

Language Use and the Marketing Communication Strategies of Ambulant Bus Vendors: The case of the Northwest Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of Pidgin English and the linguistic communication strategies employed and the difficulties encountered by the ambulant bus vendors in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. Two questions asked are: what language is used by ambulant bus vendors and what are some of the linguistic communication strategies used by these ambulant vendors in Bamenda? To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers recorded on-the-bus presentations in Pidgin English by the vendors while accompanying passengers at various travel agencies to and from Bamenda. The recordings were transcribed into the English language and transformed into text for analysis. The Persuasion Theory, Textual Conceptual Functions, Framing Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Content Analysis were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda use Pidgin English as a predominant language and it is very instrumental in the introduction of new products to the final consumer and as well serves as a link in the production chain between the producer and the final consumer. Thus, if they are well organized to work as company agents or representatives, they will contribute greatly to the growth of the economy and business. The study also revealed that ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda make use of linguistic communication strategies like negating, naming and describing, exemplifying and enumerating, equating and contrasting, and finally hypothesising. On the other hand, the study equally revealed that alongside linguistic communication strategies, ambulant bus vendors employ marketing communication strategies like songs, prayers, announcements, product endorsement, sex sales, product universality, allusion, and self-certification.

Keywords: *Pidgin English, ambulant bus, vendors, communication, strategies.*

1. Introduction

The use of Pidgin English in formal and informal settings has gained considerable attention and is equally gaining scholarship in academia. Pidgin English is increasingly gaining ground as a common language for business in Cameroon. Ekanjume (2016) defines Pidgin languages as languages that are often despised and looked down upon in social policy settings (language-in-education policies in particular and national language policies in general). Schröder (2003: 181), reveals that there are numerous extended functions of Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) serving all Cameroonians.

Amongst them, the study reveals that Cameroon Pidgin English CPE belongs to no ethnic group; it is used by all and in diverse ways, although varieties do exist. Ayafor (2000: 3), argues that this language would serve as a factor for unity, in that it would bring many Cameroonians together under one common umbrella language, which none of the ethnic groups would claim as belonging to them. Chumbow(2002) suggests that Cameroon Pidgin English could be developed and used to unify many African countries. This is because there are forms of Pidgin English all over Africa, in former British colonies such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, and they are mutually intelligible because societal perceptions about thisPidginEnglishes are similar across the three countries.

These different forms of Pidgin English which now serve as dialects could serve as a mark of identity for many Africans once developed. In an era of globalization, such a language could serve as a global language for Africans. From observation, Pidgin English has continued to gain new spheres over the years in Cameroon. The language has rapidly dominated the business sector and media space in Bamenda because it is used by all in advertisement and the sale and purchase of products in the market and malls. Even though English is the “official language” in the Northwest region, Pidgin English seems to be the business language. Ambulant bus vendors have brought this to the limelight as they interact with the educated and the uneducated in intercity buses as they routinely convince commuters to buy their products.

Amongst those who have taken Pidgin English as a business tool in Bamenda are ambulant bus vendors. Ambulant bus vendors are perceived as creating unfair competition for more established shop owners, subsequently reducing the profits of shop owners by offering pirated and counterfeit goods and commodities for sale at very low prices (Yemmafouo, 2018). He adds that as new as itinerant vending might be, the phenomenon in its way is competitive as many more individuals who most of the time can't find paid jobs look up to the sector as a way of self-employment.

Given this free entry, the sector has become more and more competitive. Hence, these vendors have now mapped out survival strategies that are anchored on how well they convince more people to buy what they are selling, hence introducing the aspect of what language they use and with what style. They now use local languages or any language that the majority understands in their brand positioning, campaigns, promotion strategy, and media use. In carrying out their daily business, ambulant bus vendors are caught in a web of convincing commuters to purchase their items, as the commuters are not in the market seeking to buy these things. From observation in contemporary Cameroonian societies, this phenomenon is increasingly gaining ground with ambulant bus vendors being referred to as marketers. As marketers, they are always trying to engage all sorts of marketing communication strategies to cause the commuters to buy the products they propose. Consequently, business/marketing communication strategies have become an integral part of the life of ambulant bus vendors with everyone trying to outsmart one another by developing more persuasive strategies to win over the commuters and have them purchase the proposed products. In the background of this experience, the current study seeks to present a discourse analysis of Pidgin English language use and the marketing communication strategies employed by ambulant bus vendors; with a view on commuters' perception of the practice.

2.LiteratureReview

According to Fill (2005), marketing communication is a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. The scholar argues that by understanding an audience communication environment, their organisations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, audiences are encouraged to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses.

