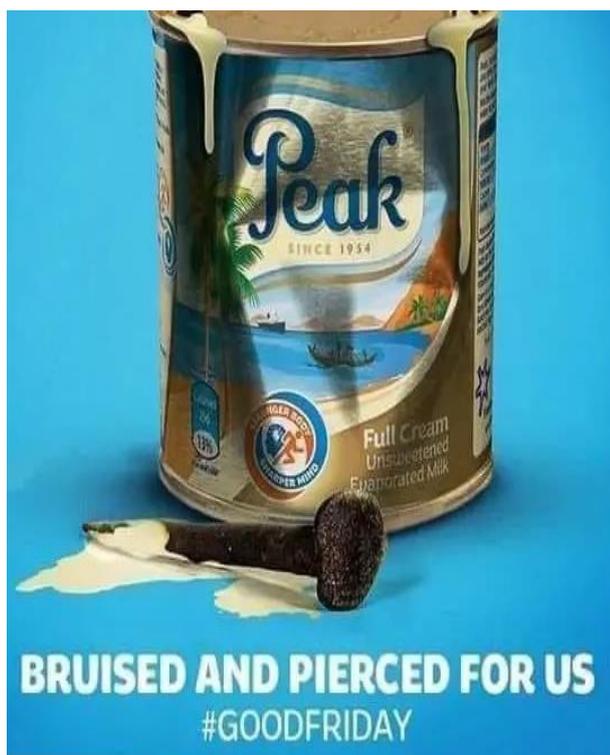


Figure 1 –Peak Milk advertisements

Moreover, context plays an essential role in how these ads are interpreted. According to the author [4], the meaning depends on context, as evi-

dent in Vanguard's ads for MTN services during festive seasons. In an ad titled "MTN: Share the Joy of the Season," the phrase "share the joy" is context-dependent. While "joy" traditionally refers to happiness, in this context, it signifies connectivity, as MTN encourages customers to stay connected with family and friends during holidays. The phrase evokes an emotional connection, making the product more relatable to the consumer's desire to keep in touch, a technique that [29] describes as tapping into hidden meanings through word choice in advertising.

Another key semantic feature in advertising is using imperatives and adjectives designed to prompt immediate consumer action. Imperatives are often used to create a sense of urgency or command action. For instance, an ad in Vanguard for Dangote Cement reads, "Build with the best, choose Dangote." The imperative "choose" compels readers to actively favour the brand, while the adjective "best" emphasises Dangote's superiority over competitors. Authors [30] note that adjectives and imperatives position products positively and influence consumers' decisions. This ad appeals to builders and contractors by stressing quality, urging them to opt for Dangote as the ideal choice.

Ambiguity is another semantic tool used effectively in advertising to intrigue consumers. In an ad in Punch for Peak Milk, the tagline reads, "Peak for every moment." The word "peak" carries multiple meanings; it signifies the brand's name but also refers to the top or best, implying that the product is the best choice for any situation. This lexical ambiguity enhances the advertisement's appeal by allowing consumers to interpret the message positively. Author [31] emphasised how ambiguity in advertising can enhance persuasion by making the consumer pause and think, thereby increasing engagement with the brand. This strategic use of semantics makes the message stick in the consumer's mind.

Puns and wordplay are also frequently utilised to capture attention and create memorable ads. In a Vanguard ad for MTN titled "Y'ello for you," the term "Y'ello" cleverly plays on the brand's signature colour, yellow, while also serving as a greeting similar to "hello." This autographic modification captures attention through uniqueness and reinforces the brand's identity. According to authors [32], puns and word modifications in advertising make the product stand out and create a memorable brand image. The playfulness of

"Y'ello" helps cement MTN's presence in the consumer's mind, associating the brand with friendliness and accessibility.

The careful selection of words in advertising reflects how products are described regarding their functional and emotional benefits. For example, a Punch ad for Dettol soap might use the tagline, "Protects your family, keeps them safe." The verb "protects" and the adjective "safe" are carefully chosen to appeal to the consumer's concern for family health, creating a strong emotional connection. As the author [4] points out, advertisers often use the semantic meaning of words in advertisements to imply a performance; here, they link the soap's performance to the responsibility of safeguarding loved ones; this aligns with the author's [31] argument that advertisers deliberately craft language to evoke emotions, persuading consumers to act positively toward the product. In this way, Punch uses language that emphasises reliability and trust, qualities central to the brand image of products like Dettol, thus appealing to the everyday concerns of its readers.

In conclusion, advertisers in Punch and Vanguard newspapers strategically manipulate meaning to shape consumer behaviour, as revealed by the semantic features of their ads.

Advertisers tailor their messages to resonate with diverse audiences through imperatives, emotive adjectives, and sometimes playful language. As authors [29] argue, advertising language is crafted with hidden meanings designed to be memorable and impactful. In Punch, advertisers employ clear and trustworthy language to evoke a sense of security and reliability, appealing to a more middle-class readership focused on everyday concerns. Conversely, Vanguard often uses more dynamic and attention-grabbing language to engage with its urban, politically conscious audience. Through these distinct linguistic choices, advertisements in these Nigerian newspapers not only inform but also persuade, influence, and shape the perceptions of their respective consumer bases.

Comparative studies on language use in Punch and Vanguard newspapers

The comparative analysis of language use in Punch and Vanguard newspapers reveals a nuanced engagement with Nigeria's socio-political landscape, reflecting their respective editorial leanings and target audiences. Both newspapers

are key players in Nigeria's democracy, providing platforms for political discourse, but their language, tone, and style often differ, which impacts how they influence public opinion [33]

Language in political reporting significantly shapes public perception and discourse, particularly in a diverse country like Nigeria. Punch, which is widely regarded as one of the leading independent newspapers in Nigeria, caters to a readership that spans various regions, not necessarily confined to a Northern audience as previously implied. Rather than focusing predominantly on Northern governance, Punch presents a more balanced approach, reflecting a commitment to accountability and transparency [34]. The language used in Punch tends to be formal and restrained, providing factual, straightforward accounts of political events. This approach aligns with its editorial standards of professionalism, objectivity, and credibility.

For instance, a typical headline from Punch might read, "Government Calls for Dialogue in Borno" [35]. This straightforward title emphasises the government's intention to foster peace and stability in a region deeply affected by conflict. The choice of words like "dialogue" suggests a preference for institutional solutions, showcasing Punch's balanced tone. The framing reflects Punch's editorial stance, which caters to an audience that values governance and transparency in public affairs.

Unlike Vanguard, which often employs more provocative and emotionally charged language, Punch maintains a restrained yet critical stance on governance issues. It frequently emphasises policy, governance, and accountability rather than sensationalism. Punch's language also appeals to readers concerned with political developments, governance reforms, and the rule of law across Nigeria, making it influential in fostering informed political engagement.

