Implicature Analysis of Online Brand Marketing Interactions

Olubunmi Lydia Adejumo

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State

sholufunmi@gmail.com

Simeon Olufunso Sonde
Department of English Studies,
Tai Solarin University of
Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode,
Ogun State
funsosonde@gmail.com
08066410446

Prosper Ikeola Opoola, Department of English Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. opoolaprosper@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines conversational implicatures in online brand marketing interactions. Online brand marketing interactions of Kuda Microfinance Bank, Coca-Cola and Airtel Nigeria were selected for study. Their interactions with customers in social media were engaged with the intention of analysing the extent to which these interactions adhere to Grice's Maxims of communication. The analysis reveals that while some brands excel in maintaining clear, honest, and relevant communication, others struggle with responsiveness and personalisation which are vital for fostering trust and satisfaction among consumers. Kuda Microfinance Bank, for example, faces challenges in managing customer complaints in social media, often falling short in providing timely and adequate responses. Coca-Cola's approach, though strong in brand identity, could benefit from more proactive engagement with customer feedback, especially when addressing criticisms. Airtel Nigeria uses scripted responses, though efficient, it risks alienating customers by appearing insincere. The findings also reveal that the brands violate several conversational maxims. Kuda Microfinance Bank frequently breach the Maxims of Quantity and Relation by not adequately addressing customers' concerns. Coca-Cola violates the Maxim of Quality by failing to clarify health claims. Airtel Nigeria's scripted responses compromise the Maxim of Quality, reducing perceived sincerity. Most of them breach the Maxim of Relation by not responding to users' feedback, missing opportunities for deeper interaction. These violations affect the brands' ability to maintain trust and effective engagement with their customers. The findings underscore the importance of adhering to conversational principles in digital communication, suggesting that brands must redefine their social

media strategies to ensure meaningful and effective engagement with their customers.

Keywords: Social media, Marketing, Conversational maxims, Implicature, Brand, Interaction

Introduction

Social media platforms have revolutionised marketing communication, shifting from traditional one-way advertising to conversational and interactive approaches. Brands could now really engage with their audience to establish authentic connections through personalised communication and engagement strategies. Language plays a crucial role in shaping brand-consumer interactions on social media platforms. Brands leverage linguistic cues and communication strategies to convey their message, evoke emotions, and foster engagement with their audience. The informal, interactive nature of online communication highlights the importance of linguistic precision and authenticity in brand messaging. Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, examines how context contributes to meaning beyond literal interpretation. Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims provide a framework for understanding implicit communication, where violations lead to the generation of conversational implicatures; indirect meanings inferred by listeners. Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for communication, information dissemination, and social interaction. With the rise of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, individuals can connect with friends, family, and acquaintances across vast distances, sharing thoughts, ideas, and experiences in real-time (Global Web Index, 2012–2018).

Moreover, social media platforms have democratised content creation and distribution to empower users to express themselves creatively and engage with diverse audiences. The emergence of social media has also had profound implications for marketing and advertising practices. Traditional marketing approaches have been supplanted by digital marketing strategies, as businesses seek to leverage the vast reach and engagement potential of social media platforms (Armstrong, Kotler, & Opresnik, 2017). Social media marketing offers businesses unprecedented opportunities to target specific audience segments, engage with customers directly, and build brand awareness and loyalty (Strauss & Frost, 2014). However, the widespread adoption of social media has also raised concerns about privacy, data security, and ethical considerations. As users share personal information and preferences on social media platforms, companies have access to valuable data that can be used for targeted advertising and marketing campaigns (Edelman, 2014). This has led to debates about the ethical implications of data usage and the need for robust privacy protections for social media users (Westerman, Bonnet, & McAfee, 2014). Hidden meanings in online conversations between brands and consumers significantly affect social media marketing, influencing how brands communicate and engage with their audience. These underlying messages play a crucial role in shaping online brand interactions on social media platforms,

often determining the tone and outcome of brand-consumer dialogues. The presence of these hidden meanings holds important implications for social media marketing strategies, as brands must be attuned to both explicit and implicit content to create effective campaigns. To communicate and engage effectively with their audience in online conversations, brands must not only deliver clear messages but also be sensitive to the underlying nuances and implications of what is being communicated. Conversational implicature plays a pivotal role in shaping brand-consumer interactions, as it involves interpreting what is implied rather than explicitly stated, thus enriching the communication process.

