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Social Stereotypes and Pre-Wedding Photo-Discourse on Nairaland, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study examines social stereotypes in pre-wedding photo-discourse on Nairaland, using a social semiotic approach. It specifically explores how oversimplified conceptions and language interact to implicitly communicate attitudinal meaning in this discussion board. Findings show that semiotic signifying features such as metaphor, collocative synonyms, symbolism and address terms are significant to the construction of social stereotypes which particularly suggest expository, sarcastic, indifferent, condemnatory and justificatory attitudes. From these attitudes, not many of the commenters are against the idea of pre-wedding photo shoot, but very many of them seem to be saying that the phenomenon of pre-wedding photo does not deserve the degree of social attention devoted to it. The study therefore concludes that the concept of pre-wedding photo shoot in Nigerian online environment is deficient of positive reception, as commenters consider the practice as a waste of time, a forum for sexual pleasure, a channel of self-proclamation, and a means of religious evocation.

Keywords: Semiotics, socio-stereotype, language, pre-wedding photo, Nairaland

1. Introduction

The quest for meaning production has always occupied a central stage of every linguistic exploration. Interestingly, the horizon of meaning is so broad that it can never be limited to written and verbal languages alone, but extends to the non-linguistic aspects of language such as signs and visuals, which are traceable to the theory of semiotics. The ability to investigate meaning across linguistic and non-linguistic paradigms accounts for the appropriateness of the concept of semiotics in relation to implicit communicative significance of any discourse. In the words of Leeuwen (2005), the objects of semiotics are actions and artifacts we use to communicate. He cites the examples of music, dance, discourse, texts, gestures, dress, and even everyday objects.

Meanwhile, scholars have explored semiotics from different perspectives. A group of studies have concentrated on semiotic analysis of childhood bereavement (Baily, 2013): semiotic study of identity and deception (Donath, 1999): Some have paid attention to linguistic contents of nicknaming (Filani & Melefa, 2014): celebrity (Hou, 2013): academic writing (Hunston & Thompson, 2000, Hyland, 2002, Igbinovia, 2003). Scholarly works on semiotics in recent times have increased tremendously, most especially with advancement in social media. The cyberspace has provided opportunities for media practitioners to report their news and for online commenters to express their minds freely. The internet has become a major public space for expressing ideologies, feelings, attitudes and beliefs as people interact on social problems across the globe. There have also been a number of studies on semiotics in online discourse emanating from the field related to functional linguistics, such as critical discourse analysis, stylistics, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics (Taiwo, 2014, 2015, Oha, 1994, Donath, 1999, & Raheem, 2017). However, not many studies have been done in the area of pre-wedding photo on social media, with reference to semiotic approach.

2. Social Stereotypes and the Phenomenon of Pre-Wedding Photo

Stereotypes are conventional conceptions about somebody, something, or a group of people. They refer to the cognitive representations people hold about a social category, comprising beliefs and expectations about probable behaviours, features and traits (Dovidio, et al., 2010). The question of stereotype in any given society cannot be overemphasized, because stereotypes are oversimplified conceptions that can affect people's understanding of the society in one way or the other. Since such conceptions are not empirical, they are bound to be wrong. When preconceived beliefs are absolutely wrong, the consequence is severe. Beliefs or assumptions held prior to or during occasions of interaction come into and facilitate the communicative process. Beukeboom and Burgers (2019) assert that social stereotypes are generally considered to be highly functional for people as they allow them to quickly and efficiently make sense of their complex social environment. Depending on perspectives, scholars have variously likened stereotypes to 'beliefs', 'mutual contextual beliefs', 'shared contextual beliefs', 'shared assumption'. Odebunmi (2001) even claims that such scholars have described stereotypes under 'presupposition', 'entailment', 'inferencing', and 'cross cultural communication'. Interestingly, language plays a vital role in the construction of stereotypes. Though as old as man, language means different things to different people. Ultimately, language is a behavioural tool, used within a context of situation for the purpose of fulfilling

man's communicative needs within a speech community. Firth (1957) paints the picture of the nature of language in a perspective of its functional role to man in the following lines: Language is a way of dealing with people and things, a way of behaving and of making others behave. We could add many types of functions: wishing, blessing, boasting; the language of challenge and appeal or with intent to cold-shoulder, to belittle, to annoy or hurt, even to a declaration of enmity. The use of word to inhibit hostile acting, to delay, modify or to conceal one's intention reflects the dynamic functions of language in communication (Firth 1957).