On the other hand, Vanguard targets a politically diverse and vocal audience, particularly in southern Nigeria. The language in Vanguard is often more emotive and sensational, designed to provoke reactions and fuel discussions. Headlines such as "Outrage as Senators Ignore Public Outcry on Budget Allocation" [36] typify the newspaper's approach. Using "outrage" conveys urgency, reflecting Vanguard's commitment to critiquing government actions and representing public concerns.

This activist-oriented tone reflects Vanguard's role in promoting civil rights and public accountability. The paper's language fosters an environment of civic engagement, often highlighting protests, dissent, and demands for government transparency, making it resonate with a politically conscious and vocal readership.

In conclusion, the linguistic styles of Punch and Vanguard illustrate the broader cultural and political diversity within Nigeria's media landscape. With its precise and measured tone, Punch focuses on governance and professionalism, while Vanguard embraces a more dynamic, sometimes sensational, style to engage its audience in critical political discussions. These editorial differences help shape public opinion and participation in Nigeria's democratic processes, each newspaper playing a unique role in fostering political discourse in its respective ways.

Use of Indigenous and Formal Language. Using indigenous and formal language in Nigerian newspapers is essential to media representation, allowing for deeper connections with their respective audiences. Punch and Vanguard primarily publish in English, Nigeria's official language, but their approach to integrating indigenous languages reflects their diverse readerships and editorial focus [37].

Based in Lagos and widely read across Southern Nigeria, Punch often integrates Yoruba phrases into its content, particularly in cultural pieces or human-interest stories; this aligns with the newspaper's Southern audience, many of whom are Yoruba speakers. For instance, in cultural reports or features that celebrate Yoruba traditions, Punch uses Yoruba idioms or greetings to create a sense of familiarity [38]. An example might be in an article covering a local event, where a phrase like "E ku ise" (meaning "Well done") is used to resonate with the local readership, adding a personal touch to the reporting. This use of Yoruba reinforces the cultural identity of its Southern audience and strengthens Punch's connection to its readers by acknowledging and celebrating their language.

In some cases, Punch advertisements also incorporate indigenous phrases to appeal directly to a broader Nigerian audience. For example, an ad for Peak Milk in Punch included the phrase "Mer-ry Peakmas" during the Christmas season, blending English and Nigerian cultural references in a festive context that resonates with Yoruba-speaking readers, who form a significant portion

of Punch's audience [39]. This blend of indigenous and English languages reflects Punch's commitment to representing its readers' experiences.

In contrast, Vanguard, widely read in Southern Nigeria but caters to a broader, politically diverse audience, incorporates a more flexible language strategy. Alongside English, Vanguard frequently uses Pidgin English and occasionally incorporates Yoruba and Igbo phrases to reach a wider readership [40].

Pidgin English, often used in Vanguard's headlines, adds a layer of relatability and immediacy to its reporting. A headline like "No Be Small Thing: Nigerians React to Election Results" (Vanguard, February 28, 2023) captures the public's sentiments in a more colloquial and accessible way [41]. This use of Pidgin simplifies complex political events, making them more digestible for the average reader, and often adds a sense of humour or emotion to serious topics. The informal tone connects with readers on the grassroots level, helping to bridge the gap between the media and everyday conversations in Nigeria.

Additionally, Vanguard occasionally uses indigenous languages like Igbo and Yoruba in regional news or opinion pieces to engage directly with its readers from specific ethnic groups. For example, in a piece celebrating Igbo cultural heritage, the phrase "Ndi Igbo Kwenu" (a popular Igbo rallying call) might be included to resonate emotionally with Igbo readers, fostering a sense of community and shared identity [42]. This approach ensures that Vanguard connects with its linguistically diverse readership while covering national and regional stories.

The strategic incorporation of Pidgin English and indigenous languages in Vanguard's reporting reflects its commitment to being a newspaper that speaks to "the people." By using language that is both accessible and emotionally engaging, Vanguard bridges the formal nature of news reporting with the colloquial speech of everyday Nigerians; this makes it an effective platform for civic engagement, especially for readers who seek to see their realities reflected in the news [43].

In conclusion, the use of indigenous and formal language in Punch and Vanguard reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of Nigeria's media landscape. Punch uses formal English with occasional Yoruba phrases to engage its Southern, middle-

class readership. At the same time, Vanguard employs a more flexible approach, incorporating Pidgin English and other indigenous languages to appeal to a broader and more diverse audience. These language choices not only enhance the accessibility of their content but also influence how readers engage with political, social, and cultural narratives across the country [44].

Language in Advertising. The language used in Punch ads serves a functional purpose: it appeals to the readership's desire for practical, no-nonsense solutions to everyday challenges. The middle-class economy of Southern Nigeria, where Punch has a strong readership base, includes professionals, small business owners, and families looking for products that promise stability and long-term benefits [45]. The focus on quality and community-oriented products resonates with the values of the region's diverse population, many of whom prioritise educational, financial, and health services.

In contrast, Vanguard, serving a Southern and urban audience, caters to a more dynamic and aspirational readership. The language used in Vanguard advertisements is energetic, characterised by emotive and often exaggerated expressions designed to capture the attention of a fast-paced, urban demographic. Ads for electronics, fashion, and entertainment are standard, with headlines such as "Unleash Your Power with the Latest Smartphone" (Vanguard, August 15, 2023). This language evokes feelings of empowerment and excitement, appealing to readers' desires for social status and personal advancement [46]. The urban readership of Vanguard is typically younger and more exposed to global consumer trends, reflected in the advertisements' energetic and often hyperbolic tone [47].

This aspirational language not only appeals to the material desires of Vanguard's readership but also reflects the broader socio-political dynamics of Southern Nigeria, where rapid urbanisation and economic diversification have created a more consumer-driven society [48]. Advertisements in Vanguard often make bold claims and use energetic phrasing to stand out in a crowded media space, encouraging readers to view consumption as a path to personal empowerment and social mobility [49].

Furthermore, Vanguard ads sometimes incorporate Nigerian Pidgin or regional languages, such as Yoruba or Igbo, to connect more intimately with its audience. This localised language makes

the advertisements more relatable and accessible, particularly to readers in the South who speak these languages in their daily lives [50]. For instance, an ad might say, "No Be Small Thing: Nigerians React to Election Results," using Pidgin to capture the public's sentiment immediately and authentically. The use of Pidgin in advertising not only broadens the newspaper's appeal but also signals inclusivity and an understanding of the linguistic diversity of its audience.

In conclusion, the language of advertising in Punch and Vanguard mirrors their respective regions' socio-cultural and economic realities. While Punch uses formal, trust-building language to appeal to a broad, diverse readership that values professionalism and reliability, Vanguard employs a more dynamic and aspirational tone to engage its urban Southern audience. These linguistic strategies reflect the newspapers' broader editorial approaches and play a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour across different regions of Nigeria.

