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Lexico-Semiotic Analysis of Pentecostal Social Media Signage in Livingstone, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a comprehensive lexico-semiotic analysis of the social media signage employed by selected Pentecostal churches in Livingstone, Zambia. A qualitative descriptive design was adopted, utilizing a dual theoretical framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (VSS). Data from Instagram, Facebook, and church websites were scrutinized to decode the relationship between word choice, visual elements, and communicative purpose. The findings reveal a sophisticated, multimodal strategy. Lexical choices draw from semantic fields of faith, prosperity, and divine intervention, while visual grammar through images, color, layout, and gesture works synergistically with text to construct persuasive messages. Furthermore, the analysis uncovers strategic code-mixing and platform-specific adaptations that enhance cultural resonance and digital virality. The study demonstrates how these churches strategically blend traditional religious rhetoric with digital affordances to shape identity, foster community, and engage in digital evangelism. By applying an integrated SFG-VSS lens, this research provides granular insights into the mechanics of meaning-making in digital religious advertising. It contributes significantly to understanding religious communication in the digital age, bridges theoretical gaps in multimodal discourse analysis within African contexts, and offers practical, evidence-based insights for media ministries seeking to optimize their digital engagement. Ultimately, the study argues that Pentecostal digital signage constitutes a distinct communicative genre, strate-

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gically engineered to navigate the affordances of social media platforms and effectively engage contemporary audiences.

Keywords: Pentecostal Churches; Social Media Signage; Lexico-Semiotic Analysis; Systemic Functional Grammar and Visual Grammar; Multimodal Discourse; Livingstone

1. Introduction

In the contemporary religious landscape, Pentecostal churches employ diverse linguistic and multimodal forms to convey their messages [1]. Social media signage has become a prevalent and potent tool for churches in urban centers like Livingstone, Zambia. Designed for virality and engagement, these digital signages aim to capture attention, reinforce doctrine, and foster a sense of virtual community [2]. However, a significant gap exists in the scholarly literature concerning the specific linguistic and semiotic strategies within this digital religious discourse, particularly at the micro-level of analysis in African Pentecostalism [3]. While broader studies on religion and media exist, few drill down into the precise lexico-semiotic mechanics, the interplay of specific word choices, visual composition, and symbolic elements that make this digital communication effective within its sociocultural context.

Livingstone presents a compelling context due to its vibrant religious landscape and the prominent, dynamic presence of Pentecostalism. Churches leverage social media as a primary channel to communicate, reinforce doctrine, and reach diverse, often youthful audiences [4]. This article, therefore, delves into the lexico-semiotic techniques in their social media signage, examining how language and visual elements are strategically deployed to convey complex religious messages, construct a charismatic identity, and engage modern audiences. Pentecostal digital signage is not merely a translation of offline rhetoric online but a distinct genre shaped by the affordances and constraints of social media platforms.

Globally, studies on signage often focus on commercial advertising, with religious advertisements as a distinct genre being relatively underexplored, especially in digital formats [3]. In Zambia, existing research on religious signage has centered on traditional physical advertisements, analyzed through semiotic or sociological lenses, leaving a considerable gap in the systematic exploration of dynamic, interactive digital platforms [4]. This study addresses this gap by conducting a rigorous lexico-semiotic analysis. It seeks to elucidate how multimodal resources are systematically orchestrated for identity construction, community fostering, and persuasive communication in digital religious advertising. The study also explores the negotiation between global Pentecostal tropes and local Zambian cultural semiotics, contributing to discussions on globalization in digital religious practice [5].

This investigation carries significant implications. It illuminates the evolving, technologically-mediated communication strategies of religious institutions in the digital age. For academia, it contributes robustly to the intersecting fields of digital religion, sociolinguistics, multimodal discourse analysis, and African media studies. For practitioners, including pastors, communication directors, and media ministry teams, it offers reflective, evidence-based insights for crafting more effective, culturally resonant, and theologically coherent digital engagement strategies [6].

2. Literature Review

The academic exploration of religious discourse and signage provides a foundational backdrop. Scholars have approached this field from various angles, yet a focused lexico-semiotic analysis of Pentecostal digital signage, particularly in Southern Africa, remains nascent.

Internationally, research has established the importance of multimodality in contemporary communication. Kress and van Leeuwen [7] fundamentally argued that all communication is inherently multimodal, integrating different semiotic resources. In religious contexts, this translates to studies analyzing how spaces, artifacts, and rituals communicate meaning [8]. However, the application of these principles to the fast-paced, curated world of social media content created by religious institutions is a more recent development.