Brands can leverage conversational implicature to enhance their online presence and influence by paying close attention to both what is said and what is left unsaid. By understanding the hidden meanings within conversations, they can craft more authentic, engaging, and impactful communications. Finally, key considerations for brands navigating conversational implicature in social media marketing include ensuring clarity, fostering engagement, and maintaining responsiveness to both the explicit and implicit cues from their audience.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to examine the pragmatic contexts of the selected online brands. The study also intends to analyse instances of conversational implicature in the selected online brand interactions on social media platforms with a view to finding out if the selected brands adhere to or violate Grice's conversational maxims.

Conceptual Review

Language serves as humanity's primary tool for communication; it represents one of the most precious gifts bestowed upon humanity to distinguish it from the animal kingdom. Through language, individuals articulate their feelings, thoughts, emotions, experiences, and ideas, while also conveying messages and imparting factual information. Moreover, language functions as a social phenomenon; it fosters relationships and interactions within society. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1996, as quoted in Chalise, 2007, language is defined as "A system of conventional, spoken and written symbols by means of which human beings as members of a social group and participants in a culture, interact and communicate". Similarly, Sapir posits that language is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols".

The unique gift of language acquisition is inherent in every human being, making it species-specific. Rai (2000) notes that though other living creatures exhibit communicative behaviour, their communication systems are considerably more limited compared to humans due to the absence of well-developed vocal organs and brain structures. Oxford (1996) defines language as a system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings. It emphasises its role in

facilitating mutual understanding and interaction within communities.

Pragmatics deals with the origin, functions, and impacts of signs within the contexts in which they occur. The field of pragmatics, unfortunately, faced disregard, particularly in the late 1960's. Leech (1983) recalls this period with a sense of nostalgia, describing how pragmatics was side-lined and considered a repository of data that could not be neatly categorised elsewhere. This disdain was often attributed to the abstract nature associated with pragmatics. However, in recent years, there has been a shift in perception. Many argue that a comprehensive understanding of language is incomplete without considering pragmatics, the study of how language is used in communication. Verschueren (1999) notes this transition, marking the departure from the outdated view of pragmatics as a mere "waste-basket" for linguistic anomalies.

Marketing is a multifaceted discipline which encompasses a range of activities aimed at promoting and selling products or services. It fundamentally involves understanding customers' needs and creating value by fulfilling those needs. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (American Marketing Association, 2017). Key elements of marketing include product development, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional activities. Product development focuses on identifying and creating new products to meet market demands. For example, Apple's development of the iPhone revolutionised the smartphone industry by meeting a latent demand for user-friendly, multifunctional devices (Gans, 2016). Pricing strategies involve setting prices based on cost, competition, and customer willingness to pay. An example of this is how Netflix adjusts its subscription prices based on regional competition and consumers' demand (Jenner, 2018). Distribution channels are selected and managed to effectively deliver products to consumers, with Amazon's efficient logistics network being a prime example (Chopra, 2016). Promotional activities utilise advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and personal selling to stimulate customer interest and demand. Marketing also emphasises building strong brands, creating a positive corporate image, and maintaining customer relationships to ensure long-term success (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Understanding the features of marketing is crucial for comprehending its scope and application. Marketing begins and ends with the customer to emphasise customer orientation and the need to understand and meet customer needs and preferences. Market research plays a vital role in this process by systematically gathering, recording, and analysing data related to marketing products and services. Product differentiation is another key feature which involves the development of unique products that offer superior value compared to competitors. Differentiation can be based on quality, features, branding, and customer service, as seen in how Tesla differentiates itself with advanced electric

vehicle technology and superior performance (Mangram, 2012). Value creation is central to marketing, focusing on providing superior value to customers through high-quality products, competitive pricing, and excellent service. This goal aims to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Relationship building is also fundamental, as it involves developing and nurturing long-term relationships with customers to foster loyalty and encourage repeat business. Lastly, integrated marketing communication ensures that various promotional tools and channels are coordinated to deliver a consistent and clear message about the brand (Schultz, 1993).

Media marketing involves the strategic use of various media channels to promote products or services to a broad audience. It includes traditional media such as television, radio, print as well as digital media like websites, social media, and mobile apps. The primary objectives of media marketing are to increase brand awareness, drive sales, and build customer loyalty. Key components of media marketing include media planning and buying, content creation, campaign management, and audience targeting. Media planning and buying involve selecting the appropriate media channels and purchasing ad space to effectively reach the target audience (Sissors & Baron, 2010). Content creation focuses on developing engaging and relevant content tailored towards a specific media platform. An example is Red Bull's high-energy content that aligns with its brand image (Holt, 2016). Campaign management coordinates and manages marketing campaigns across different media channels to ensure consistency and effectiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Audience targeting uses data and analytics to identify and target specific audience segments with personalised messages, as seen in Facebook's advanced targeting options for advertisers (Chen, 2017). Media marketing can reach a large and diverse audience across various geographic regions and demographics, making it an effective tool for brand building and mass communication (Belch & Belch, 2012). This involves utilising mass media channels such as television, radio, and print to reach broad audiences, as well as leveraging digital media platforms like websites, social media, and mobile apps to reach global audiences.