Sensationalism vs. Neutral Reporting. The distinction between sensationalism and neutral reporting is stark in how Vanguard and Punch approach news stories, particularly in their political coverage. Vanguard is known for employing provocative language, often tapping into public emotions, especially in human interest stories and political commentary; this was especially evident in its coverage of significant social movements, such as the #EndSARS protests. The newspaper's headlines during the protests frequently used emotionally charged language to galvanise public opinion, as seen in headlines like "Nigerian Youths Demand End to Police Brutality; Streets Erupt in Protest" (Vanguard, October 15, 2020). This type of language reflects Vanguard's role as a platform for amplifying popular voices, which tends to emphasise social justice, public dissent, and accountability. The use of emotionally laden words like "demand" and "erupt" aims to mobilise the public and elicit a strong response from readers, aligning the newspaper with a more activist form of journalism [46].

Vanguard's sensationalist style is often a deliberate strategy to engage a politically diverse and vocal readership, particularly in Southern Nigeria, where activism and civil rights issues resonate strongly. The newspaper's provocative language emphasises the urgency of the problems it covers, presenting political and social challenges as immediate concerns that require public inter-

vention [48]; this aligns with broader trends in Southern Nigerian media, where journalism often serves as a tool for social activism and public accountability, reflecting the region's political and cultural diversity [47].

In contrast, Punch takes a more measured approach to reporting, especially when dealing with politically sensitive issues like the #EndSARS protests. The newspaper tends to focus on factual reporting and avoids the emotive language characterising Vanguard's headlines. For instance, Punch might present the same event with a headline like "Shelve #EndSARS protest, Adegboruwa begs, says enough of bloodshed" (Punch, February 11, 2021). This language is noticeably more restrained, focusing on calls for peace and preventing further violence. The choice of words like "begs" and "enough of bloodshed" reflects a concern for stability and reconciliation, aligning with Punch's broader editorial mission to promote reasoned discourse and peaceful resolutions [31].

This balanced approach to reporting can be attributed to Punch's diverse readership, which spans Nigeria, including individuals who prioritise governance, social justice, and accountability. By framing protests in a balanced manner, Punch often highlights the government's responses and public concerns, maintaining a commitment to objectivity. The newspaper's neutral tone helps it retain professionalism and credibility, fostering a sense of public trust while encouraging discourse on political events to promote institutional accountability and public participation. This approach aligns with its reputation for advocating transparency and democratic values [45, 50].

The divergence in reporting styles between Vanguard and Punch is not merely a difference in tone but reflects broader editorial choices and approaches to journalism in Nigerian media. Vanguard's more assertive style often appeals to a Southern audience that is highly politically engaged and vocal about issues of social justice and government accountability. On the other hand, while also critical of governance, Punch employs a more investigative and balanced tone, appealing to a broad readership that values accountability and in-depth analysis of political issues. Punch emphasises transparency and democratic participation, often highlighting public concerns and government responses to foster a sense of long-term solutions [49].

These differences in reporting styles also illustrate how media outlets shape public perception by heightening news stories' emotional impact or focusing on balanced, solution-oriented coverage. While Vanguard uses sensationalism to mobilise its readers, Punch's neutral reporting aims to foster calm and reasoned discussion, particularly in politically sensitive regions [47].

In conclusion, the contrasting approaches to reporting in Vanguard and Punch reflect different editorial strategies within Nigerian media. While Vanguard uses emotionally charged language to engage its audience and highlight social justice issues, Punch takes a more balanced, investigative approach to foster accountability and democratic participation. These editorial choices indicate their different approaches to journalism, with Vanguard often appealing to a politically vocal and urban readership. At the same time, Punch engages readers who value in-depth analysis and thoughtful critique of governance.

In summary, both Punch and Vanguard contribute significantly to Nigeria's democratic process, but their distinct editorial philosophies are reflected in their language choices. Punch leans toward formal, investigative language that appeals to a broad, progressive audience, while Vanguard adopts a more dynamic, sometimes sensationalist style, resonating with a politically engaged and urban readership. These differences shape their influence in the Nigerian media landscape and their role in political advocacy and readership engagement.

Theories of Meaning

In examining the theories of meaning about language, particularly within the context of media such as Punch and Vanguard, these frameworks provide insights into how meaning is created, conveyed, and interpreted. As the author [24] explains, these theories primarily offer frameworks that help readers infer meaning; this becomes particularly significant in analysing newspaper language, where writers carefully select words to align with the intended message, audience, and regional context.

1) Denotational Theory of Meaning: One of the primary theories discussed is the Denotational Theory of Meaning. This theory emphasises the relationship between a linguistic expression and the object or concept it refers to, known as its denotation. In the context of newspaper report-

ing, such as headlines in *Punch*, the denotational meaning is particularly relevant. For example, the headline "Shelve #EndSARS protest, Adegbo-ruwa begs, says enough of bloodshed" (*Punch*, February 11, 2021) is a straightforward statement of fact, where each word has a direct denotative meaning aimed at providing clear information. "begs" denotes a call for peace, while "bloodshed" directly references violence. Using denotational meaning here avoids ambiguity, ensuring the audience understands the message clearly.

2) *Mentalist Theories of Meaning*: In contrast, the Mentalist Theories of Meaning argue that meaning is tied to the ideas or images that expressions evoke in the minds of speakers or readers. This theory applies to the more emotive and sensational language used in *Vanguard*. When *Vanguard* headlines read "Outrage as Senators Ignore Public Outcry on Budget Allocation" (*Vanguard*, March 18, 2023), the choice of the word "outrage" evokes a strong emotional response in the minds of readers. It is crucial here, not just the word's literal meaning but the mental image of widespread anger and dissatisfaction. While this theory can be criticised for its vagueness, as noted by authors [51], it effectively explains how newspapers like *Vanguard* engage their readers emotionally by evoking mental associations through language.

3) *Sense Theories of Meaning*: Moving to the Sense Theories of Meaning, which propose that meaning is objective and not based on subjective ideas, this theory is instrumental in understanding how newspapers strive for objectivity. In both *Punch* and *Vanguard*, the sense of the chosen words is vital for conveying accurate, understandable meaning, regardless of the reader's mental associations. In reporting on political events or economic issues, the objective meaning of terms like "reform," "protest," or "policy" is paramount in ensuring that the intended message is communicated, independent of personal biases or emotions. This theory supports the objective nature of reporting in newspapers, ensuring that the core message is consistent despite regional or political differences.

4) *Use Theory of Meaning*: The Use Theory of Meaning, which suggests that the meaning of an expression lies in its use in particular contexts, also offers valuable insights for analysing media language. As authors [51] noted, this theory enhances understanding of how language functions

within specific social or cultural frameworks. For example, governance, policy, and accountability are shared in *Punch*, reflecting the newspaper's focus on transparency and institutional reforms; this contrasts with *Vanguard*, which frequently uses language associated with activism and public dissent, aligning with the interests of its more politically vocal, urban audience. The Use Theory helps explain why the exact words or expressions may carry different connotations or significance in other contexts, as the meaning depends on how and where the language is applied.