In Nigeria, a hub for African Pentecostal scholarship, studies have analyzed speech acts in church billboard mes-

sages[9] and the linguistic landscape of religious signboards, exploring themes of identity and glocalization[10]. Another scholar conducted a multimodal discourse analysis of church signboards, highlighting the integration of textual and visual modes, a foundational study for this research[11]. A similar study explored the semiotic landscapes of religious signboards, emphasizing their role in identity construction and urban space negotiation[12]. While thematically related, these studies often focus on static, physical boards or broader linguistic landscapes, differing from the present focus on curated, interactive, and ephemeral social media content.

Research on African Pentecostalism extensively highlights its adaptive nature, a glocalization process where global Pentecostal rhetoric is inflected with local cultural sensibilities[10, 13]. This movement is also characterized doctrinally by a pronounced emphasis on the prosperity gospel, divine healing, and immediate spiritual encounters, often reflected in a potent lexicon of "breakthrough," "miracle," "deliverance," and "anointing"[3, 7, 14]. The use of social media by African Pentecostal churches has been examined for its role in community formation, the extension of pastoral authority, and the creation of digital sacred spaces[15]. A growing body of work, such as that by Musonda and Siame[16], examines brands and the specific linguistic strategies employed on social media in terms of content that attracts the readers and viewers. However, a scarcity of studies specifically focuses on the granular lexico-semiotic construction of their social media signage, the precise choice of words in tandem with specific images, colors, and layouts. Studies like Musoni et al.[17] on visual narratives in Zimbabwean churches underscore the importance of visual artefacts as theological statements, a perspective critically integrated into this analysis.

Within the Zambian context, literature directly related to this study's focus is limited but provides important grounding. A scholar investigated the social structuring of language and mobility of semiotic resources broadly within Zambian linguistic landscapes[4], while Robertson[5] analyzed semiotic codes in traditional healer signage, offering a comparative perspective on spiritual advertising. Recent work by Jimaima[4] begins to touch on signage in Zambia, discussing the broader trends but not undertaking detailed discourse analysis, and not based on religious circles, but on the social structuring of language and mobility of semiotic resources. Thus, this study directly enriches the sociolinguistic and multimodal literature in Zambia by providing empirically grounded, micro-analytical insights into the lexico-semiotic strategies of Pentecostal churches on the digital frontier. It builds on and dialogues with the aforementioned studies while carving a distinct niche through its dedicated focus on the integrated verbal-visual grammar of social media signage.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a dual theoretical framework integrating Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (VSS). This combined approach provides a robust, complementary framework for analyzing the interplay and synergy of linguistic and visual meaning-making in social media signage, treating text and image as interconnected rather than separate components.

3.1. Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

SFG views language not as a set of rules but as a dynamic resource for making meaning within specific social and cultural contexts. It posits that language simultaneously serves three meta-functions: the ideational (construing human experience and reality), the interpersonal (enacting social relationships and attitudes), and the textual (organizing discourse into coherent and contextually relevant messages)[18]. In the context of Pentecostal social media signage, the ideational function is realized through lexical choices and processes that portray spiritual warfare, divine intervention, and blessed lived experiences. The interpersonal function is crucial for constructing a specific relationship with the viewer, often one of authority, invitation, or shared identity, frequently realized through imperatives, modal verbs, and evaluative language designed to prompt belief or action, such as "Come and receive your miracle". The textual function is evident in how captions, hashtags, and slogans are structured to create cohesive, platform-appropriate messages that stand out in a crowded digital feed. Furthermore, SFG's emphasis on register, the configuration of field (topic), tenor (relationships), and mode (channel), is crucial for analyzing how Pentecostal discourse adapts to different social media platforms such as, the conversational tenor of Instagram vs.

the more formal tenor of a website banner, diverse audiences such as, members versus seekers, and varied communicative purposes like invitation versus teaching [19].

3.2. Visual Social Semiotics (VSS)

Complementing SFG, VSS extends the principles of semiosis to visual communication, arguing that systemic resources that realize metafunctions also organize images, layout, color, typography, and gesture [7]. It proposes three corresponding functions: the representational (depicting participants, actions, and conceptual realities), the interactive (engaging the viewer through gaze, angle, and modality), and the compositional (arranging elements through salience, framing, and information value to create a coherent whole). This study incorporates VSS to analyze how visual elements such as worship scenes (representational narrative), direct gazes or inviting gestures from pastors (interactive demand), and the salience given to a church logo versus a Bible verse (compositional choice) contribute to the overall persuasive and identity-forming power of the signage. This lens allows for the systematic analysis of semiotic resources like facial expressions of joy or intensity, symbolic gestures (raised hands, anointing), iconic symbols (dove, fire, crown), culturally resonant color schemes (e.g., the significance of white for purity or green for growth), and the strategic use of church branding, all of which are integral to the signage's communicative efficacy.