Social media marketing is a subset of digital marketing that involves using social media platforms to promote products or services. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok have become integral to marketing strategies due to their vast user bases and high engagement levels. The goals of social media marketing include increasing brand visibility, driving website traffic, generating leads, and fostering community engagement. Developing a content strategy is a key aspect of social media marketing, involving the creation of a strategic plan for creating and sharing content that aligns with business objectives and resonates with the target audience (Barker et al., 2012). Building interactive relationships with customers through likes, comments, shares, and direct messages helps build community and brand loyalty. According to Kietzmann et al (2011), community management involves actively

managing and participating in social media communities.

Current Trends in Media and Social Media Marketing

The landscape of media and social media marketing is constantly evolving, with new trends shaping how brands connect with their audiences. Influencer marketing is becoming increasingly popular, with brands collaborating with social media influencers to leverage their reach and credibility. Brands are increasingly working with micro-influencers—those with smaller but highly engaged followings—who often provide more authentic and relatable endorsements. Long-term partnerships with influencers are also gaining traction, as they build stronger relationships and trust with audiences over time (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Video content continues to rise in popularity, with short-form videos, live video, and video storytelling driving engagement. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts are at the forefront of this trend, enabling brands to create bite-sized, entertaining, and informative content. Live video, in particular, allows for real-time interaction and engagement, making it a powerful tool for product launches, Q&A sessions, and live events (Westenberg, 2016).

Social commerce is another significant trend, integrating e-commerce functionality directly into social media platforms. This allows users to purchase products without leaving the app, offering a seamless shopping experience. Features like Instagram Shopping, Facebook Shops and Pinterest's Buyable Pins enable brands to leverage social media's visual and interactive nature to drive sales (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Personalisation is becoming increasingly important in media and social media marketing. By using data and AI, brands can deliver personalised content and ads that resonate with individual users based on their preferences, behaviours, and demographics. This trend enhances user experience and increases the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (Malthouse Li, 2017). User-generated content (UGC) is also playing a critical role in modern marketing strategies. Encouraging customers to create and share content about their experiences with a brand fosters authenticity and trust. Brands can leverage UGC in their marketing campaigns to showcase real-life applications and testimonials, enhancing credibility (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). The use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) in marketing is growing. These technologies provide immersive experiences that allow customers to interact with products in innovative ways. For example, AR apps can enable customers visualise how furniture might look in their homes, while VR can offer virtual tours of travel destinations or real estate properties (Scholz & Smith, 2016).

Theoretical Review

Theories of Conversational Implicature (Gricean Theory)

The Cooperative Principle, as proposed by philosopher H.P. Grice, is a foundational concept in the study of pragmatics and communication. It suggests that participants in a conversation typically adhere to a basic set of rules or maxims that facilitate

effective and meaningful communication. This principle is divided into four main maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Understanding these maxims is crucial for analysing conversational implicatures and how meaning is conveyed beyond the literal interpretation of words.

Maxim of Quantity: The Maxim of Quantity is the amount of information provided in a conversation. It consists of two submaxims: Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange (Betti & Hasan, 2020). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (Betti, 2013; Betti and Igaab, 2018). This maxim ensures that speakers provide sufficient information without overwhelming or under-informing their listeners. For example, when someone asks for directions, providing just enough detail to help the person reach their destination, without unnecessary elaboration, adheres to this maxim.

Maxim of Quality: The Maxim of Quality emphasises the truthfulness of the information shared; do not say what you believe is false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Bach, 2005; Betti, 2021). This maxim highlights the importance of honesty and reliability in communication. It ensures that speakers do not intentionally mislead their listeners and that the information shared is credible and well-supported.

Maxim of Relation: The Maxim of Relation, often summarised as "Be relevant" requires speakers to contribute information that is pertinent to the current topic or context of the conversation. Grice explains this with a practical analogy (Betti, 2021). "If I am mixing ingredients for a cake, I do not expect to be handed a good book, or even an oven cloth (though this might be an appropriate contribution at a later stage)." Relevance is key to maintaining coherence and purpose in a conversation, preventing digressions that could confuse or distract participants.