Schultz (2013) argues that Marketing Communication is the process of managing all sources of information about a product or a service to which a customer or prospect is exposed and which, behaviourally, moves the customer toward its sale and maintains customer loyalty. However, due to the second big revolution in the mid-1990s, the term Marketing Communication metamorphosed into a more complex concept, and it is not used as a tactical tool but as a strategic process (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010: 7-11). The first scholars to give Marketing Communication a complex understanding were Schultz and Schultz (2013) when they referred to Marketing Communication as a strategic process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programmes over time with consumers, customers, prospects and other internal and external audiences. This understanding of Marketing Communication was much more explicit than what Schultz wrote in 1991. By this definition, Marketing Communication is not just managing the promotional messages, to get customers toward the sale, but it is managing the whole brand communication programmes, which can be measured not only by doing this with consumers, customers, and prospects but also with internal and external audiences (Kliatchko 2005: 21).

Pickton and Broderick (2005: 25) view Marketing Communication as bringing together all marketing communications activities in the most appropriate manner, even though in their book "Integrated Marketing Communication they, clearly show that Marketing Communication is not as simple as they define it, but rather complex and difficult to fully

understand. According to Kliatchko (2005:21), Marketing Communication is the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centered, and results-driven brand communication programmes over time, while Percy (2008: 5) defined Marketing Communication as planning a systematic way to determine the most effective and consistent message for appropriate target audiences. On their part, Floor and Van Raaij (2011: 541) sustain that Marketing Communication is a process where all messages and methods are geared to each other in such a way that they complement and reinforce each other, and that added value is the result.

Ambulant bus vending makes up a large proportion of the informal economy across the world, especially in less developed nations such as Cameroon. This is because; the economies of such nations are characterized by unemployment, hardship, and starvation. Confirming this, Bhowmik (2012) stipulated that many street vendors are from poor backgrounds with few alternative employment opportunities available to them due to a lack of skills and education. Thus, the majority of the lower-income earners consider ambulant bus vending as a means to an end.

Ambulant bus vending has been described as an extension of street hawking which was triggered by the advent of travel agencies. Street vending involves the production and exchange of legal goods and services that involve the lack of appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non-compliance with labour regulations governing contracts and work conditions, and/or the lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients. Street vending embroils the production and exchange of goods and services outside of legal frameworks. In simpler words, street vending can be defined as the act of selling goods and services in the streets without having a permanent built-up structure (Wongtada, 2014). Street vendors are commonly referred to as hawkers, peddlers, and street traders.

A bus from Bamenda to Yaoundé serves well to exemplify some of the main categories of the hawking trade. The first round of offers is made inside the bus station where station-based hawkers pass from one departing vehicle to the other, tendering products customised to the needs of long-distance travellers (e.g. ready-made meals, drinks, phone credits, souvenirs). Once the vehicle sets off, mobile street hawkers offer the next rounds of window trade. They operate primarily on urban and sub-urban roads, at places where the traffic is slowed down, such as at busy crossings and traffic lights, where they move along the line of waiting cars. They offer not only drinks and snacks, but also a broad variety of goods such as clothes, toys, DVDs, and home appliances (Stasik & Klaeger, 2018a and b).

As the bus passes through more rural areas, semi-stationary hawkers entice the passengers with fresh produce from nearby farms and forests (e.g. fruits, vegetables, bush meat), which they present in attractive displays on provisional stalls put up at strategic locations along the roadside. Ratnar (2012) posit that ambulant vendors can sell these items at a cheaper rate because they do not have to pay any overhead cost such as shop rent, electricity, gas or water bills, or any taxes to the government. But they have to pay a significant portion of their profit to the local police or political persons to conduct business in a preferable place.

Dragilev (2020) describe marketing communications strategy as any strategy employed by a company or an individual to reach their targeted market through different communication outlets such as word of mouth (WOM), print, radio, television, and the new media. According to the author, a marketing communication strategy involves the sender's message, the medium, and the targeted audience. Thus, in designing a communication strategy for a business structure, the strategists should identify their targeted audience as well as the medium that they are glued to. This is because marketing communication shapes and drives the plan towards the goal.

Marketing communication is the lifeblood of an organization (Narayanan and Manchanda, 2009), as it links the firm and its stakeholders. Chiliya,

Herbst, and Roberts-Lombard (2009:70) defined marketing as a method by which a firm attempts to reach its target markets. According to the authors, marketing strategy starts with market research, in which needs and attitudes, and competitors' products are assessed and continues through advertising, promotion, distribution, and where applicable, customer servicing, packaging, sales, and distribution. Marketing strategy must focus on delivering greater value to customers and the firm at a lower cost (Chiliya, Herbst & Roberts-Lombard, 2009).