5) *Ideational Theory of Meaning*: Further building on these theories, Fodor's Ideational Theory of Meaning posits that the relationship between expressions and ideas needs to be well-defined to explain how meaning is inferred [52]. In newspaper language, this means that both the speaker (or writer) and the hearer (or reader) must share a common understanding of how certain words or phrases are used. This shared understanding is essential for effective communication, particularly in newspapers, where headlines and articles must be concise yet impactful. In *Punch*, this shared understanding often involves using neutral, fact-based language to discuss governance and accountability. In contrast, the ideational meaning of *Vanguard* may hinge on evoking public sentiment or rallying support for social causes.

6) *Leech's Types of Meaning*: Lastly, author [4] Types of Meaning offer further nuance to analysing meaning in newspapers. These include denotative meaning and words' literal, stable meaning, as seen in *Punch*'s factual reporting. Conversely, connotative meaning relates to the emotional or cultural associations attached to words, which is more prominent in *Vanguard*'s charged, emotive language. Affective meaning is also relevant here, as it reflects the speaker's feelings or attitudes, often visible in opinion pieces or editorials in both newspapers.

In conclusion, these theories of meaning, denotational, mentalist, sense, use, ideational, and types of meaning, provide a comprehensive framework for analysing how language operates in newspapers like *Punch* and *Vanguard*. Each theory highlights different aspects of how meaning is constructed and communicated, from the literal reference of words to the mental images they evoke, their use in context, and their emotional or cultural connotations. These frameworks are essential for understanding how language shapes pub-

lic discourse and influences readers' perceptions in diverse media environments.

Analysis of Presentation and Data Analysis

This chapter analyses advertisements published in two prominent Nigerian newspapers: Punch and Vanguard. This chapter investigates the lexical and semantic choices employed in four specific advertisements: Wema Bank and the Alternative Bank from Punch, Blue Diamond Logistics and the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) from Vanguard. By utilising established linguistic theories, including the Denotational Theory of Meaning, Mentalist Theories of Meaning, Sense Theories of Meaning, and Use Theory of Meaning, we will explore how language shapes consumer perception and engagement.

The chapter is structured first to provide an in-depth analysis of each advertisement, examining their respective messages, imagery, and target audiences. Following this, a comparative analysis will highlight the differences in language use and thematic emphasis between the two newspapers. The findings will illustrate how these lexical and semantic choices reflect the newspapers' editorial styles and influence reader engagement and brand positioning. Ultimately, this chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of language's role in advertising within the Nigerian context, offering insights into effective communication strategies in print media.

Wema Bank Advertisement: Punch Newspaper

The Wema Bank advertisement featured in Punch newspaper promotes the N135,000,000 prize as part of the "5 for 5 Promo" (Season 4).

The ad strategically highlights how customers can participate in daily, weekly, and monthly draws by conducting transactions through the bank's digital platforms, such as the ALAT app, debit cards, and USSD codes. The advertisement's target audience includes tech-savvy customers who frequently engage in digital banking.



Figure 2 – Wema Bank Advertisement: Punch Newspaper

1) *Lexical Analysis.* The choice of words in the Wema Bank advertisement is deliberate, focusing on terms that invoke excitement, reward, and action. Words like "promo," "win," and "N135,000,000" are carefully chosen to capture the reader's attention immediately. The term "promo" signals a limited-time opportunity, creating a sense of urgency. This choice encourages potential participants to act quickly, aligning with the concept of "draws," which are frequent (daily, weekly, monthly). The word "win" is emotive and taps into the audience's desire for success and financial gain. By using this word repeatedly, the ad fosters a sense of potential achievement. Additionally, "N135,000,000" is a powerful motivator due to its substantial monetary value, suggesting that the promotion offers life-changing rewards.

The advertisement uses verbs like "perform" and "fund" to clarify the required actions. These words are directive, leading the audience to engage with Wema Bank's digital platforms. Including specific banking terms like "ALAT app" and "USSD" demonstrates the bank's modern approach to financial services, which appeals to digitally literate consumers. These terms also reflect the bank's efforts to promote technological advancement, encouraging customers to shift towards digital banking solutions. The choice of these technical terms reassures the audience that

Wema Bank is aligned with contemporary banking trends.

2) *Semantic Analysis*. From a semantic perspective, the Wema Bank advertisement effectively uses meaning to reinforce consumer perception. The word "promo" semantically conveys the idea of an incentive-based marketing strategy where customers benefit through participation. It suggests a temporary offering, which in turn motivates quick action. The term "N135,000,000" carries a strong connotative meaning, implying that the promotion offers substantial financial rewards, possibly changing the lucky winner's life. By associating the prize amount with everyday banking transactions, the ad suggests that even ordinary, routine actions can lead to extraordinary outcomes.

The phrase "5 for 5 Promo" is also semantically rich, suggesting a balance and symmetry that appeals to the audience's sense of order and fairness. It implies that there are multiple opportunities to win and that participation can yield favourable outcomes repeatedly, reinforcing the idea of consistency in rewards. The ad's use of "daily," "weekly," and "monthly" draws reinforces this message, as these words suggest that winning is frequent and accessible, further enticing consumers to take part in the promo.

Moreover, using the brand's digital platforms as the medium of participation carries symbolic meaning. The ALAT app, in particular, is Wema Bank's flagship digital product, and its inclusion in the advertisement subtly conveys the bank's leadership in the digital banking space. The emphasis on app, card, and USSD transactions promotes customer engagement and brand loyalty. It encourages customers to interact more frequently with the bank's digital services, subtly aligning the concept of winning with the everyday use of Wema's products.

In conclusion, the Wema Bank advertisement employs a combination of lexical choices and semantic elements to promote its "5 for 5 Promo" in a way that excites and motivates its target audience. The ad encourages customers to participate in frequent transactions through action-oriented language, promising significant financial rewards. Its focus on digital platforms further reflects the bank's innovation and modernity, appealing to tech-savvy consumers who value convenience and efficiency in their banking experience.

The Alternative Bank Advertisement: Punch Newspaper

The advertisement for The Alternative Bank, featured in Punch newspaper, employs the slogan "Be Unstoppable" to convey a message of empowerment and success. The visual of a well-dressed woman seated confidently in a luxurious setting, likely within an aeroplane or business environment, suggests personal and professional accomplishment. This positioning of the bank as a partner in success is reinforced by the encouraging message, "Make that move. Anything is possible with a partner that believes in you." The ad's target audience appears to be ambitious professionals and individuals seeking financial growth, with the bank offering itself as a reliable companion on their journey toward achieving personal and business goals.



Figure 3 – The Alternative Bank Advertisement: Punch Newspaper

1) *Lexical Analysis*. The advertiser intentionally crafts the lexical choices in this advertisement to evoke feelings of empowerment and ambition. The slogan "Be Unstoppable" is particularly significant. The imperative "be" is a direct call to action, urging the audience to embody a mindset of resilience and limitless potential. The word "unstoppable" carries strong connotations of invincibility, perseverance, and continuous progress,

encouraging readers to associate their ambitions with these attributes. This lexical choice inspires confidence, suggesting that the bank's customers can overcome obstacles to success.