Maxim of Manner: The Maxim of Manner deals with the clarity and presentation of information. It includes four submaxims: Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly. This maxim focuses on how information is communicated, advocating for straightforward, clear, and organised speech. It ensures that messages are easily understood and not open to multiple interpretations. (Betti, 2020; Betti and Hashim, 2018).

Application of Grice's Theory in Social Media

Grice's maxims are highly relevant in the analysis of social media communication. Users on social media platforms often employ conversational implicatures to convey messages succinctly and effectively within the constraints of the medium. For example, a tweet may rely on shared cultural references or hashtags to convey meaning beyond the literal words used. Research has shown that social media users frequently flout Grice's maxims to create humour, irony, or emphasis. For instance, a user might deliberately provide excessive information (flouting the maxim of quantity) to create a humorous effect or use vague language (flouting the maxim of manner) to engage a more knowledgeable audience who can infer the intended meaning.

Grice's maxims are not strict rules but rather guidelines that conversational participants typically follow. These maxims can be observed, violated, or flouted, leading to different conversational outcomes. For instance: Observing the Maxims: Ensures smooth and effective communication. Violating the Maxims: Can cause misunderstandings or confusion, often unintentionally. Flouting the Maxims: Deliberate non-adherence to a maxim to suggest an additional meaning or implicature. Understanding how these maxims operate in various contexts, including social media interactions, helps in analysing the implicit meanings and the effectiveness of communication strategies used.

Grice's Cooperative Principle and the associated maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner provide a framework for understanding effective communication. They highlight the implicit rules that govern conversational exchanges and explain how meaning is constructed beyond the literal content of utterances. In the context of social media and marketing, these maxims can be crucial for crafting messages that engage audiences and convey intended meanings clearly and effectively. The analysis of how Grice's maxims are adhered to or flouted in social media interactions can provide insights into the implicit norms and expectations of online communities. It also sheds light on how users navigate the limitations and affordances of digital platforms to achieve effective communication.

Methodology

The population for this study consists of social media users engaging with Kuda, Coca cola and Airtel on their respective social media pages. This group was chosen due to their direct involvement and experience with these brands. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select relevant comments and user conversations from Kuda, Coca cola and Airtel's social media pages. This involves identifying posts and discussions that are most pertinent to the research questions. The sample size was determined based on the volume of available data and the saturation point for qualitative analysis. The primary research instrument for this study are these Online advertisements by Kuda, Coca cola and Airtel's Social Media pages that are designed to capture relevant data from social media comments and conversations. Apart from the social media advertisements, the social media comments that accompanied each advertisement are subjected to pragmatic analysis. The analysis of data is done through pragmatic approaches using Grice's Maxims of Conversation. This is supplemented by Conversational Implicature to explore how users follow or violate conversational norms, providing deeper insight into their interactions with the brands.

Data Analysis

Context of Social Media Marketing in Relation to Online Brand Interaction

Social media marketing has fundamentally transformed the way brands engage with consumers; they offer new avenues for real-time interaction, personalised communication and the development of strong communities. Unlike traditional marketing channels, which largely involve one-way communication, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn

facilitate a two-way exchange between brands and their audiences. This evolution has led to a more dynamic and interactive approach to marketing, where consumers are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants in shaping brand narratives. Brands utilise social media to build stronger connections with their customers by engaging in conversations, addressing feedback and providing immediate support. This interaction fosters a sense of community and loyalty, as consumers feel more involved and valued by the brand. Social media have thus become an essential tool in modern marketing, allowing brands to engage with their audiences in ways that were previously unimaginable

Bank Advert in Relation to Online Brand Interaction

The financial services industry, particularly online banking, has increasingly shifted towards digital platforms, with online advertisements playing a crucial role in communicating with customers. These adverts are designed to build trust and promote the convenience, efficiency, and security of digital banking services. For a brand like Kuda Microfinance Bank, these advertisements are integral to reinforcing its image as a reliable and customer-centric financial institution. In an industry where trust is paramount, it is essential that online banking adverts effectively convey the safety and reliability of the bank's services. This includes emphasising features such as secure transactions, user-friendly interfaces, and responsive customer support. However, the success of these adverts is not solely dependent on the content they present; the brand's ability to engage with customers online, particularly when issues arise, is equally critical. Customer interactions on social media often reveal the true effectiveness of a bank's services, as negative experiences or unresolved issues can quickly erode trust. For Kuda Microfinance Bank, engaging with customers online is not only important for resolving individual issues but also for maintaining a positive brand image. The comments and interactions on Kuda's social media posts often highlight customer concerns regarding transaction issues or delays in customer support, which the brand must address promptly to preserve its reputation. Therefore, the effectiveness of online banking adverts is closely linked to the brand's responsiveness and its ability to manage customer relationships effectively in the digital space.