3. Theoretical Framework

The theories guiding this study are the Marketing Communication Theory also known as the Persuasion Theory, Textual Conceptual Functions, and the Framing Theory.

3.1 Marketing Communication Theories

The Marketing Communication Theory of O'Keefe (2003), rests on the persuasion Theory. The theory holds that beliefs plus values and/or motives combine to produce attitudes which in turn influence consumer behaviour. Diagrammatically, these can be described as Beliefs + Values = attitudes → Behaviour. The theory implies that the ability to transform prospective buyers by developing brand awareness, brand consideration, and finally actual purchase is the function of a well-developed right message and the right promotion channel. According to (Chang-Dae, Michelle & Susmita, 2015) the ability of a marketer to shape and determine the outcomes depend on the marketers' beliefs about the traits, competencies, and goals of persuasion. The marketer needs to enable the potential buyers to recognize, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and remember persuasion attempts and to select and execute copying tactics believed to be effective and appropriate. The relevance of Persuasion Theory in this study resides in the fact that the street vendors and ambulant bus vendors should be strong enough to make potential customers build positive beliefs, and values and form favourable attitudes toward their products.

3.2 Textual Conceptual Functions

The theory, Textual Conceptual Functions of Jeffries (2016) applies aptly to this study. Textual Conceptual Functions have three types of meanings, which are linguistic, ideational, and interpersonal. The linguistic meaning includes the de-contextual, structural and semantic meanings that examine the levels of language. The linguistic meaning is the core meaning, fundamental to all language use. The ideational (textual-conceptual meaning) is the co-textual effects of linguistic choices made by language users. The theory takes into consideration the linguistic environment in which a word is used within a text. It gives a set of textual meanings that can be used in analyzing the text, exposing the different ways in which texts represent the world. Interpersonal is the pragmatic meaning that focuses on the contextual intention of linguistic uses on others. Jeffries, (2016) outlines the tools of Textual Conceptual Functions to include: prioritization, naming and describing, implying and assuming, listing, naming and description negating, hypothesizing and exemplifying and enumerating. This theory is best suited for this study, language used in marketing communication, and analysis of the linguistic communication strategies used by ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda in that, the names used by these vendors to name their various products sold to commuters are carefully selected to better sell the products. These vendors in their advertisements make use of all the tools of this theory in convincing commuters in buying their products.

3.3 Framing Theory

This theory, by Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) is related to the agenda-setting tradition of the Media. It seeks to explain that the media or people decide where and what people think about.

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) describe a lot of possibilities to frame situations.

a) Metaphor: To give an idea or programme a new meaning by comparing it to something else. **b) Stories** (myths and legends): To frame

a subject by an anecdote vividly and memorably. **c) Traditions** (rites, rituals, and ceremonies): To pattern and define an organization at regular time increments to confirm and reproduce organizational values. **d) Slogans, jargon, and catchphrases:** To frame a subject memorably and familiarly. **e) Artefacts:** To illuminate corporate values through physical vestiges (sometimes in a way language cannot). **f) Contrast:** To describe a subject in terms of what it is not. **g) Spin:** to talk about a concept to give it a positive or negative connotation.

This theory is suited for this study in that, ambulant bus vendors in their advertising exploit all measures and linguistic strategies to make sure that commuters see their products as genuine by making use of metaphors with happenings and things around them, artifacts, slogans, and jargon that are commonplace in the society. By this, commuters see their products as the final solution to their daily problems, predominantly health challenges as some commuters who tend to think about the products on the bus will certainly continue to buy outside the bus.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed method of research; qualitative and quantitative. The mixed method of research is best suited for this study because it gives a chance for the researchers to participate both actively and passively in the research by playing the role of a commuter on the bus and conducting interviews with these vendors later. It also enabled the researchers to have a more comprehensive knowledge of the marketing communication strategies. The sample population for this study includes all bus vendors in Bamenda. Bus vendors especially those operating in Bamenda are vendors who earn a living by selling various products to commuters on transit. Their products include toothbrushes of all brands, medicated soaps of all categories, body lotions, alternative African medicinal products, and sweets as well as food supplements. These bus vendors are not fixed. They join the bus just when it is take-off time and after selling their products for a considerable distance, they

alight and wait for the next bus coming in from the next town where they join the commuters and sell back to Bamenda.