3.3. Multimodal Integration

SFG and VSS together facilitate a truly integrated multimodal analysis, which is essential for digital media where linguistic and visual grammars interact dynamically and inseparably. In social media signage, the image may amplify, elaborate on, exemplify, or sometimes even subtly contradict the textual message [20]. This integrated framework allowed the researchers to examine, for instance, how a caption's imperative verb and high modality in "God **will** transform your life tonight!" works interpersonally to express certainty and command, alongside an image's interactive offer (a peaceful scene of prayer) and compositional salience of a smiling face, to create a synergistic message of promised transformation delivered in a welcoming context. The framework also helps interrogate the concept of "digital affordances," how the technological features of platforms (like hashtags, filters, story formats) are appropriated as semiotic resources themselves, integrated into the overall lexico-semiotic design to enhance reach, interactivity, and communal identity [21].

4. Methodology

A qualitative descriptive research design was employed to provide a rich, detailed, and nuanced portrayal of the phenomenon [22]. This design is appropriate for uncovering the meanings, patterns, and strategies embedded within the signage without prior rigid hypotheses [23, 24]. Livingstone was purposively selected as the research site due to its status as a major urban and tourist center with a vibrant, competitive Pentecostal presence and the observed active, strategic use of social media by churches to attract both locals and visitors.

During data collection, the study employed purposive sampling. A purposive sampling strategy was used at two levels [25]. First, a purposive sample of five prominent Pentecostal churches in Livingstone was selected. The criteria for selection included: (a) having a visible, active presence on at least two major social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), (b) representing a mix of large transnational assemblies such as Bread of Life Church International and influential indigenous ministries like Dominion Faith Ministries, and (c) demonstrating a consistent output of promotional signage. This mix ensured the data captured a range of Pentecostal expressions from the globally connected to the locally rooted. From these churches, approximately 200 social media posts (primarily from Instagram and Facebook timelines and stories) and website banner images were collected over three months (January–March 2025) to capture thematic variety across events like regular services, crusades, and prosperity-themed programs.

To triangulate the data and understand the production and reception contexts, qualitative interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were held with five key informants (including two senior pastors and three social media managers/content creators) to understand the rationale, theological considerations, and strategic intentions behind content creation. Furthermore, two focus group discussions (FGDs), each with 6–8 regular church members and active social media followers, were conducted to gather insights into audience reception, interpretation, and the perceived

effectiveness of the signage[26]. All interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized.

Thematic and iterative data analyses were employed[27]. Thematic and iterative analysis was conducted using a hybrid approach. First, a comprehensive coding scheme was developed deductively based on the SFG and VSS frameworks. For linguistic analysis, codes included: Lexical Fields (such as Faith/Providence, Prosperity/Breakthrough, Healing/Deliverance), Process Types (Material, Relational, Verbal), Modality (certainty, obligation), and Interpersonal Features (imperatives, interrogatives). For visual analysis, codes included: Representational Meaning (Narrative/Conceptual, Actors, Symbols), Interactive Meaning (Contact, Social Distance, Modality/Color Saturation), and Compositional Meaning (Salience, Framing, Information Value). This scheme was applied to the dataset using qualitative data analysis software[28]. Coding was performed independently by the primary author, with a randomly selected subset (20% of the posts) independently coded by the second author to ensure reliability and consistency. An inter-coder agreement of 88% was achieved, with all discrepancies discussed and resolved through consensus, leading to minor refinements of the coding definitions. The analysis then focused on synthesizing how specific linguistic and visual choices worked synergistically to realize the meta-functions within the Pentecostal communicative context, moving from description to interpretation.

5. Results and Discussion

The integrated SFG-VSS analysis revealed a sophisticated, intentional orchestration of semiotic resources across nine prominent types of social media signage. The findings are presented below, with each subsection detailing the lexico-semiotic strategies employed.

5.1. Instagram Posts

Instagram's visual-centric and ephemeral nature is leveraged by churches to create immersive, emotionally resonant experiences. A representative post in **Figure 1** featured a vibrant, high-energy worship scene with the caption "*Experience the tangible power of worship this Sunday! Are you ready for a shift?* #LivingstoneRevival*".