Drink (Food) Adverts in Relation to Online Brand Interaction

cocacola_ng When was the last time you tried the classic Coke Zero Sugar? With its new refreshing taste, you just might be in for a delicious surprise!
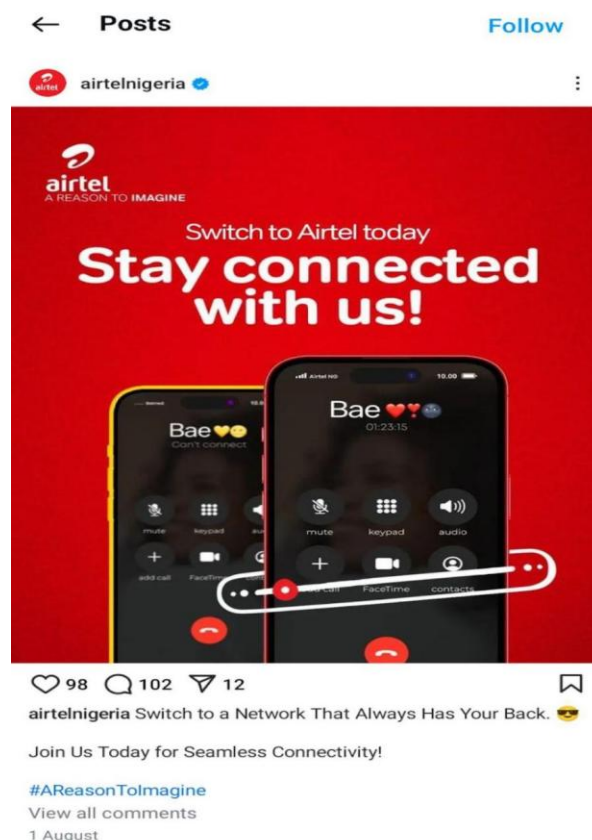#RealWonder #CocaColaNG
16 May 2022

In the competitive food and beverage industry, brands like Coca-Cola use online advertisements to reinforce their product's appeal and connect with consumers on a more emotional level. Coca-Cola's advertising strategy has historically focused on creating a strong emotional bond with its audience, positioning its products as essential components of social gatherings, celebrations, and personal enjoyment. This approach has continued into the digital age, with Coca-Cola leveraging social media to reach a global audience and engage with consumers in real-time. However, the increasing trend towards health consciousness among consumers presents challenges for brands like Coca-Cola, which must navigate the complex discourse around sugar content, health implications, and shifting consumer preferences. Online brand interactions provide a critical platform for addressing these concerns, as consumers increasingly turn to social media to express their opinions and seek information about products. Coca-Cola's ability to respond to these interactions, provide accurate information, and reassure consumers about the quality and safety of its products is essential for maintaining brand loyalty.

Moreover, the interactive nature of social media allows Coca-Cola to engage with consumers in more personalised and meaningful ways. For instance, the brand can utilise targeted campaigns to address specific concerns or promote new products that align with the health-conscious shift, such as Coca-Cola Zero Sugar. This direct engagement not only helps to foster a positive brand image but also encourages consumer trust, which is crucial in an industry where public perception can significantly impact sales.

Network Provider Advert in Relation to Online Brand Interaction

airtelnigeria Switch to a Network That Always Has Your Back. 😎
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#AReasonToImagine
View all comments
1 August

For network providers like Airtel Nigeria, online brand interactions are crucial for managing customer satisfaction and building loyalty in a highly competitive market. The telecom industry is characterised by intense competition, with customer retention often hinging on the quality of service and the brand's ability to address issues promptly. Airtel's online adverts typically emphasise the reliability, coverage, and customer-centric services that differentiate it from competitors. However, the effectiveness of these adverts is heavily influenced by how the brand manages customer interactions online. As observed in the comments on Airtel's social media posts, customers frequently express frustration with network issues or service disruptions. The brand's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to these concerns can significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. For Airtel, online interactions are not only a customer service channel but also a critical component of its brand management strategy. By addressing customer complaints and providing timely support, Airtel can reinforce its commitment to customer satisfaction and differentiate itself from competitors. This proactive approach to online brand interaction is essential for maintaining a positive brand image and ensuring long-term customer loyalty in a market where consumers have multiple options and can easily switch providers.

Implicature

Implicature of Airtel Nigeria's Advert/Post

Airtel Nigeria's Advert/Post: "Switch to Airtel today. Stay Connected with us!"