These itinerant vendors are not disorganized but operate in a very structured setup. As many as they are, they are affiliated with inter-urban bus travel agencies. For the very big bus travel agencies which have many buses leaving the station either in the morning or by evening for night travels, many itinerant vendors will take turns and sell in each of the buses for the first 20-30 minutes before departure. The bus vendors, as realized are not only affiliated with the bus travel agencies but they often have specific buses in which they will always sell. Going by statistics from the 8 interurban bus travel agencies operating in Bamenda and the many other clandestine buses, more than 61 itinerant bus vendors commuting with travellers in a bid to carry out their trade actively participated in this study. A total of 45 participated in this study, 40 of them male, and 5 females with ages ranging between 30-40 years.

Table 1: Sampling Matrix

| BUS TRAVEL AGENCY | Total ABV | Percentage (%) | Sample Size |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Amour Mezam | 15 | 25% | 13 |
| 2. Moghamo Express | 18 | 30% | 14 |
| 3. Vatican Express | 8 | 13% | 7 |
| 4. Guarantee Express | 3 | 5% | 1 |
| 5. Grand Jeannot Expre | 5 | 8% | 3 |
| 6. Nso Boys Express | 6 | 10% | 4 |
| 7. Avenir Voyage | 2 | 3% | 1 |
| 8. Mondial Express | 4 | 7% | 2 |
| Total | 61 | 100% | 45 |

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2022

The main sample technique used in this study is non-probability sampling. The itinerant bus vendors were divided into the various existing inter-urban travel agencies. Given that ambulant bus vendors are often on the move with no permanent office the snowball sampling technique was used to access most vendors outside the bus, at times in the streets, and even in their homes to have short interviews with them. For three months the researchers and research assistants made several trips out of Bamenda and into Bamenda armed with audio recording devices. Recordings were made inside the various buses. The researchers had the chance to observe live presentations by the various vendors either into Bamenda or going out of Bamenda. The researchers equally had the opportunity to talk with commuters who bought the various items advertised on the bus as soon as they arrived at the various bus satins.

Data for this study was collected by employing two main research instruments. For the observations, a checklist was designed which was intended to capture several issues raised along the lines of marketing strategy used, products on sale, and languages used amongst other issues. Secondly, an interview guide was designed with semi-structured interview questions administered to selected Ambulant Bus Vendors. The researchers posed as passengers multiple times in inter-urban buses wired with TASCAN digital recorders during which bus vendors were recorded from start to finish in each of the sessions. To better understand the challenges faced by these bus vendors, contacts of these bus vendors were collected from some of their products bought by the researchers or directly. Interview sessions were later arranged and with the use of a digital recorder, and an interview guide, the researchers carried out semi-structured interviews with the identified ABVs.

In order to collect the appropriate data, the researchers had to identify all travel agencies existing in Bamenda and their time of departure from Bamenda. A plan of recording sessions was put in place and it was followed by trips that took the researchers to Up-station, Akum, Santa,

Matazen, Mbouda, and Bafoussam then back to Bamenda depending on when the researchers were done recording the ABV. Some of the time, the recordings are done by research assistants trained in digital recording. These trips resulted in a total of 40 recordings. These recordings were transcribed into word format for analysis. The researchers programmed structured interview sessions with some of these vendors and the transcriptions gotten from the audio recordings were equally done.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

The sections that follow will present and analyse the data collected from the fieldwork. The analysis of data collected for this study is done by identifying thematic areas and frames that occurred in the data collection process. Qualitative data was analysed through critical discourse analyses tools. Content exploration of frequencies and percentages of occurrences of particular features, thematic concerns, and frames were used for the analysis of the data of the study. The analysis tried to locate and classify linguistic features, marketing styles, and techniques as well as other issues around the challenges of ABVs. To ease proper understanding and easy comprehension of the analysis, some of the quantitative data was presented on frequency tables and graphs.

5.1 Linguistic Strategies Used by Ambulant Vendors in Bamenda

One of the research questions of this study was to address the issue of the linguistic strategies which are used by ambulant vendors in Bamenda. In addressing this, the tools of textual conceptual functions were evoked. Jeffries (2016) outlines the tools of Textual Conceptual Functions to include; prioritization, naming and describing, implying and assuming, listing, naming and describing, negating, hypothesizing, and exemplifying and enumerating. This research exploits these tools in exploring the linguistic strategies of ambulant bus vendors from the transcribed text.

5.1.1 Naming and Describing

The names the ambulant bus vendors attribute to their products do not come ex-nihilo. The naming of their products is meaning-embedded. The product “African Panacea” cures a lot of ailments. The lexis “panacea” means something which solves all problems. This means the product, “panacea” is designed to sell itself. “Queen Stick” and “King Seed” are all names that are branded or given to the products sold by these ambulant bus vendors. Semantically, the words Queen and King carry some realness and as such cannot be contested. Just as a king has authority over the people. This is how the meaning of Queen stick and King seed are construed to have authority over illnesses. This branding endorses the universality of the product and marks attention cum confidence.