In constructing stereotypes, language is used to express different attitudes. Such attitudes may include condemnation, revolution, sarcasm, irony, intense hostility, and affection, among others.

The phenomenon of pre-wedding photo has become a growing trend in Nigeria. This phenomenon is a process in which engaged couple decide to take professional photographs in a special location before their wedding day. The shoot is usually done a few months before the wedding and couples wear several fascinating outfits with intriguing poses. Some couples would even choose to wear their wedding outfits, which is an opportunity to appear in such outfits before the wedding day. The setting of the photograph depends largely on the choice of the couples. Some couples choose to take theirs in historical buildings and hotels with strong architectural designs, while some prefer tourist hot spots where they can do a destination photo shoot. In Nigeria for instance, couples would go as far as taking theirs to local settings such as villages and farmyards, perhaps as a way of reflecting their humble beginning.

Meanwhile, this phenomenon has generated a whole lot of reactions from readers on social media and this shows how engaging the online forum has been in recent years, particularly in terms of topical issues of national interest. According to Holt (2004:5) "effective online discussion, which can construct meaning is predicated on the transmission of 'competing viewpoints' through the unification of participants from different backgrounds and cultures." The Internet has offered increasing opportunities for its users to comment on any news or information posted online (Herring 2001). This idea according to Mentzer's (2003) has helped greatly in promoting civic discourse and proffering civic solutions through the sharing of similar and different views amongst participants. Among those views is pre-wedding photo discourse. Thus, the manner in which socio stereotypes are implicitly constructed in readers' comments on pre-wedding photo on *Nairaland* is the concern of the present study. Several studies have been carried out on social media discourse in Nigeria. Raheem (2017) studies identity re-construction aspect of social media discourse on *Nairaland*, using a sociolinguistic approach. Chilwa & Ajiboye (2014), Chilwa & Odebunmi (2016) and Idehen & Taiwo (2016) examine sub-genres of social media discourse on *Nairaland*, using a stance and engagement approach. Chilwa, Ifukor & Taiwo (2014) and Taiwo (2016) investigate trolling/job advertisement aspect of social media discourse on *Nairaland*, using a pragmatic approach. Lamidi (2016), Taiwo, Odebunmi & Adetunji (2016) study humour aspect of social media discourse on *Nairaland*, using a discourse analysis approach. However, none of these studies has adopted the method of semiotics in analysing social stereotypes as representations of the social world on *Nairaland* forum. Using a semiotic approach in analyzing pre-wedding photo-discourse on *Nairaland* will show how different segments of the Nigerian society that constitute the online community conceive and react to the trending discourse of pre-wedding photo in the country.

3. Implicature in Discourse

Implicit realisations are those utterances whose attitudinal assessments are implied or covertly encoded and are not expressed directly. According to Kasia (2014), utterances convey built-in attitudinal significance, known as implicit emotive standpoint. In other words, this can be described as 'what is meant but not said'. Hence, to understand implicit meanings to the fullest, one needs to extend interpretations beyond the surface level. Consequent upon this, we specifically put in mind that in communication, people care not only about the information (idea) they want to share with others, but also about their attitudes (emotional relation) to what they say, or who they say it to. Thus, for the purpose of our analysis in this section, we keep an eye on how language and oversimplified conceptions bind to communicate attitudinal meaning.

4. Review of Related Literature

In recent times, empirical studies on *Nairaland* forum have engaged issues that are central to all aspects of human existence, using different linguistic means. For example, Shoki & Oni (2008) examine the semiotics of computer-generated textual signs of selected Nigerian students on *Nairaland*. The paper claims that Nigerian students' Internet consumers solely use universal non-linguistic signs and iconic linguistic signs to produce messages in a cross cultural context, enabled by a synchronous system of communication called instant messaging. Using content analysis, the work analyses the linguistic and non-linguistic signs found in the data. Findings also show that textual signs include emotive icons, emotive texts and abronyms. The study concludes that signs are observed to have positive implications on effective computer-mediated discourse.