Phrases such as "Make that move" and "Anything is possible" further support this narrative. "Make that move" is a motivational phrase that prompts immediate action, while "Anything is possible" reinforces the idea that limitations can be transcended. These words create an emotional connection with the audience, tapping into their aspirations and fostering the belief that their goals are within reach with the bank's support. Using "partner" is also deliberate, emphasising the bank's role as a financial institution and an active, supportive collaborator in the customer's success. By choosing a relational term like "partner" instead of "bank" or "service provider," the ad establishes a sense of trust and personal investment in the customer's growth.

2) *Semantic Analysis*. From a semantic perspective, the slogan "Be Unstoppable" encapsulates the overall theme of the advertisement: empowerment and progress. The "unstoppable" conveys an inability to be hindered or stopped and suggests that the bank's services are tailored to foster continuous achievement for its clients. This slogan sets the tone for the ad, positioning the Alternative Bank as a personal and professional advancement facilitator.

The imagery of the well-dressed woman seated confidently in a luxurious setting adds another layer of meaning to the ad. This image symbolically represents success, authority, and self-assurance. The luxury implied by the setting and the woman's confident posture connotes that the bank's customers are financially stable and capable of attaining elite status in their careers or personal endeavours. The woman is an aspirational figure, and her presence suggests that Alternative Bank enables its customers to achieve such heights. The semantic implication is that financial stability and growth with the Alternative Bank lead to the lifestyle represented in the ad, one marked by comfort, confidence, and achievement.

Furthermore, the phrase "Anything is possible with a partner that believes in you" emphasises the supportive and trust-based relationship between the bank and its customers. The word "believes" carries deep emotional resonance, suggesting a bank that is more than just a financial service provider. Instead, the bank is framed as a

mentor or champion, backing the customer's decisions and ambitions; this creates a sense of loyalty and emotional connection, implying that the bank is invested in the customer's success, not just in transactional relationships.

The advertisement's semantic focus is on empowerment, support, and limitless potential synergies with its imagery and word choices. It appeals to the ambitious, success-oriented individual who sees the bank as a partner in achieving their goals. The luxury and confidence displayed in the ad symbolise the results of this partnership, implying that The Alternative Bank is essential to making these aspirations a reality.

In conclusion, The Alternative Bank advertisement in Punch newspaper uses a combination of powerful lexical and semantic elements to project an image of empowerment and progress. The slogan "Be Unstoppable" and the supporting phrases encourage the audience to take action. At the same time, the ad positions the bank as a trusted and supportive partner in achieving financial and personal success. The imagery reinforces the message, depicting a successful individual with a luxurious and confident lifestyle, which is precisely what the bank promises to help its customers achieve. Through this ad, The Alternative Bank sells its financial services and inspires confidence and ambition in its audience.

Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: Vanguard Newspaper

The advertisement for Blue Diamond Logistics, featured in Vanguard newspaper, presents the company as a leading provider of global logistics services, emphasising reliability, international reach, and a long-standing reputation.

It highlights the company's capacity to transport goods by air, sea, and land, catering to diverse client needs across different industries. The ad mentions key global hubs such as China, Turkey, and Dubai, emphasising Blue Diamond's strategic presence in international markets. Moreover, the ad stresses the company's 30 years of experience in logistics, positioning it as a seasoned and trustworthy service provider for businesses seeking efficient and dependable shipping solutions.

4 - Vanguard, MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024

LOOKING FOR A RELIABLE LOGISTICS PARTNER? WE HAVE GOOD NEWS! BLUE DIAMOND IS HERE FOR ALL YOUR LOGISTICS AND AGENCY NEEDS.

OUR CORE SERVICES INCLUDE:

- * AIR & SEA CARGO.
- * HANDLING OF PERSONAL & GROUPAGE CONTAINERS.
- * ACCURATE DOCUMENTATION.
- * BONDED TERMINAL SERVICES.
- * CUSTOM LICENSE & CARGO CLEARING.
- * ON TIME DELIVERY TO YOUR DOOR STEP.
- * MIDDLE MAN SERVICES BETWEEN BUYER & SUPPLIER FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.
- * DIRECT SOURCING & NATIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE.

We have strong presence in :

CHINA
TURKEY
DUBAI
HOLLAND
With partners across the globe.

BLUEDIAMOND LOGISTICS
The Trusted Global Logistic company with over 30 years of operational excellence.

Contacts:
Nigeria contact: +234 814 195 4188, China contact: +86 132 8866 1587
E-mail: uzoteximports2018@yahoo.com
Website: www.bluediamondgroups.com

WE SHIP, CLEAR CUSTOMS, WAREHOUSE AND DELIVER TO YOUR DOOR STEP
As your reliable logistics partner, we make your shipping experience seamless...

Figure 4 – Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: Vanguard Newspaper

1) *Lexical Analysis*. The lexical choices in this advertisement are carefully selected to communicate reliability, trust, and international expertise. Words like "reliability" and "global logistics services" are foundational in establishing Blue Diamond Logistics' credibility and the breadth of its operations. "Reliability" connotes consistency and dependability, ensuring potential clients view the company as a stable partner for their shipping and logistical needs. By focusing on "global logistics services," the ad underscores the company's wide-ranging capabilities, with "global" specifically chosen to highlight its international scope and proficiency in managing cross-border trade.

The mention of specific transportation modes, "air," "sea," and "land", is an essential lexical choice that broadens the company's appeal. This trinity of transport mediums conveys versatility and flexibility, indicating that Blue Diamond can handle various shipping forms depending on the customer's needs. These words are straightforward and technical, immediately appealing to businesses that require clarity and specificity in their logistical partners.

In addition, the reference to locations such as "China," "Turkey," and "Dubai" serves as strategic lexical markers of the company's international

presence. These countries are significant global trade centres, and their mention signals Blue Diamond's ability to navigate complex international markets and shipping routes. The phrase "30-year track record" is also a key element, as it projects experience and a proven history of success. "Track record" is vital here, as it suggests longevity and a record of consistent performance, something potential clients will look for when choosing a logistics partner.

2) *Semantic Analysis*. Semantically, the ad is structured around reliability, international reach, and longevity. The word "reliability" is crucial in framing the company as trustworthy and dependable, characteristics highly valued in the logistics industry. The semantic implication here is that businesses can count on Blue Diamond Logistics to deliver their goods safely and on time, regardless of destination. This reassurance is a key factor in the decision-making process for potential clients.

The company's emphasis on "global logistics services" is also semantically rich, positioning Blue Diamond as a global shipping leader. The word "global" is not just a descriptor of the company's operational scale but also suggests expertise in handling the complexities of international trade, such as customs regulations, varying legal frameworks, and cross-cultural business practices. This term extends beyond just shipping goods; it suggests a level of proficiency in global commerce that appeals to businesses looking to expand their operations internationally.

The ad's mention of specific trade hubs, "China," "Turkey," and "Dubai", serves multiple semantic functions. First, these locations symbolise major centres of commerce and manufacturing, which are crucial for any company engaged in global logistics. Their inclusion in the ad signals that Blue Diamond has a strong presence in markets known for high-volume trade, further cementing its image as an internationally competent logistics provider. Second, these locations imply that the company can manage high-demand routes and handle the logistical challenges of such markets.