The build-up of the names of products is purposeful. The choice of words used diagnoses and provides solutions to people’s problems. **Skin care solution**” would give treatment to the skin of either a male or female while **“Dental Pro”** which means **“teeth-friendly”** would give solutions to any problem related to the teeth. Furthermore, to describe the illnesses which the product treats, the ambulant bus vendors modify the nouns to properly distinguish them from other illnesses. They use descriptive adjectives to modify the illness commuters may be suffering from. The use of “strong”, “chronic” and “dry” to describe cough helps to endorse the product African Panacea. This also buttresses the universality of the product as far as the treatment of cough is concerned. The naming and description of the products sold by the ambulant bus vendors transcribe the themes, product endorsement, product universality, attention, and confidence-building.

5.1.2 Equating and Contrasting

The ambulant bus vendors in advertising their products inside the various buses either equate the effects of their products to other phenomena or contrast the effects. Through equating, the ambulant bus vendors make their products worth buying. Equating in the discourse of ambulant bus vending is realized through the use of intensive relational equivalence and metaphoric equivalence. The ambulant bus vendors say that the secret to treating Covid 19 “is” or lies in the use of natural

medicines. Also, they say that the best way to fight Covid 19 “is” to practice cleanliness. The use of the verb “To be” in the third person singular performs the function of an intensive relational marker. The advice on the use of natural medicine for the treatment of the deadly pandemic enhances or makes the products, mainly natural concoctions, being sold more credible.

Ambulant bus vendors also do equate through metaphorical equivalence. The equation of African Panacea to the anointing oil taken from TB Joshua gives their products universal characteristics. As anointing oil cures almost all illnesses according to Christians’ belief, so does African Panacea.

“Are you a man who has body odour like that of a he-goat?”

This metaphor captures the nature of the obnoxious odour. The use of “like” helps the commuters to equate and imagine the type of odour. Metaphorical equivalence thus helps in product definition and symptom description. Moreover, to describe someone’s buttocks to be rough like that of a hammer. The use of like here describes the nature of the skin disease, “rough buttocks”. This linguistic tool helps the commuters to have a vivid description of the illness being described. Again, to liken a love-making situation to a nation’s cup final between Cameroon and Egypt is evoked in the minds of commuters, the effectiveness of the medication being advertised. The use of metaphorical equivalence lures the commuters to buy the product African Panacea.

Contrast is another tool used by ambulant bus vendors to convince commuters to buy their products. These ambulant bus vendors use contrastive and comparative oppositions. They support the use of traditional medicine to advance reasons why their parents lived for long and why their products should be bought. They contrast our parents who hardly visited the hospital to parents and people of our time who move from one hospital to another. The ambulant bus vendor says though Covid 19 can be treated with natural medicine, the best thing to do is to avoid...” but the best thing....” here, the ambulant bus vendor underpins

the idea of avoiding Covid 19 through the use of comparative opposition. *“Prevention is better than cure”*. The ambulant bus vendor here thus exploits, equates and contrasts to drive his idea into the minds of the commuters.

5.1.3 Hypothesizing

Hypothesising helps the ambulant bus vendors sell their products. Through hypothesising, they suggest what a situation might be if one buys the product being advertised. Conditional structures help hypothesis thought in the sentence. *“Even if you do not afford to buy, I will still give you to taste”* Here the ambulant vendor hypothesizes that he is not only out to sell but also out to help people. This communicates the idea of charity in the minds of commuters. The ambulant bus vendor says *“if you do not believe in the stick, it will not work for you”*. This conditional statement calls on the commuters to believe and have faith in what he says. This use of conditional structures helps the vendor in question to build confidence on the minds of his buyers towards his products. Moreover, he calls on the commuters to buy his product and taste it. He asserts that if the product does not help them, they should challenge him the next time they meet on the bus. The use of “if” in the structure hypothesises the thoughts of the vendor.

5.1.4 Use of Pidgin English

Pidgin English is the language of business in formal and informal settings in most settings in Cameroon. It bridges the educational or linguistic gap that might exist between people especially when they meet for the first time because it will not be easy to ascertain the educational or linguistic background of all, especially in the market and public spaces like inter-urban buses where people meet from different walks of life and with diverse educational backgrounds. Pidgin English, therefore, becomes the easiest way or means of communication.