Chilwa, Ifukor & Taiwo (2010) investigate trolling in *Nairaland* using pragmatic approach. The study posits that trolls in *Nairaland* consciously engage in face attack and make themselves vulnerable to attacks from other participants. The paper argues that trolls initiate and sustain impoliteness online by employing different linguistic forms ranging from simple sentences to complex ones. It asserts that trolls' strategies vary from sarcasm, feigning ignorance, vulgarism, thread jacking to spam trolling, but their ultimate goal is to manipulate and control the cognition of participants by exploiting ethnicity and religion and using them to generate conflict and polarised views in the virtual discourse. The paper avers that trolling has become a regular feature of online discourse. It concludes that some online users often abandon the important matter of discussion to abuse and attack others. Lamidi (2015) examines conversational strategies in the *Nairaland* virtual community. The study adopts conversation analysis to account for the technological nature of the discourse. The paper argues that reference strategies, graphological strategies, strategic pictures and manipulation of

emoticons are the conversation strategies used in *Nairaland*. The study also argues that pictures and emoticons are strategies used to enhance the meaning communicated through a post. The paper claims further that there is a similitude of the emotional aspects of talk in real-world conversation. It posits that there is a high level of non-observance of face wants, which brings about impoliteness in *Nairaland*. The study submits that conversations in *Nairaland* virtual community have technologically based structures, which deploy referential and graphological strategies representing the physical presence of posters. The work concludes that adaptability of conversation in the virtual community entails structural modification of conversations in the real-world and the development of context-based strategies to suit its mode.

Lamidi (2016) investigates humour markers and their interpretations in the *Nairaland* virtual community. The study posits that humour patterns, pragmatic factors and humour markers are the processing elements in humour interpretation in the *Nairaland* virtual community. The work submits that online context alone is not enough to cue humour in computer mediated communication. The paper concludes that contextualising online humour in the real world situation is needed in the interpretation of conversations as humorous.

Raheem (2017) examines the (re)construction of identities on *Nairaland* online forum from a sociolinguistic point of view. Using data from the forum, the study explores the deployment of language to (re)construct identities, and discusses the implications of these linguistic practices on language spread and linguistic globalisation. Drawing insights from Communication Accommodation Theory, the study identifies and analyses patterns of identity, and highlights linguistic practices deployed to construct identities in intergroup interactions.

From the literature reviewed above, it is evident that studies on semiotics are impressive. The significance of the insights from the reviewed works cannot be overemphasized as far as our present study is concerned. The review substantiates the view of Van Leeuwen (2005:1) that "semiotics is a form of enquiry," which comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems in the context of specific social situations and practices. An assiduous linguistic, non-linguistic and multimodal enquiry into the articles reviewed depicts the ways semiotic resources are interrogated in the context of specific social situations. Meanwhile, noting the scantiness of studies devoted to the linguistic analysis of Internet discourses on pre-wedding photo-discourse, it is imperative that a thorough linguistic study is carried out. Thus, it is clear from the above brief survey that the present study seems to represent one major linguistic, non-linguistic and multimodal research in the area of pre-wedding photo-discourse, within the context of the Nigerian socio-political and economic realities. The studies reviewed above thereby provide the required theoretical and empirical background for the present study.

5. Data and Methodology

The study is anchored on a corpus of 4 postings along with their comments, consisting of 10,500 words, purposively drawn from the online archive of *Nairaland* forum (www.nairaland.com). Postings/threads selected specifically focused on threads relating to pre-wedding photo in Nigeria. The website is chosen because it has a wide coverage across the country and it is a widely viewed website. *Nairaland* is a website owned by a Nigerian (Seun Osewa). The website has many discussion sections, which include: politics, entertainment, romance, religion, jokes, culture, fashion, jobs/vacancies, education, crime and sports. The forum which started in 2005, has developed to become the most popular online community associated with Nigeria and Nigerians (Chiluwa, 2010). Taiwo (2016) even claims that *Nairaland* is Nigeria's largest online forum and discussion portal. Presently, the website has 2,194,296 members, 4,784,812 topics, and about 6,746 page views per day. The threads of discussion were selected from this portal between January 2018 and November 2019. This period was chosen not only because it captured most recent discussions on pre-wedding photo in the portal, but also because there were a large volume of publications covering various aspects of pre-wedding photo. Data are analysed using Van Leeuwen's (2005) principles of social semiotics, with a particular emphasis on social stereotypes and implicit realisations. The theory is considered fit for the study because it is fundamental to the communicative function of linguistic constructs in specific socio-political and economic contexts.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