The phrase "30-year track record" carries significant semantic weight, projecting experience and reliability. "Track record" here suggests a history of proven success, indicating that the company has weathered the challenges of the logistics industry over decades. The number "30" is significant; it conveys longevity and stability, signalling

to potential clients that Blue Diamond has been able to sustain its operations and maintain its reputation over time; this appeals to businesses prioritising partnering with established companies with long-standing reputations.

The imagery of the various transport modes, air, sea, and land, reinforces the company's ability to offer comprehensive logistics services. Semantically, these images conjure up visions of a competent, well-resourced logistics provider catering to diverse shipping needs, from small parcels to bulk international shipments. This versatility further enhances Blue Diamond's appeal to businesses with varying logistical requirements.

In conclusion, Vanguard newspaper's Blue Diamond Logistics advertisement effectively uses lexical and semantic elements to project an image of reliability, international competence, and longevity. Through terms like "reliability," "global logistics services," and "track record," the ad positions the company as a trustworthy and experienced partner for businesses seeking dependable and efficient logistics solutions. The strategic mention of international trade hubs and the company's multi-modal transport capabilities further reinforce its credibility as a global player in the logistics industry. With these elements working harmoniously, the ad appeals to businesses looking for a logistics partner to handle complex, large-scale operations while ensuring consistent, reliable service.

Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) Advertisement: Vanguard Newspaper

As featured in Vanguard newspaper, the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) advertisement promotes the eTax platform, encouraging individuals to file their annual tax returns online.

The ad positions tax filing as a civic responsibility and frames the eTax platform as a convenient, efficient way to fulfil this duty. The ad's imagery features a professional, likely a doctor or dentist, conveying that even the most occupied individuals can easily comply with tax obligations through this user-friendly digital platform.



Figure 5 – Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS)
Advertisement: Vanguard Newspaper

1) *Lexical Analysis.* The LIRS advertisement employs a strategic selection of words to emphasise ease, responsibility, and modernity. The "eTax platform" is a crucial lexical choice, signalling that the Lagos Internal Revenue Service is embracing digital solutions to streamline tax filing processes. The term "platform" implies a technological space that is accessible and functional, catering to tech-savvy audiences and those looking for convenience in managing their finances. By employing the term "eTax," the ad positions the service as modern, aligning with the current trend toward digitalisation in government services.

The advertisement's call to action focuses on "filing annual tax returns," with "tax returns" as a central lexical unit. This term has a formal and institutional resonance, immediately reminding individuals of their legal and financial obligations. The repeated mention of "annual" stresses that this is a recurring duty, reinforcing the idea of tax compliance as a continuous civic responsibility.

Words like "civic duty" are also lexically significant, appealing to the audience's sense of responsibility and citizenship. The term "duty" carries moral and legal connotations, framing tax compliance as a financial necessity and a moral obligation. Using language that invokes a sense of

responsibility, the advertisement aims to persuade individuals to take their tax obligations seriously, regardless of their professional commitments.

Furthermore, the depiction of the professional in the image, whether a doctor or dentist, adds an essential layer to the lexical framework; this figure represents individuals who are typically very busy and are associated with responsibility, expertise, and societal contribution. The visual reinforces the idea that even the most time-constrained individuals, like professionals in the medical field, can quickly meet their tax obligations through this convenient platform.

2) *Semantic Analysis*. Semantically, the LIRS advertisement is structured around convenience, responsibility, and modern civic engagement. The term "eTax" is semantically loaded, suggesting both ease of use and modernity. By encouraging this digital platform, the advertisement conveys that tax filing no longer needs to be cumbersome. The shift from physical filing methods to an online platform reflects the broader digital transformation of governmental services, positioning LIRS as a forward-thinking, tech-savvy institution.

The concept of "civic duty" is also semantically rich, invoking the idea that tax compliance is not just a legal obligation but a contribution to the greater societal good. The advertisement frames the act of filing tax returns as a shared responsibility of all citizens, aligning it with the broader concept of national development and governance. This subtle reminder to fulfil one's duty taps into individual and collective identity, appealing to citizens' sense of belonging and societal contribution.

The image of a professional in the advertisement enhances the semantic message by portraying the kind of person who may feel overwhelmed by their work yet still manages to prioritise tax compliance. This visual metaphor extends the idea that tax compliance is a shared duty no matter how busy or essential one's role in society may be. The professional figure symbolises success, responsibility, and contribution to society, qualities that LIRS wants its audience to associate with fulfilling their tax obligations.

Additionally, the professional image links to the semantic theme of accessibility; by featuring a professional in a prestigious occupation, the ad underscores the idea that the eTax platform is

designed to be user-friendly even for extremely busy people. It suggests that the platform is so convenient that even individuals with demanding schedules, like doctors, can still make time to comply with their tax obligations. This message semantically equates the eTax platform with efficiency and ease, further appealing to the target audience's desire for convenience.

Including phrases like "online filing" also plays into a broader cultural shift toward digitalisation, conveying that filing taxes no longer requires visiting physical offices or engaging in time-consuming paperwork. The advertisement semantically aligns itself with contemporary values of speed, convenience, and technological innovation, which resonates particularly well with younger, tech-savvy audiences.

The overall message of the advertisement is that paying taxes is not just a financial obligation but a mark of responsible citizenship. By framing tax compliance as a civic duty and coupling it with modern, convenient digital solutions, the LIRS advertisement appeals to both the individual's sense of responsibility and the desire for ease in fulfilling obligations.

In conclusion, the LIRS advertisement in Vanguard newspaper uses a combination of lexical precision and semantic messaging to promote the eTax platform as a modern, convenient, and responsible way for individuals to file their annual tax returns. Lexically, words like "eTax," "civic duty," and "platform" emphasise ease, modernity, and obligation. Semantically, the ad ties the act of tax filing to broader themes of civic responsibility and convenience. At the same time, the visual of a busy professional reinforces the idea that everyone can and should comply with their tax obligations. This combination of lexical and semantic elements helps position the eTax platform as a solution that is both efficient and essential for citizens who wish to fulfil their legal and moral responsibilities.

Theoretical Analysis of Advertisements in Nigerian Newspapers

This chapter employs various linguistic theories to analyse four advertisements from Nigerian newspapers: Wema Bank, The Alternative Bank, Blue Diamond Logistics, and the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS). The theories applied include Denotational Theory of Meaning, Mentalist Theories of Meaning, Sense Theories of Meaning,

and Use Theory of Meaning. This theoretical framework will elucidate how lexical and semantic choices contribute to the effectiveness of these advertisements in conveying their messages and appealing to their target audiences.

The Denotational Theory of Meaning emphasises the explicit, referential meanings of words. In the advertisements under consideration, specific lexical choices create clear, identifiable images that resonate with the audience.