Pidgin English version: *“Some man dey inside this motor you want shidon inside this motor, ma waist, ma waist, you want stand, ma waist ma waist. If*

you get waist pain, fungi inside belle, when you reach for house, warm na water, mix panacea inside drink morning and evening, for three weeks you, don well."

Our English language translation: *Is there anyone inside this car with waist pain issues? Do you have difficulties in standing because of waist pain? if you are suffering from waist pain or fungi infection in your stomach. When you reach home, take warm water and mix it with panacea and drink, morning, and evening. Do this for three weeks and you will get well.*

To better explain how panacea can work, how to use panacea, and the potency of panacea, the vendor makes use of Pidgin English. this makes it easier for the educated and the under-educated and even commuters who are not educated to easily understand and subsequently buy African panacea as they are thought about its function and use thanks to pidgin English.

5.2 The Marketing Communication Strategies of Ambulant Bus Vendors

This section attempts to address the nature and types of marketing communication strategies employed by ambulant bus vendors. To this end, several strategies were unveiled.

5.2.1 Use of Songs

The influence of music on marketing is both obvious and discreet. It has been proven that designing specific lyrical music to develop an appropriate brand image is possible, and music selection can provide customers with an increased understanding of a product (Brodsky, 2011). The relational aspects of music can help a brand influence the attitude and mood of customers. Music can both consciously and unconsciously play a large part in positioning strategy, memory, structure, targeting, authority establishment, branding and brand identity, and differentiation. It also can provide entertainment in advertisements, help gain the attention of buyers, and can even affect the mood of the buyers and the buyers' willingness to make a purchase. Ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda make use of songs, predominantly religious songs. They select

religious songs that encourage interactivity and general animation on the bus. At times the songs are so interesting that even those who are sleeping in the car usually have their sleep interrupted by the singing and are compelled to join in the general mood on the bus. A good example of the songs they use is seen below.

Pidgin English version: *“Hold your neighbour tellam say, a love you well well, God bless your soul ooh, a love you well well”*

Our English language translation: *Touch your neighbour and tell him or her that I love you so much. If you do this, God will bless your soul.*

From the example above, the ambulant bus vendor compels commuters to touch their neighbours on the bus while singing a religious song. The message in the song is about love for God and man. The fact that the vendor is meeting commuters obviously for the first time; shows interest in their spiritual wellbeing and how to make God love them the more. Just the fact that they use these religious songs makes the relationship grow fast and the bonding between the vendor and the commuters matures early to the extent that commuters gladly listen to the message the ambulant vendor dishes out to them, hence a soft ground for his marketing. Here, they use religious songs to establish a kind of emotional connectivity with the audience and also as an attention grabber.

5.2.2 Prayers

In its deeper sense, prayer has been grasped as a form of communication with the divine, cosmic, or some deity that gives rise to a spiritual relationship Vasconcelos (2010). In addition, the simple act of praying presupposes that people recognize the need for some form of transcendent help, cooperation, or spiritual linkage with God. The fear of getting involved in a car accident each time one travels has remained a major concern for many commuters who travel in and out of Bamenda. Many passengers often pray at individual levels and at times in groups at the travel agency or inside the car just before take-off. They commit the journey to the hands of a superior being, God, and call for his protection. This aspect has been well utilized by ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda.

As soon as they enter the bus at take-off, either in the morning or evening, they always call on God to protect the commuters, the car, the driver, and throughout the journey till the final destination. This makes the commuters see the vendors as one who cares about their wellbeing and safety. This amounts to confidence-building and trust in a man who supposedly has the fear of the lord. This, therefore, has a psychologically positive effect on the commuters who are prospective buyers of his product in the sense that a believer does not tell lies. Commuters are therefore motivated to listen and to purchase the products with the hope that if he deceives them, the wrath of the same God he has evoked in prayers will descend upon him.

5.2.3 Announcements or Pieces of Advice

The use of announcements by ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda as a marketing strategy stands out clearly. In a bid to arrest the attention of commuters, ambulant bus vendors pose as parents who from time-to-time checks on the security of their children. They share general information on checkpoints, security alerts, stop points for the bus, and the importance of wearing a face mask.