Nairaland Forum Welcome, Guest: Join Nairaland / LOGIN! / Trending / Recent / New Stats: 2,233,404 members, 4,887,990 topics. Date: Thursday, 25 April 2019 at 01:43 AM	
Com. 1	Shameless people!!! Both of you are cute; just make your beautiful pictures without being slutty. Happy married life.
Com. 2	By their pose you shall know them (What sex has joined together... ...let no other Dick put asunder...omoh d dick don enter oo.....chai my Vaseline don finish.....
Com. 3	Let no abstinence put asunder.
Com. 4	Bros, How far? You don't give am belle? cos na the koko be that ohh
Com. 5	All I see is soft porn.
Com. 6	Two idiots displaying their idiocy on social media. After fornicating several times what is the pride in this shameful marriage they are embarking on 18 Likes 2 Shares

Table 1: Thread A: A *Nairaland*er's Pre-wedding Photos - Queenstl - Romance – *Nairaland*: Thursday 25 April 2019

6.1. Metaphor as Stereotypic Signification of Promiscuousness

In the words of Halliday (1985:320), metaphor is “the variation in the use of words such that words have transferred meaning”. Yeibo (2011) claims that in most cases, metaphoric expressions are semantically odd and syntactically incongruent. As a result, readers need to think deeply before arriving at their true meaning. In Table 1 above, there is a preponderance deployment of metaphor of rottenness characteristic of sex and sexuality in contemporary times. In com. 1, the word ‘slutty’ suggests an offensive term for a woman thought to be sexually promiscuous. This metaphor is reinforced by the mockery expression ‘Shameless people!!!’, which is an implicit way of saying that the pre-wedding photo-exercise is devoted to matters of sexual intercourse. Similarly in com 2, ‘dick’ is an offensive term for the penis: the external male organ of copulation, used to transfer semen to the female. The metaphor in the context of usage presupposes a scenario satiated with sexual exploration.

In com 3, the metaphor of ‘abstinence’, which is polluted by the negator ‘no’, implicitly also suggests that the pre-wedding photo-exercise is a period of fun, in which the two parties involved come to know each other sexually. The metaphor of ‘porn’ in com. 5 as well indicates a symbolic representation of an exercise replete with sex and sexuality. The sexual image ‘fornicating’ in com. 6 connotes sexual intercourse between two consenting adults who are not married to each other. In the Biblical semiosphere, sexual intercourse between a man and woman who are not married, or any form of sexual behaviour is considered immoral. On the whole, there is an implicit metaphoric social stereotype of promiscuousness in the comments.

Nairaland Forum Welcome, Guest: Join Nairaland / LOGIN! / Trending / Recent / New Stats: 2,233,404 members, 4,887,990 topics. Date: Tuesday, 8 January 2019 at 12:15 PM	
Com. 7	So so tacky! Tasteless and trashy. Should keep that type of role playing in the bedroom. TMI Wonder if they have spent as much time preparing for the reality of marriage as much as time as they invested in dressing up for this shoot. Silly people everywhere.
Com. 8	Run for your life. There are stupid people everywhere. Not until pre-wedding is stop by bubu, people will not sit right. Nonsense of a thing
Com. 9	Some ppl just have corn cobs stuck up their ass sha. The photo is playful and childish; not a big deal. Stop being so boring, ppl! jeeez!
Com. 10	People these days are so engrossed with pre-wedding photoshoot while they fail to emotionally prepare for the post-wedding life.
Com. 11	Despite all these, one wonders why divorce rate is nothing in Nigeria of today, most of our parents didn't carry all these inanities or emptiness on their heads yet they have longer, more blissful and prosperous marriages than today's couple. Congratulations to them though. 5 Likes 1 Share
Com. 12	am still trying to wrap my head around the aim and objective of these pre wedding shots, is it that the intending couples don't take pictures together before. But the girl fresh. 3 Likes

Table 2: How on Earth is This a Pre-Wedding Photo Shoot (Pics) - Romance – Nairaland: Tuesday 8 January 2019

6.2. Collocative Synonyms as Stereotypic Signification of Time-wasting

Collocative meaning emerges from the coming together of words through common usage. These words are mutually interchangeable in all contexts. When a word that collocates with another word is able to carry the meaning of another independent word, especially that which can substitute for it in the context in which it occurs, we say such words are collocatively synonymous. In Table 2 above, collocative synonyms are widely deployed to encode users' impression of pre-wedding photo as a mere waste of time. For instance in com. 7, the adjectives *Tasteless* and *trashy* are collocatively synonymous. *Tasteless* is a negative personality adjective that suggests something that lacks flavor in aesthetic or social matters, while *trashy* is a conditional adjective which denotes worthlessness or useless thing to be discarded.