Figure 1. Instagram post depicting a vibrant worship service.

The image in **Figure 1** shows congregants with raised hands and expressive faces, engaged in prayer or singing. Lexically, the phrase "tangible power" ideationally construes the Holy Spirit as a palpable force, while the interrogative "Are you ready for a shift?" functions interpersonally to directly engage the viewer's personal spiritual readiness. Visually (**Figure 1**), the representational narrative is one of collective, ecstatic participation, showing congregants with raised hands, eyes closed, and expressive faces depicting a state of spiritual absorption. Crucially, the interactive modality is an "offer": The participants are not looking at the camera but are caught in the act of worship. This invites the viewer as a witness to an authentic, desirable, and emotionally charged event, creating a sense of voyeuristic aspiration[29]. Compositionally, the salience is given to the crowd rather than any individual, emphasized by a slightly low angle, which ideationally reinforces the value of communal experience and interpersonally builds a sense of scale and movement belonging.

5.2. Captions

Captions across platforms utilize concise, impactful, and often imperative language. A quintessential example from a Facebook post reads:

> ✸ *Breakthrough Sunday!* ✸ *Join us for a powerful service where chains are broken and yokes destroyed. Expect miracles! #Breakthrough #Faith #Livingstone*.

Lexically, "powerful," "chains are broken," "yokes destroyed," and "miracles" belong squarely to the Pentecostal semantic field of supernatural intervention and liberation,

fulfilling an ideational function. The imperatives "Join us" and "Expect" function interpersonally as direct calls to action and attitude shaping [29]. The star emojis (🌟) are not merely decorative; they function as visual-semiotic resources. Compositionally integrated with the text, they act as abstract symbols representing divine light, favor, and blessing, thereby visually amplifying the thematic message of hope and supernatural intervention [30]. This exemplifies the seamless blending of digital vernacular (emojis) with traditional religious rhetoric.

5.3. Slogans and Taglines

Slogans are concise, memorable, and impactful phrases that encapsulate the core messages, values, and identity of a church. They are designed for rapid recall and repetition. Lexically, slogans show a marked preference for vibrant, positively connotated, and emotionally charged vocabulary like "blessed," "empowered," and "transformed" to foster spiritual upliftment and a sense of positive self-identity among adherents [31]. Semantically, the meanings often extend far beyond the literal.

Slogans like "Empowered to Prosper" or "From Glory to Glory" are recurrent motifs. They use positively connotated, abstract vocabulary with high interpersonal appeal. Semantically, "empowered" ideationally implies an external divine agency as the source of ability. From an SFG perspective, "Empowered to Prosper" can be analyzed as a relational identifying process, positioning the believer in a state of empowerment bestowed by God (the Token) for prosperity (the Value). This linguistic construction aligns perfectly with VSS analysis of accompanying logos or graphics, which often feature upward trajectories such as a rising dove, ascending line graphs, or sun rays breaking through clouds. These visual motifs symbolize spiritual and material ascent and growth, compositionally providing a visual metaphor that reinforces and concretizes the slogan's abstract promise [7, 12, 20].

Here is another biblically rooted slogan: "Faith that Moves Mountains."

The above slogan employs a powerful metaphor drawn directly from biblical scripture (Matthew 17:20) to convey the immense power of faith in overcoming seemingly insurmountable life obstacles. Lexically, "mountains" metaphorically represents problems (financial, health-related, marital), and "moves" signifies their complete removal. This metaphorical mapping serves to inspire and motivate the audience by framing faith not as a passive belief but as an active, world-altering force [31].

5.4. Hashtags

Hashtags function as more than just metadata for categorization; they are potent semantic tools that foster online communities and movements. They often condense complex theological ideas into a single, shareable lexical unit. Here are some examples of typical Pentecostal hashtags collected during the study:

#HolySpiritRevival#, #BreakthroughNight#, and *#ZambiaForChrist*

The above hashtags are compound lexical units packing significant theological and communal weight. They function textually as hyperlinks, organizing posts into wider thematic and participatory discourses [25]. Interpersonally, they signal in-group charismatic identity and summon a like-minded community. Crucially, they act as visual-semiotic markers in the digital landscape. Their consistent formatting (often in a bold blue link), strategic placement (at the end of a caption or integrated within it), and repetition across posts enhance compositional salience. They become recognizable branded signifiers, aiding searchability and fostering a sense of ongoing, trackable digital movement or event, akin to a virtual banner [13, 32].