Pidgin English version: *“Wuna welcome to Moghamo express. Before we go reach for town, we still get three major controls. Even though we noo go deycomotoutside. Wear your face mask, e be very important pass your ID card. You enter okada, na facemask, you take na taxi, na face mask them di askam. Prevention is better than cure.”*

Our English language translation: *You are welcome to MoghamoExpress. We still have to pass through three checkpoints before we reach the town. Even though we shall not have to leave the car, everyone needs to wear their facemasks because it is more important than your identity cards. Make sure you have your face mask on as you board a bike or a taxi because it is compulsory to have it anywhere in town. Prevention is better than cure!*

From the above excerpt, the ambulant bus vendor announces as well as gives out security measures and warns commuters about checkpoints and

the intensification of wearing a face mask in Bamenda. This is in a bus bound for Bamenda. Commuters coming to Bamenda for the first time or returning to Bamenda are informed of the new dispensation and shall escape falling victim, to the new security and health dispensations in the region. This builds trust between the vendor and the commuters and the moment he introduces his products to the commuters, they easily listen and believe in its potency and ingredients and the powers the products possess, hence ending up buying the products. The use of announcements and pieces of advice usually serves as a precursor to the advertisement or marketing of their products. Usually, it is well-timed, just when commuters are approaching a checkpoint. This evokes a kind of sympathy even for those who do not believe instantly in their products to at least buy as compensation for the service (useful information) given them.

5.2.4 Use of Testimonies

The use of testimony was unveiled as one of the communication strategies employed by marketers trying to build a congruent image between the brand and the consumer. Ambulant bus vendors make use of this by asking commuters on the bus if there is anyone on board who has used the product being advertised before. Most times, there is at least someone who says yes. The moment the person says he or she has used the product before, the ambulant bus vendor proceeds by asking the person who testifies to say how it worked for him or her.

Pidgin English version: *“Na who dey for inside motor weh e don use African panacea before?”*

Me! (First person)

Me! (Second person)

Me! (Third person)

E work well well nor?

Yes! (first person)

Yes! (second person)

Yes! e don cure ma gastric.”

Our English language translation: *Who is inside this car who has used African Panacea before?*

Me! (First person)

Me! (Second person)

Me! (Third person)

Did it work very well?

Yes! (First person)

Yes! (Second person)

Our English language translation: *Yes! it has cured my gastritis.*

From the above example, the ambulant bus vendor in trying to find an endorser for his product African Panacea, asks if there is anyone on the bus who has used it before. Once someone owns up, he asks the person to say how effective the product was in solving the problem. This makes the other commuters on the bus cultivate more confidence in the product being advertised thereby convincing many more about the potency of the product and subsequently they also buy it.

5.2.5 Sex Sell

Belch et al (1990) define Sexual advertising or selling via sex as the use of sex appeal or innuendo in advertising to help sell a particular product or service. Ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda have employed this method of advertising by including sex to whatever product or item they advertise or sell on the bus as seen in the excerpts below.

Pidgin English version: *“Chop this queen stick, go invite madam or your massah say wuna get match.”*

Our English language translation: *Eat this Queen stick then invite your spouse for a love-making encounter.*

Pidgin English version: *“You call madam for retour match that mean say weti? Cameroon Vs Egypt, Nation Cup finals.”*

Our English language translation: *Invite your wife for a love-making encounter. It will be competitive like a Nation's Cup football final match between Cameroon and Egypt.*

Pidgin English version: *"Madam deyholam like tuner for radio, deytunam like radio from one frequency to another? e fall like bobolo. Madam tune for this side, e fall like miyondo.*

Our English language translation: *Your wife holds your penis like the tuner of an FM radio. She tunes it like a radio from one frequency to another. Because it can't erect, it falls back like "bobolo". Your wife tunes it again and it drops like "myondo"?*

Pidgin English version: *"Some of wunadey marry woman give landlord weynobinafine tin."*

Our English language translation: *Some of you marry a woman and she flirts with the landlord which is not a good thing.*

Pidgin English version: *"Some of wunadey marry woman today for night, one goal you no fi go, no way, you don tire."*

Our English language translation: *Some of you marry a wife and at night you can't make love to her even once, even when you try once, you cannot do a second round because you are tired.*

These five accepts above link up to the various products advertised to commuters to contemporary issues about sex. They all touch on sexual weakness, poor sex performance, low libido, and fertility issues. Given that be it, man or woman, many people dread the various ailments related to sex, ambulant bus vendors capitalize on these aspects of life by either selling majority of their products that relates to sex or by using sex as a gateway to sell their products.

5.2.6 Product Universality

Another marketing communication strategy employed by ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda is that of product universality. That is no product

treats exclusively one illness but rather has more than one. By this, these vendors always name more than one ailment that a product can cure. This makes their products have some relevance to almost every commuter since most illnesses are related to one another. Although there is product universality, the strategy used is always that of complimentary, thereby leading to the purchase of multiple products. Most times, a commuter who originally intended to buy one product ends up with three or five.