Likewise in Com. 8, *stupid* and *Nonsense* are negative personality adjectives used by the commenter to intensify this stereotype. Something *stupid* is irritatingly silly or time-wasting; it is something ridiculous and lacking in intelligence. On the other hand, *Nonsense* expresses meaningless language or behavior. In the same vein, the appearance adjectives *Playful* and *childish* as synonymously used in Com. 9 are quite belittling. *Playful* means to have fun, with no significance attached, while *childish* in the context of usage is to possess the characteristic of a child. To be precise, *childish* is something regarded as showing a lack of adult qualities such as emotional restraint, seriousness, or good sense. In Com. 11, the registers *inaneities* and *emptiness* are signifiers of senselessness in the pre-wedding photo. *Inanity* is a noun which depicts meaninglessness or senselessness: something that suggests a lack of understanding or intelligence. *Emptiness* on the other hand is a quantity adjective, which means something devoid of content. On the whole, the overall underbracing social stereotype from the comments is the one of time-wasting.

Nairaland Forum Welcome, Guest: Join Nairaland / LOGIN! / Trending / Recent / New Stats: 2,233,404 members, 4,887,990 topics. Date: Monday, 18 February 2019 at 2:30 PM	
Com. 13	na waiting make marriages no last again all dis notice me thing dey make <i>devil</i> add join person load them no go hear word since na Photoshop dey in vogue
Com. 14	Good prayer for the couple, especially with the pre wedding picture - spell we record these days which maybe comes with high divorce rate.
Com. 15	Our parents had no pre wedding pics and their marriage was really that of 'till death do us part'. 2 Likes 1 Share
Com. 16	that tru bro, 2 Likes 1 Share
Com. 17	This is just a way of exposing oneself to powers and principalities...
Com. 18	Beta beware of African magic and juju

Table 3: Thread C: The Hottest Pre-Wedding Photoshoot in Town (Pics) - Romance-Nairaland: 18 February 2019

6.3. Imagery as Stereotypic Representations of Supernatural Forces

Imagery is a set of mental pictures produced by the memory or imagination or conjured up by a stimulus. According to Eyoh (1997), quoted in Yeibo (2011), imagery is a mental picture created through words and the imaginative faculty, manifesting itself in various figures of speech. In Table 3 above, this trait manifests abundantly to instantiate affective meaning and further cement the belief in supernatural powers. There is an underlying belief that the pre-wedding photo is a way of exposing oneself to evil forces. For instance in Com. 13, the imagery of the 'devil' is a reflection of the commenter's belief in the supernatural. The imagery "devil" denotes a creature of hell which possesses an evil spirit. It is variously known as satan, Beelzebub, Mephistopheles, old nick and old scratch. In Yoruba worldview, it is associated with evil forces. A Yoruba adage says '*Bí isú ení bá funfun, àá fowó bòò jé*' (A successful person does not proclaim his fortune to the world to see).

In other words, pre-wedding photoshoot is a public proclamation of someone's fortune. In extending this stereotype, the magical symbolism "spell", deployed in Com. 14 explicates the reality and influence of magical powers. The Yoruba's belief is that 'spell' is induced by an incantation or formula. Also, 'Powers' and 'principalities' in Com. 17 as used in this context are spiritual authorities which further explain the belief in such forces. The rustic magical imagery reflects the geographical, physical or socio-cultural background of the commenters. To buttress this argument, the imagery of *African Magic* and *Juju* in Com. 18 further suggests the religious/metaphysical worldview of the commenter's African origins. 'Juju' is a charm believed by West Africans to have magical or supernatural powers. 'African magic' is a supposed supernatural power that makes impossible things possible or gives somebody control over the forces of nature. From this, it is believed that African society is fetish and can reverse someone's fortunes with magical powers.

Nairaland Forum Welcome, Guest: Join Nairaland / LOGIN! / Trending / Recent / New Stats: 2,233,404 members, 4,887,990 topics. Date: Wednesday, 20 March 2019 at 1:10 PM	
Com. 19	Wonderful. I see a matured couple. God bless your marriage. Lalasticlala 55 Likes
Com.20	Aww...Cute smilies, may ur home be fill with laughter and unmerited favor of Olodumare for ever Amen, congrats 76 Likes
Com.21	Congrats Your next marriage will be bigger than Dangote daughter wedding. If you believe say Amen
Com.22	Beautiful. May Allah SWT shower your home with abundant blessing. 7 Likes
Com.23	nice one may the All Sufficient one bless your marriage
Com.24	this week has d highest no of prewedding pinshare in NL, , , , they look good together. I pray the Helper helps the marriage remain intact forever. 19 Likes 1 Share