Speech Acts: This advertisement primarily functions as a directive act, urging potential customers to switch their service to Airtel. The phrase "Stay Connected with us" serves both as an invitation and a reassurance of the brand's reliability. **CI**: The post implies that switching to Airtel will ensure continuous and reliable connectivity, which is a critical factor for mobile network users. The brevity and simplicity of the message suggest that Airtel values efficiency and clarity, aligning with consumer expectations for straightforward communication from service providers. The advert employs positive politeness by including "Stay Connected with us!"—a phrase that fosters a sense of community and inclusion. By framing the service as something that will help users "stay connected," Airtel implicitly flatters its audience, suggesting that choosing Airtel is a wise and beneficial decision.

Implicature of Kuda Microfinance Advert/Post

Kuda Microfinance Advert/Post: "How to Stop Overspending in Lagos. (One thing you should know about Lagos? You're bound to overspend. 1 credit alert, 10 debit alerts. But we've got you covered. Here's how you can stop overspending in Lagos.)"

Speech Acts: This post primarily functions as an assertive act, where Kuda states a fact about the financial habits in Lagos ("You're bound to overspend"). This is followed by a commissive speech act where the brand promises a solution ("We've got you covered"), thereby committing to helping the consumer. **C I**: The post implies that Kuda understands the financial challenges faced by Lagos residents, positioning itself as a brand that empathises with and provides solutions to these

challenges. The use of colloquial language ("1 credit alert, 10 debit alerts") reinforces the idea that Kuda is familiar with the everyday experiences of its target audience. Kuda employs positive politeness by acknowledging a shared experience ("You're bound to overspend") and offering a helpful solution. This strategy fosters a sense of solidarity between the brand and its users, positioning Kuda as a supportive and reliable financial partner.

Implicature of Coca-Cola Advert/Post:

Coca-Cola Advert Post: "Coca Cola. Zero Sugar. Try it now. When was the last time you tried the classic Coke Zero Sugar? With its new refreshing taste, you just might be in for a delicious surprise!"

Speech Acts: This advertisement includes both a directive speech act ("Try it now") and an assertive speech act ("With its new refreshing taste, you just might be in for a delicious surprise"). The directive encourages immediate action, while the assertive suggests a positive outcome from following the directive. **C I**: The post implies that the new Coke Zero Sugar has been improved and that those who haven't tried it recently might be missing out on something better. It also subtly suggests that the product is healthier due to the absence of sugar, without explicitly mentioning health benefits. **Politeness Strategies**: Coca-Cola uses positive politeness by appealing to the consumer's sense of curiosity and taste ("you just might be in for a delicious surprise!"). This creates an invitation to enjoy the product as part of a pleasurable and refreshing experience, making the consumer feel that they will benefit from trying the product.

Conversational Implicature CI of Adverts by Kuda Microfinance Bank

Kuda Microfinance Bank's post, aimed at educating users on how to manage their finances in Lagos, reveals significant challenges in its customer engagement strategy. The post itself is informative and relevant to the brand's mission of financial empowerment. However, the comments section tells a different story, one that is marked by frustration and dissatisfaction. An example is:

> **User: How can I save money with you people called KUDA and the whole money get lost without any reasonable action. If to say I owe your company, I know you wouldn't take soft hand to handle the case. Nevertheless, my money can't just go like that, I want my money back #35k no be small money Reply: No reply.**

Maxim of Quantity: This maxim dictates that contributions to a conversation should be as informative as necessary, without providing too much or too little information. In the case of Kuda, the complete lack of responses to the numerous customers' complaints is a clear violation of this maxim. Customers repeatedly express concerns about unaddressed issues such as failed transactions, unresponsive customer service, and fears of being scammed. The absence of any reply from Kuda leaves these complaints unresolved, providing neither the necessary information nor reassurance to the customers. This neglect creates an information vacuum where customers are left without the details they need to understand their situations, leading to

increased frustration and potential distrust in the brand. **Maxim of Quality**: This maxim requires that contributions to a conversation be truthful and based on evidence. Kuda's failure to respond to the comments could be seen as a passive violation of this maxim. The silence can be interpreted as an implicit acknowledgment that the complaints might be valid, or worse, that the brand has nothing to offer in defence of its practices. Customers like User 4, who explicitly call the bank a scam, receive no counter-argument or clarification, which could lead to the spread of misinformation or negative perceptions about the brand's integrity. The lack of truthful communication from Kuda exacerbates the situation, as it does not provide any factual responses to clear up potential misunderstandings.