Table 2: Number of ailments treated by the different products

| S/N | PRODUCT | NUMBER OF AILMENTS TO TREAT |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Queen Stick | 10 |
| 2 | Skin Care Solution | 8 |
| 3 | African Panacea | 12 |
| 4 | Dental Pro | 5 |
| 5 | Skin Care Lotion | 9 |
| 6 | King Seed | 3 |

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, 2022

Table two above shows that ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda highly employ product universality as a market communication strategy. According to their claims, most of their products cure more than one ailment. From the above table, Queen Stick is supposed to cure or provide solutions to 10 ailments, Skin Care solution cures 8 ailments, African panacea,12, Dental Pro 5, Skin care lotion 9, and King Seed 3. Commuters are easily convinced to buy these products because they are presented to have the power to cure more than one ailment, which easily convinces commuters to go for these products. This is because they see the products as apparently economical as buying one will surely save money as it can cure other diseases.

5.2.7 Biblical Allusions

In a bid to woo commuters into buying their products, ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda largely make use of biblical allusion. Just like they use prayers in softening the ground before advertising their products, these vendors use the allusion to the Bible just to convince commuters to buy their products as seen in the examples below.

Pidgin English version: *“Hand strong like hand for Goliath or cutlass.”*

Our English language version: *Your hand is hard like that of Goliath or a cutlass.*

Pidgin English version: *“If you look inside Ezekiel 47:12, edey talk say, plant them go grow for corner water, we go use the fruit for food, leave and root as medicine”*

Our English language version: *If you read Ezekiel 47:12. It reads that, plants will grow by the river banks, and we will use the fruits as food, leaves, and roots as medicine.*

The transcripts above show how the vendor selling skin care lotion compares the strength of the lotion to one that can soften even the hardened hands like that of Goliath in the Bible. The second example justifies summarily, the need for all to return to medicinal plants like those they sell because the Bible says so. Given that messages from the Bible are largely unquestionable to many Christians, such allusions by these vendors easily convince the commuters to buy their products.

5.2.8 Self Certification

One of the marketing communication strategies used by ambulant bus vendors in Bamenda remains the titles they attribute to themselves. Given that almost all of the bus vendors in Bamenda sell one or two products that are seen to cure one or more ailments, most of the ambulant bus vendors give attributes to themselves as doctors. Given that a doctor traditionally is somebody who provides final solutions to health issues,

these bus vendors regard themselves as doctors. By this, many commuters, especially the gullible ones easily get convinced and buy their products.

Pidgin English version: *“Ma name na Doctor Princely.”*

Our English language version: *My name is doctor Princely.*

Pidgin English version: *“Doctor talk say when you travel, salute your nebo.”*

Our English language version: *The doctor says, when you are travelling, always greet your neighbour.*

Pidgin English version: *“A beg make we clap for doctor.”*

Our English language version: *Please let’s clap for the doctor.*

6. Findings

Findings reveal that one of the marketing communication strategies used by ambulant bus vendors is the various modes of speech delivery. Most vendors read directly from leaflets, thereby transferring the messages to commuters directly without any refraction in content as a result of translation. Most vendors also make use of the impromptu, manuscript, and extemporaneous modes of speech delivery. These enhance credibility and give the vendors authority and mastery over what they are selling. This extradites doubts in the minds of commuters and serves as a catalyst or motivation to procure their products.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of Pidgin English and the marketing communication strategies of Ambulant Bus Vendors in Bamenda ties very much with the Diffusion of Innovation as propounded by E.M. Rogers in 1962. The theory explains how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system. The result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a

social system, adopt new ideas, behaviours, or products. Adoption means that a person does something different than what they had previously done. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible. Adoption of new ideas, behaviours, or products does not happen simultaneously in a social system; rather it is a process whereby some people are more apt to adopt the innovation than others. Just like what happens on the bus between the vendors and commuters, some people buy products because others have used them before and testify on the bus or just because they identify with the product easily.

Some people buy the first day they are introduced to the product; some commuters only buy because others have talked about the efficacy of the products while others will only buy later. Rogers (1962) says that there are four steps in promoting an innovation: Innovators - These are people who want to be the first to try the innovation. Early Adopters-Those people who represent opinion leaders. They enjoy leadership roles and embrace change opportunities. Early Majority – Those who adopt new ideas before the average person. Late Majority - Those people are skeptical of change, and will only adopt an innovation after it has been tried by the majority. Laggards - These people are bound by tradition and very conservative. They are very skeptical of change and are the hardest group to bring on board. The study recommends that ambulant bus vendors should employ various communicative strategies in the language(s) that the commuters understand best.

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