Wema Bank Advertisement: The phrase "N135,000,000 prize" is a concrete, quantifiable element that denotes substantial financial opportunity. This explicit reference is crucial for attracting customers motivated by economic incentives. Similarly, "promo" and "draws" denote structured opportunities for customers to win rewards, reinforcing the advertisement's core message.

The Alternative Bank Advertisement: The slogan "Be Unstoppable" is a motivational reference that directly conveys empowerment. The imagery of a well-dressed woman in a luxurious setting denotes success and achievement, which aligns with the bank's message of being a supportive partner in financial growth.

Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: "Global logistics services" and "30-year track record" provide precise referential meanings that emphasise reliability and expertise. These lexical choices establish the company's credibility and appeal to businesses seeking dependable logistics partners.

Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) Advertisement: The term "eTax" denotes a modern approach to tax filing, while "civic duty" evokes a sense of moral obligation. This language frames tax compliance as necessary and a responsibility of every citizen, thus encouraging engagement with the service.

Mentalist Theories of Meaning focus on how individuals internalise and interpret meanings based on personal experiences, beliefs, and societal contexts.

Wema Bank Advertisement: The language used in this ad, particularly the notion of "Make at least one transaction daily", invokes a mental association between banking and financial gain. It taps into customers' desires for wealth accumulation and positions Wema Bank as a facilitator.

The Alternative Bank Advertisement: The advertisement appeals to individuals' aspirations for success and achievement. Framing the bank as a partner in the customer's journey creates a mental image of collaboration, wherein the bank supports the ambitions of its clients. This approach will likely resonate with ambitious professionals looking to elevate their financial status.

Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: The ad's emphasis on its "strong presence" in key international markets taps into the mental frameworks of businesses seeking global expansion. It fosters an image of reliability and expertise that prospective clients can trust, thus influencing their decision-making processes regarding logistics partnerships.

LIRS Advertisement: The representation of a busy professional highlights the relatability of tax obligations. By showing that even successful individuals prioritise their civic duties, the ad aims to shift the audience's perception of tax filing from a burdensome task to a shared responsibility, fostering a sense of community and accountability.

Sense Theories of Meaning underscore the importance of context in shaping how language is interpreted.

Wema Bank Advertisement: The ad's context, highlighting digital banking and the convenience of transactions through various platforms, adds layers of meaning to the term "promo." It suggests that engaging with Wema Bank is synonymous with adopting modern banking practices, appealing to a tech-savvy audience.

The Alternative Bank Advertisement: The luxurious setting depicted in the advertisement provides a contextual backdrop that enhances the interpretation of success. The sense of empowerment is not just verbal; it is visually supported, creating a multi-faceted appeal that suggests potential customers can attain this lifestyle by partnering with the bank.

Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: The context of global logistics in an increasingly interconnected world adds depth to the advertisement's message. The strong presence in various countries indicates an ability to navigate complex international logistics, which is essential for businesses looking to expand their market reach.

LIRS Advertisement: The imagery of a professional individual in the ad adds a contextual layer to the message. It reinforces the notion that ful-

filling tax obligations is a common practice among successful individuals, thereby normalising the act of tax filing and encouraging compliance across all societal strata.

Use Theory of Meaning considers how language functions within specific contexts and its influence on behaviour.

Wema Bank Advertisement: The imperative phrase "Make at least one transaction daily" is a direct call to action, encouraging potential customers to engage with the bank's services. The language creates a sense of urgency and a clear path toward participating in the promo, motivating immediate action.

The Alternative Bank Advertisement: The motivational slogan "Be Unstoppable" is an empowering call to action, encouraging individuals to see themselves as capable of achieving their goals. This language choice invites customers to engage with the bank as a partner in their success story, fostering a sense of community and shared aspirations.

Blue Diamond Logistics Advertisement: The ad's use of assertive language, emphasising reliability and a proven track record, positions Blue Diamond Logistics as a trustworthy partner. This approach is particularly effective in influencing businesses to choose the company for their logistics needs.

LIRS Advertisement: The ad's framing of tax filing as a civic duty encourages individuals to engage with the eTax platform. By presenting tax compliance as a societal expectation, the advertisement prompts the audience to view tax filing as an essential, rather than optional, responsibility.

Lexical and Semantic Choice Differences Between Punch and Vanguard Advertisements

This analysis examines the differences in lexical and semantic choices in advertisements published in Punch and Vanguard newspapers, focusing on four specific ads: Wema Bank and The Alternative Bank from Punch and Blue Diamond Logistics and Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) from Vanguard. By comparing these ads, we can understand how the choice of words and phrases reflects each newspaper's style, audience engagement strategy, and thematic emphasis.

Lexical Choices

Punch Newspaper: In the advertisements featured in Punch, the lexical choices lean towards direct, action-oriented language. For instance, the Wema Bank ad employs transactional terminology such as "N135,000,000 prize" and "daily draws," which clearly outlines the financial incentives and encourages engagement. The words chosen are straightforward, targeting customers interested in promotional offers and digital banking convenience.

The Alternative Bank ad in Punch utilises motivational language with phrases like "Be Unstoppable" and "a partner that believes in you." This lexical choice appeals to the audience's aspirations for empowerment and personal growth. The focus here is on creating an emotional connection and portraying the bank as a supportive ally, an effective strategy to attract ambitious individuals.

Vanguard Newspaper: Conversely, the ads in Vanguard showcase a different lexical style, emphasising professionalism and expertise. The Blue Diamond Logistics advertisement utilises industry-specific terminology such as "global logistics services," "30-year track record," and "air, sea, and land." This choice of words appeals to a business-oriented audience, highlighting reliability and experience in logistics services. The lexical choices here are designed to establish authority and attract clients who value professional expertise.

The LIRS advertisement also adopts a formal tone, employing phrases like "civic duty" and "annual tax returns." This lexical choice conveys a sense of responsibility and compliance, positioning tax obligations as an essential civic act. The use of technical and bureaucratic language reflects the official nature of the service, aiming to create a sense of responsibility among the audience.

Semantic Choices

Punch Newspaper: The semantics in the Punch advertisements focus on immediate benefits and aspirational themes. In the Wema Bank ad, the emphasis on prizes and rewards creates a sense of urgency and excitement. The semantic framework encourages potential customers to participate actively in the promotion. This approach aligns with the bank's goal to drive engagement through quantifiable benefits.

However, the semantics of The Alternative Bank ad centre on empowerment and personal success; the imagery of a confident woman in a luxurious setting and the empowering slogan invites consumers to envision a successful partnership with the bank; this creates a narrative that extends beyond mere financial transactions, aligning the bank's identity with personal growth and aspiration.

Vanguard Newspaper: The semantics of the Vanguard advertisements, on the other hand, emphasise authority, professionalism, and civic duty. The Blue Diamond Logistics ad frames its services regarding reliability and international reach, using language reinforcing the company's position as a trusted logistics provider. The emphasis on a "30-year track record" builds credibility and attracts businesses seeking dependable solutions.

In the LIRS advertisement, the semantic framing focuses on responsibility and compliance. By portraying tax filing as a civic duty, the ad encourages individuals to fulfil their obligations while normalising the act of tax filing. This semantic choice creates a sense of collective responsibility, positioning the LIRS as an authoritative body in the public's eye.