Maxim of Relation: This maxim requires that responses be relevant to the preceding statement. Given that there are no replies from Kuda, this maxim is also violated. The comments from users are directly related to the service issues they are experiencing, and a relevant response from Kuda would be expected. By not engaging, Kuda misses the opportunity to address these concerns directly, leaving the customers' questions and frustrations unacknowledged.

Maxim of Manner: This maxim emphasises clarity, brevity, and the avoidance of ambiguity. Kuda's complete lack of response introduces ambiguity into the conversation. Customers are left wondering why their issues are not being addressed, leading to assumptions and speculations that are damaging to the brand. The lack of communication also fails to provide clear and straightforward answers to pressing issues, further frustrating customers who seek immediate and concise resolutions.

In summary, Kuda Microfinance Bank's handling of its social media interactions, as observed in this post, fails to adhere to Grice's conversational maxims. The absence of engagement not only violates these maxims but also undermines customer trust and satisfaction. By not providing necessary information, addressing concerns with truthful responses, maintaining relevance, or ensuring clarity, Kuda risks damaging its reputation and losing customers' loyalty.

CI of Comments on Coca-Cola Online Advert

Coca-Cola's post promoting its Zero Sugar variant aims to engage customers with a health-conscious message about its product. However, the comments reveal a mix of positive, neutral, and negative reactions, each requiring a different engagement strategy. An example of the customers' comments is:

> **User: Coke used to be my favorite drink but not anymore. It's not like before**
> **Reply:No reply. User: I heard it's deadly**
> **Reply: No reply. User: Big lie... we that sell it to consumers know that it has 700 sugar valid.... Reply: No reply**

Maxim of Quantity: Coca-Cola's decision not to engage with the comments, especially those that are critical, violates the Maxim of Quantity. For instance, comments questioning the sugar content and those expressing dissatisfaction with the taste

are left unaddressed. By failing to provide additional information or clarification, Coca-Cola misses the chance to educate customers about the product's benefits and dispel any myths or concerns. The lack of interaction leaves customers without the necessary information to form an informed opinion, which could lead to the perpetuation of negative views about the product.

Maxim of Quality: The Maxim of Quality is particularly important in this context, where product claims are being questioned. When a user comments that the drink tastes like "sh*t" or questions the truthfulness of the sugar content, Coca-Cola's silence could be interpreted as an inability to defend the product's quality. By not responding, Coca-Cola fails to provide factual corrections or explanations, which could have countered these negative perceptions. This inaction may lead to the spreading of misinformation, potentially harming the brand's credibility.

Maxim of Relation: The comments left on Coca-Cola's post are directly related to the product being promoted. However, the brand's lack of response violates the Maxim of Relation. Coca-Cola misses the opportunity to engage in a relevant dialogue with its consumers. For instance, when users express disappointment that the product is not what it used to be, a relevant response from Coca-Cola could have addressed these concerns and highlighted improvements or changes in the product formula. By not responding, the brand appears disconnected from its audience, missing the chance to engage in

meaningful conversations that could enhance customer relations.

Maxim of Manner: Clarity and brevity are crucial when addressing consumer concerns, especially in a public forum like social media. Coca-Cola's non-engagement creates ambiguity, leaving customers unsure about the brand's stance on the issues raised. For example, when a user jokes about becoming a brand ambassador, Coca-Cola could have seized the opportunity to engage playfully while reinforcing brand loyalty. The absence of such interaction leaves room for misunderstandings and does not provide clear communication, which could have positively impacted the brand's image.

Overall, Coca-Cola's handling of the comments on its Zero Sugar post highlights missed opportunities to engage with its audience and manage its brand perception effectively. The brand's silence violates Grice's conversational maxims, particularly Quantity and Relation, leading to unaddressed concerns and potential misinformation. To maintain a strong brand image, Coca-Cola needs to engage more actively in these conversations, providing clear, truthful, and relevant responses that enhance customer trust and satisfaction.