Below are other collected hashtags:

#LiveWorship and #LivingstoneForChrist#

The above hashtags not only categorize the posts but also connect them to broader thematic conversations and communities. This implies that they integrate lexical and visual elements to effectively communicate the church's dynamic message and encourage direct engagement [32].

5.5. Visual Symbols and Color Schemes

Visuals are integral to meaning-making, not merely decorative. A post in **Figure 2** featured a stylized, radiant dove descending against a gradient blue-and-white background, with the text "Experience the Holy Spirit's Power and Peace" as depicted below:



Figure 2. Social media graphic featuring a dove symbol with the text "Experience the Holy Spirit's Power".

The dove is a deeply conventional representational symbolic attribute for the Holy Spirit. The cool blue color scheme is semantically potent, culturally evoking tranquility, heaven, and divinity. Compositionally, the soft gradient creates a cohesive, serene aesthetic tone[33]. This deliberate integration of visual and linguistic modes ensures the message is both attention-grabbing and semantically rich, creating a more holistic and persuasive communicative experience. The visual grammar here works to concretize and emotionalize the abstract theological concepts named in the text "Power and Peace"[7]. The interplay is one of elaboration: the image provides a culturally accepted symbol for the entity whose "experience" the text commands.

5.6. Testimonies

Testimonies are a cornerstone of Pentecostal persuasion, and their digital presentation is highly crafted. A post in **Figure 3** contained text: "From sickness to health! I was bedridden for months, but after last week's Miracle Service, I am healed! Hallelujah!" accompanied by a photo of the testifier smiling broadly as shown below:

I want to share my testimony of how God performed a miracle in my life. A few months ago, I was diagnosed with a severe illness that left me bedridden and in constant pain. Despite visiting numerous doctors and trying various treatments, my condition didn't improve. I felt hopeless and desperate for a breakthrough.

One Sunday, I attended a Pentecostal church service where the pastor spoke about the power of faith and prayer. During the service, the pastor called for anyone in need of healing to come forward. With a heavy heart but a glimmer of hope, I went to the front and asked for prayer.

The pastor and the congregation laid hands on me and prayed fervently. As they prayed, I felt a warmth and peace wash over me. I knew in that moment that something extraordinary was happening. By the end of the prayer, I felt a significant change in my body.

In the following days, my condition continued to improve rapidly. What seemed impossible before was now a reality—I was healed! The doctors were astonished and couldn't explain my sudden recovery. I knew without a doubt that it was a miracle from God.

I am now completely healthy and stronger than ever. I give all the glory to God for His miraculous healing power. This experience has deepened my faith and trust in Him. If you are in need of a miracle, I encourage you to hold onto your faith and believe that God can do the impossible.

Figure 3. A testimony post with text describing a healing experience.

Lexically, it uses dramatic narrative, such as "bedridden," "healed," within a clear problem-solution structure[34]. Interpersonally, the first-person account builds credibility and personal connection, functioning as evidence. Visually, the "after" photo provides interactive proof. The testifier's direct gaze at the camera (an interactive demand) and genuine, joyful facial expression (a visual semiotic of happiness and health) enhance the interpersonal appeal. This combination fosters empathy and offers a visualizable outcome, selling not just an event but a promised transformation[35]. The composition often places the text as an overlay on the image, physically merging the verbal testimony with the visual evidence.

5.7. Event Announcements

Announcements for upcoming events, such as services or conferences, use highly deliberate lexical-semantic strategies to maximize attendance and set expectations. Announcements for special events use lexically marked terms such as

"Special Anointing Service", "Prophetic Encounter Night", and high-modality imperatives such as "Come and receive your portion", "Don't miss out!"

Consider this example announcement from a Pentecostal church in Livingstone, Zambia:

> *Join us this Sunday for a Special Healing Service. Come and receive your miracle. Service starts at 10 AM. Be there and be blessed!*

Modality is often absolute in announcements like "Your life will never be the same", expressing prophetic certainty and reducing interpersonal distance by presenting the promise as fact. Visually, accompanying images are carefully chosen. A "Healing Service" announcement might use a representational image of a serene altar with soft lighting, setting an expectation of sacred, peaceful intervention. In contrast, a "Youth Explosion" might use images of vibrant, diverse young people, compositionally arranged dynamically. The compositional use of bold, large fonts for practical details (time, venue) gives them informational salience, guiding the viewer from the emotional appeal to the practical call-to-action[34].