Comparison of Lexical and Semantic Choices

Overall, the lexical and semantic choices in Punch and Vanguard advertisements reflect their differing editorial styles and target audiences. Punch tends to favour direct and motivational language that appeals to individual aspirations and immediate benefits, whereas Vanguard employs a more formal, professional tone emphasising authority and civic duty.

Audience Engagement: Punch engages its readers with language that motivates and excites them, focusing on financial incentives and personal growth. In contrast, Vanguard caters to a more business-oriented audience, using formal language that reflects professionalism and compliance.

Thematic Emphasis: Punch's advertisements revolve around themes of empowerment and immediate rewards, aiming to create an emotional connection with the audience. Vanguard's ads prioritise themes of reliability, responsibility, and civic engagement, aligning with the needs of its professional readership.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have conducted a comprehensive analysis of the lexical and semantic choices in advertisements from Punch and Vanguard newspapers, focusing on four specific ads: Wema Bank and The Alternative Bank from Punch, and Blue Diamond Logistics and the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) from Vanguard. The comparative analysis highlights distinct differences in language usage that reflect each newspaper's editorial style and target audience.

Punch's advertisements leverage direct and motivational language to engage readers, focusing on immediate benefits and aspirational themes. The emphasis on financial rewards and empowerment fosters a personal connection with the audience, appealing to their ambitions and desire for success. Conversely, Vanguard's advertisements are formal and authoritative, underscoring professionalism and civic responsibility. The lexical choices focus on reliability and compliance, resonating with a business-oriented audience.

The semantic framing in both newspapers further emphasises their strategic communication approaches. While Punch positions itself as a catalyst for personal growth and financial engagement, Vanguard establishes itself as a credible authority on professional services and civic duties.

Overall, this chapter illustrates how nuanced lexical and semantic choices can influence consumer perceptions and engagement, revealing the underlying strategies employed by each publication to reach their respective audiences. The analysis underscores the importance of language in advertising, demonstrating its power to shape brand identity and customer relationships in the competitive landscape of Nigerian media.

This study explored the semantic features and language usage in advertisements from the Punch and Vanguard newspapers, revealing nuanced strategies that intertwine various linguistic theories. At the core of the advertisements is the Denotational Theory of Meaning, which underscores the clarity and directness of word choice. In Punch, terms such as "Save" and "Exclusive" serve not only to convey concrete benefits but also to foster immediate comprehension among consumers. This straightforward approach reflects the newspaper's pragmatic audience, which prefers quick, actionable insights. Conversely, Vanguard employs words like "Power"

and "Unlock," which, while denotatively clear, carry metaphorical implications that resonate with aspirational themes in technology and self-improvement. Here, the denotative meanings pave the way for more decadent interpretations that align with the aspirations of its readership.

This interplay between clarity and aspiration leads to insights grounded in the Mentalist Theories of Meaning. The emotional resonance embedded in language plays a crucial role in shaping consumer response. The advertisements in Vanguard often leverage emotionally charged language, targeting consumers' aspirations and desires; this contrasts with the Punch approach, which instils a sense of urgency and practicality, prompting immediate action. The cognitive responses elicited by these differing strategies highlight how the language used is intricately linked to the desired consumer behaviour.

Moreover, the Sense Theories of Meaning illuminate the use of metaphors and connotations within both newspapers. Vanguard frequently incorporates culturally rich terms that evoke strong emotional responses, creating deeper connections with its audience; this aligns with its broader strategy of appealing to lifestyle aspirations. On the other hand, Punch uses straightforward advertisements that, while practical, still incorporate subtle cultural undertones, particularly in sectors such as finance and insurance. Here, the layered meanings engage a demographic that values clarity while still being receptive to cultural narratives.

Finally, the Use Theory of Meaning emphasises the contextual shaping of language in advertisements. In Punch, the language is crafted to deliver clear, action-oriented messages that resonate with its urban readership's practical needs; this aligns with the denotative clarity identified earlier, creating a cohesive message that drives consumer action. In contrast, Vanguard's advertisements reflect aspirational values and lifestyle choices, suggesting that the function of the language used is not only to inform but also to inspire and elevate the consumer experience.

In summary, the findings illustrate that the interplay of various linguistic theories enriches our understanding of how language in advertisements is employed to influence consumer perception and behaviour. The distinct strategies used by Punch and Vanguard highlight the complex relationship between language, meaning,

and audience engagement in the realm of advertising.

The advertisements in Punch tend to focus more on denotational meanings and direct consumer appeals, such as discounts or savings on products, aligning with the pragmatic mindset of its audience. The language is simple, action-oriented, and designed to elicit immediate responses, which correlates with the socioeconomic characteristics of its readership.

In contrast, Vanguard frequently utilises a more sophisticated linguistic style, often employing metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and culturally charged words to create a sense of prestige and exclusivity. Advertisements in Vanguard tend to appeal to the reader's aspirations, using persuasive techniques that evoke emotional responses. The focus on empowerment and lifestyle aligns with the newspaper's broader editorial tone, which caters to a more diverse, urban, and upwardly mobile audience.

The study concludes that each newspaper's intended audience and overall editorial stance shape the semantic features and language choices in advertisements in Punch and Vanguard. In its advertisements, Punch leans toward clear, practical, and action-driven language, appealing to readers seeking straightforward information. Conversely, Vanguard employs more emotive and aspirational language, which aligns with its target audience's focus on lifestyle, prestige, and empowerment.

These linguistic differences highlight the role of language in shaping consumer perception and engagement with advertisements. Both newspapers use language strategically to resonate with their readership. Still, their approach to semantics and meaning construction varies significantly, reflecting their respective audiences' broader social, economic, and cultural context.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) For Advertisers: Advertisers should tailor their language to the demographic and psychographic profiles of the newspaper's audience. In Punch, where the focus is more on practicality, advertisers should continue to use clear, straightforward language that appeals to rational decision-making. In Vanguard, advertisers should maintain emotive and aspirational language but ensure that the connotations and metaphors

align with the values and expectations of a diverse urban readership.

2) For Media Analysts: Future studies should delve deeper into how cultural and regional factors influence the semantic choices in newspaper advertisements across different Nigerian media outlets. A comparative analysis across a broader range of newspapers could provide more insight into the linguistic strategies employed by advertisers.

3) For Researchers: Further research should consider expanding the scope of semantic analysis to include digital advertising on news platforms; this will offer insights into how online media advertisements differ from traditional print media,

especially in the evolving landscape of digital journalism.

4) For Consumers: Understanding the linguistic strategies used in advertisements can help consumers make more informed choices. By recognising how language influences their perceptions, consumers can better navigate the persuasive tactics used in advertising.

In conclusion, language plays a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of advertisements in both Punch and Vanguard newspapers. The semantic features employed in these ads are carefully selected to align with the cultural and cognitive profiles of the respective readerships, demonstrating the decisive role of language in media and marketing.

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