C I of Comments about Advert of Airtel Nigeria

Airtel Nigeria's post encourages users to switch to their service, emphasising the promise of connectivity. However, the comments reveal widespread dissatisfaction with the current service, which Airtel attempts to address through consistent

engagement. Two examples of users' comments and replies given to them are given below:

1. **USER: Come Airtel people make una nor add join person anger this period ohh. REPLY: @king___tee Hello, apologies for the experience. We would love to understand and resolve the issue. Kindly share the experience and the affected number via DM for assistance. Thank you. ^Faith**

2. **USER: Good morning, I've been unable to use my router for over a month now. No service. I went to one of your offices 3 days ago, they checked my number and there was service before I left, as soon as I got to my office there hasn't been service till now. Please what is going. REPLY: @unikdiva Hello, we empathize. Kindly share the mobile number via DM for checks and assistance. Thank you. ^Faith**

Maxim of Quantity: Airtel Nigeria generally adheres to the Maxim of Quantity by providing sufficient information in its responses. Each complaint is met with a request for the customer's details via direct message (DM) to investigate the issue further. While this approach demonstrates a commitment to resolving problems, the repetition of similar complaints suggests that the information provided might not be fully addressing the underlying issues. The repeated offers to assist via DM might come across as formulaic rather than tailored to the specific needs of each customer,

which could diminish the perceived sincerity of the brand's efforts.

Maxim of Quality: Airtel's responses largely adhere to the Maxim of Quality, as the brand offers genuine apologies and expresses a willingness to resolve issues. However, the persistent nature of the complaints, particularly regarding service quality, raises questions about the effectiveness of these responses. While Airtel is truthful in its apologies and promises of assistance, the ongoing issues suggest that the solutions being offered may not be effective, leading to a potential loss of credibility. If customers perceive that their complaints are not being genuinely addressed, the brand's reputation could suffer despite the adherence to this maxim.

Maxim of Relation: Airtel's responses are relevant to the complaints raised, adhering to the Maxim of Relation. Each response directly addresses the user's issue, with a focus on moving the conversation to a private channel for further assistance. This approach helps manage public perception by keeping potentially negative discussions out of the public eye. However, the consistency of the responses might give the impression that Airtel is not fully addressing the root causes of the complaints, as the brand relies heavily on directing users to DM without offering specific resolutions in the public forum.

Maxim of Manner: Airtel's responses are generally clear and straightforward, adhering to the Maxim of Manner. The brand's communication, which is direct and free from ambiguity, focuses on resolving the issues at hand. However, the uniformity of the

responses might lead to a perception of insincerity or lack of genuine concern. To enhance the effectiveness of its communication, Airtel could benefit from varying its responses to better reflect the specific circumstances of each complaint, thereby demonstrating a more personalised approach to customer service.

Findings

The analysis of social media interactions across Kuda Microfinance Bank, and Coca-Cola, Airtel Nigeria's platforms provides critical insights into how these brands manage their online presence and customer relationships. Each brand's approach highlights the distinct challenges and opportunities associated with engaging customers on social media platforms. Kuda Microfinance Bank's interactions reveal a significant challenge in managing customer service effectively. The analysis shows that many users express frustration over the bank's unresponsiveness, particularly concerning unresolved issues and unanswered direct messages. Coca-Cola's social media strategy focuses on reinforcing its brand identity through positive customer engagement. However, the varied responses to the Coke Zero Sugar campaign reveal challenges in maintaining brand loyalty. While some customers express satisfaction with the product, aligning with the Maxim of Quality, others challenge the product's claims, particularly regarding its health benefits and taste..

Airtel Nigeria's use of social media as a customer service tool showcases the importance of balancing efficiency with authenticity. While the company attempts to address customer issues publicly, adhering to the Maxim of Relation by ensuring responses are relevant, the over-reliance on scripted and standardised replies results in violations of the Maxim of Quality.

Conclusion

This study paints a vivid picture of the current state of social media interactions between brands and their consumers. In an era where customer loyalty is increasingly tied to the quality of brand communication, the stakes have never been higher. Brands that excel in their social media strategies are those that not only engage their customers but do so in a manner that is informative, sincere, and timely. This study has shown that when brands adhere to Grice's Maxims—providing sufficient information, maintaining truthfulness, ensuring relevance, and being clear—they are more likely to foster trust and loyalty among their customers. However, the study also highlights significant areas where brands can improve. While social media offer brands an unparalleled opportunity to engage with their audiences, the effectiveness of these interactions is heavily dependent on how well they adhere to established principles of communication. Brands that prioritise clear, honest, and relevant communication are more likely to build strong, lasting relationships with their customers. On the other hand, those that neglect these principles risk alienating their audience and damaging their reputation. As this study has shown, the key to successful social media marketing lies not just in the content that is shared but in the quality of the

interactions that follow. The recommendations are as follows: i) Brands should enhance responsiveness with a human touch as the immediacy of social media requires a swift response to customer inquiries and complaints. ii) Brands strategy of ignoring certain critical comments is a missed opportunity to strengthen consumer trust. iii) Brands should inspire and empower its users, but this could be further enhanced by more direct interaction with its community. iv) All brands should establish continuous feedback loops to monitor and improve their social media interactions.

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