5.8. Digital Posters

Digital posters are complex, integrated multimodal texts designed for sharing. A poster in **Figure 4** for "Miracle Night" uses a headline with a lexically significant noun. The design of the poster includes luminous visuals and text inviting people to "Come and receive your breakthrough," as shown in the signage below:



Figure 4. Digital poster titled "Miracle Night".

The sub-text, "Come and receive your breakthrough: financial, marital, spiritual," ideationally lists domains of life and interpersonally personalizes the promise through the possessive "your". Compositionally, the visual design is critical. These posters frequently employ luminous colors (yellows, golds, whites) radiating from a central point, often a cross, a burst of light, or the pastor's figure. This representational symbolism of divine radiance and breakthrough visually reinforces the textual message of miraculous intervention. The layout is typically hierarchical, with the event title most salient, followed by the key speaker's image (often a medium close-up with a direct, demanding gaze), then the details, creating a clear reading path that moves from spiritual promise to human agency to practical information[7].

5.9. Billboard-Style Graphics and Code-mixing

While focusing on social media, churches often use graphics mimicking the authoritative scale of physical billboards in their online feeds. These graphics frequently engage in strategic code-mixing, blending English with local Zambian languages like Tonga or Nyanja, as shown in **Figure 5** below:



Figure 5. Billboard-style graphic promoting a "Sunday Worship" service.

A billboard-style graphic in **Figure 5** advertised "SUNDAY WORSHIP" Service. It used lexical items like Salvation, Miracle, and Deliverance, which carried deep connotations. It features key terms like "Salvation", "Miracle", and "Deliverance" in both English and a local language (Nyanja), in a large, bold format. Imperatives such as *Join Us!/Izuba lya Sunday: Ukuposa, Amapinduzi, Ukuboshwa. Tubingeleni!* function interpersonally. This is a deliberate sociolinguistic and semiotic choice[33]. Lexically, the English terms carry deep theological connotations from global Pentecostalism, while the local translation provides cultural inclusivity

and broader local reach, performing an interpersonal function of solidarity and accessibility. Visually, the large, bold typography and the simulated "public" scale of the digital billboard compositionally assert authority, permanence, and public presence in the digital sphere. The side-by-side placement of languages itself is a compositional metaphor for the church's glocal identity, both globally connected and locally embedded.

6. Conclusions

This study has systematically examined the lexico-semiotic methods in the social media signage of Pentecostal churches in Livingstone, Zambia. The integrated SFG-VSS analysis reveals a sophisticated, highly intentional use of both linguistic and visual resources tailored to the affordances of digital platforms. Lexical choices drawn from potent semantic fields of faith, divine intervention, and prosperity are strategically coupled with a deliberate visual grammar, utilizing imagery of ecstatic community, symbolic icons, culturally coded colors, and persuasive compositions to create powerful, unified multimodal messages. Furthermore, the strategic use of digital vernacular (hashtags, emojis), code-mixing for local resonance, and the adaptation of register to different platforms demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the digital audience. These methods effectively construct a distinct, attractive Pentecostal identity that is both spiritually powerful and contemporarily relevant, foster a sense of belonging in a digital community, and persuasively engage both existing adherents and potential converts.

The study's implications are significant and twofold. Theoretically, it robustly demonstrates the utility and necessity of combining SFG and Visual Social Semiotics for a holistic analysis of digital religious discourse. It moves beyond text- or image-centric analyses to show how meaning is manufactured in the interplay. It also contributes to filling a gap in the literature on African digital religion by providing a detailed, contextualized case study. Practically, it offers actionable insights for religious communicators and media ministry teams. It highlights how deliberate alignment of lexical choices with visual semiotics, mindful attention to platform-specific registers, and the strategic incorporation of local linguistic and cultural elements can significantly enhance digital engagement, evangelistic appeal, and community building. For future research, a comparative analysis with Pentecostal social media in other Zambian towns or neighboring countries would be valuable to identify regional variations. A longitudinal study tracking semiotic shifts in response to changing platform algorithms or societal trends is also recommended. Ultimately, this study underscores that in the digital age, spreading faith and building religious community rely fundamentally on the competent, strategic deployment of multimodal meaning-making resources.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, C.N. and P.S.; methodology, C.N. and P.S.; formal analysis, C.N.; investigation, C.N.; resources, P.S.; writing—original draft preparation, C.N.; writing—review and editing, P.S.; supervision, P.S. Both authors have agreed to publish the manuscript in this journal.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the research ethics. Kwame Nkrumah University has not yet instituted the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions concerning the social media posts and interview transcripts.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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