Table 4: Thread D: A Nairaland Pre-wedding Photo-Nairaland: 20 March 2019

6.4. Address Terms as Stereotypic Representation of Religious Evocation

Most commenters are of the opinion that the pre-wedding photoshoot is a forum to bless the couple divinely. In doing this, address terms are deployed. Address terms refer to names and titles such as honorifics and appellations, used in addressing something, someone or a group of people. It may be friendly, unfriendly or neutral: respectful, disrespectful or comradely. In Table 4 above, address terms are deployed to express religious evocation and enchantment. For instance, in Com. 20, the address term '*Olódùmarè*' is a symbolic representation of a supreme being who alone can grant unmerited

favour. In Yoruba cosmology, *Olódùmarè* is an index of “one with whom humans may enter into covenant or communion with, at any time and in any place; one who is supreme, superlatively great, incomparable and unsurpassable in majesty, excellent in attributes, stable, unchanging, constant, reliable” (Idowu, 1962:36). The Yoruba think of Him as one who possesses superlative greatness and fullness of all excellent attributes. By calling Him *Olódùmarè*, the Yoruba acknowledge Him to be unique in heaven and on earth (Idowu, 1962). Similarly in Com. 19, the address term ‘God’ is encoded to offer ejaculatory prayers. ‘God’ here is an index of a supreme being believed in monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity to be the all-powerful (omnipotence), all-knowing (omniscience) and all-present (omnipresence) creator of the universe.

Likewise, in Com.22, “Beautiful... May *Allah* SWT shower your home with abundant blessing,” the address term ‘*Allah*’ is an icon of blessing. In Islamic concept of religion, ‘*Allah*’ is a semiotic anchorage of the creator, judge and rewarder. In Com. 24, the address term ‘Helper’ is an iconic representation of Holy Spirit in Christian piety. This argument is well encoded in John 14:16: “And I will pray the father, and He shall give you another *Helper*, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). The ‘Helper,’ Jesus said would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13). The ‘Helper’ is always there to give special care in times of need. Meanwhile, Com. 21 seems to differ from other comments in this thread. This is because the address term deployed “*Dangote*” is not a reference to a supreme being. ‘*Dangote*’ is a Nigerian business magnate, an investor and the owner of the *Dangote* Group. As of March 2019, he had an estimated net worth of USD 10.6 billion. He is ranked by Forbes magazine as the 100th richest person in the world and the richest in Africa (Forbes, 2018). The address term is deployed in the comment to evince supplicatory evocation. The term is a symbolic representation of riches, which everyone desires to have.

7. Conclusion

So far, we have tried to examine social stereotypes in pre-wedding photo-discourse on *Nairaland*, using a semiotic approach. The study shows the nexus between oversimplified conceptions and language in communicative behaviours and more interestingly at implicit level. Findings reveal a preponderance occurrence of metaphor of rottenness, characteristic of sex and sexuality, suggesting promiscuousness. Sexy metaphors such as ‘slutty’, ‘dick’, ‘porn’, ‘fornicating’, ‘belle’, ‘abstinence’, among others, are deployed to implicitly express the social stereotype of promiscuity in the pre-wedding photo exercise. Findings establish a wide deployment of collocative synonyms to encode users’ conception of pre-wedding photography as a mere waste of time. Collocative synonyms as ‘Tasteless and trashy’, ‘stupid and nonsense’, ‘playful and childish’, ‘inaneities or emptiness’, and ‘blissful and prosperous’, connote a social stereotype of time wasting. Findings also show a large use of imagery as stereotypical representations of supernatural forces. Supernatural imagery such as ‘devil’, ‘spell’, ‘powers’, ‘principalities’, ‘African magic’ and ‘juju’, imply that the African society is fetish and can reverse someone’s fortunes with magical powers. Findings likewise reveal that “Address Terms” are extensively used as stereotypical representations of religious evocation and belief. Address terms such as ‘God’, ‘*Olódùmarè*’, ‘Allah’, ‘All sufficient God’, and ‘*Dangote*’ evince supplicatory evocation and show that the pre-wedding photo is conceived as a forum to bless the participants. The study therefore concludes that the concept of pre-wedding photoshoot in Nigerian online environment is deficient of positive reception, as commenters consider the practice as a waste of time, a forum for sexual pleasure, a channel of self-proclamation, and a means of religious evocation.

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