

**THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF ADVERTISEMENT IN SOROTI CITY: A
CASE STUDY OF MTN UGANDA AND AIRTEL UGANDA
TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES**

EBOGU FRANCIS

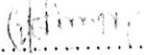
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
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OCTOBER, 2026

DECLARATION

I, Ebogu Francis, declare that this thesis entitled, *The Linguistic Landscape of Advertisement in Soroti City: A Case Study of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda Telecommunication Companies* is my true and original work, and it has never been submitted to any other university or institution of higher education for any award.

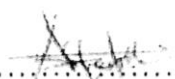
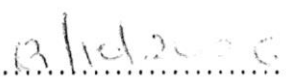
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APPROVAL

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, *The Linguistic Landscape of Advertisement in Soroti City: A Case Study of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda Telecommunication Companies* by Ebogu Francis has been developed under my supervision and is now ready for examination.

Signature:.......... Date:..........

MS. SARAH AMARORWOT

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, especially my wife, Asero Esther; my father, Esupu Milton and my four wonderful children, Sophie, Nathan, Micah and Simon. I also extend my dedication to my siblings, particularly Stephen Oporocan and his beloved wife, Itoju Suzan. To my late brother Opogol Moses (RIP), thank you for the short time you lived with us. May your soul rest in peace.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GB	Gigabyte
GWP	Government White Paper
LL	Linguistic Landscape
LLT	Linguistic Landscape Theory
LP	Language Policy
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MoMo	Mobile Money
MTN	Mobile Telephone Network
UCC	Uganda Communication Commission
UG	Uganda
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

ABSTRACT

This study examined the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City, focusing on MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies. Business domains in Soroti City display multilingual practices that are reflected in commercial signage. (Hu, 2022), offers a broad conceptual synthesis of linguistic landscape scholarship but leaves insufficiently theorized role of commercial advertising as a multimodal space where linguistic resources jointly construct meaning. This study extended that conceptual understanding by examining the patterned deployment of such resources in MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda advertisement in Soroti city. The study was sought: to examine the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunications advertising in Soroti City; to assess the stylistic features of the language used in their advertisements; and establish the relationship between the linguistic landscape in Soroti City and Uganda's language policies and practices. Anchored in the Linguistic Landscape Theory by Landry and Bourhis (1997), the study employed a qualitative approach supported by descriptive and comparative designs. The findings for Objective One showed that patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising were evident in terms of dominance, with English more widely used than Ateso and other indigenous languages, and in the distribution of signage, MTN was more prominent than Airtel. Multilingual practices were also noted among others. For Objective Two, the study established that advertisements employed stylistic features such as code-mixing, humor, imagery, syntactic variations, and typographic choices. Regarding objective three, results revealed a correlation between Uganda National Language Policy and advertising practices, including the reflection of cultural context, recognition of English as the official language, and the incorporation of indigenous languages. The study recommends the promotion of indigenous languages in advertising, the enforcement of ethical standards, and strengthening awareness of Uganda's language Policy among advertising stakeholders, while also suggesting that future research adopt quantitative or mixed methods to complement qualitative findings.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Introduction

Business domains in Soroti City exhibit multilingual practices, and this also involve commercial signage. A number of research works have been conducted on linguistic landscape but from different contexts and concepts (Hu, 2022). This study approached the field of linguistic landscape from the perspective of advertisement, and aimed at assessing the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City, with a case study of: MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. This section presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, scope, significance, limitations to the study and mitigating measures.

1.1.2 Background to the study

1.1.2.1 Conceptual background

The concept of linguistic landscape, defined as the presence and salience of languages in public settings (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), has gained global importance as a subject of study. ‘Linguistic Landscape’ describes how language and its features manifest themselves in daily life, particularly in public spaces (Hu, 2022, p.2). It defines the status of language in terms of its social, political, or functional position in a particular society. The study adopted the definition of linguistic landscape according to Hu (2022), as the language that is portrayed in textual form for public consumption. The above definition was adopted in this study because it aligned well with the intention of the study, aimed at establishing the linguistic landscape of Soroti City, using advertisement as the medium of focus, taking into account the measures reflected in the patterns of the linguistic landscape of advertising, its stylistic features, as well as whether or how language policies and practices relate to linguistic landscape. ‘The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial

shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, or urban agglomeration' (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, as cited in Hu, 2022, p. 2). This is summarized as the language that is portrayed in textual form for public consumption (Hu, 2022).

According to Itagi and Singh (2002), linguistic landscape is "language use in its written form (visible language) in the public sphere" (cited in Zeng, 2019, p. 114). From this definition, Zeng (2019) concludes that linguistic landscape entails all written forms of language in an area. In addition, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) advance a definition of linguistic landscape as "linguistic objects that mark the public space" and they state that linguistic landscape is any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location (cited in Zeng, 2019, p. 114).

It is also noteworthy that expressions related to *linguistic landscape* be delineated, and this included such expressions as: *landscape* and *linguistic environment*. Gaho, Kardana and Sari. (2022, p. 216)., while asking why the term 'landscape' is used in linguistic studies, note that the noun 'landscape' has two distinct meanings, i.e. the literal meaning, which is a piece or span of scenery that may be observed at one moment from one location; and secondly, a painting depicting such a vista of natural inland scenery, as opposed to a seascape or a portrait.

According to them, citing Gorter (2006), both interpretations of landscape can be found in the studies of the language landscape, where it is used in the literal study of the language such as in signs, on the one hand, and the representation of the languages, on the other hand. According to Burenhult and Levinson (2008), linguistic landscape can also be referred to more broadly as linguistic 'environment,' and it provides an intriguing domain for human classification and labeling for a variety of reasons. They further note that landscape is a

linguistic domain of substantial interest in and of itself, raising concerns of general importance to language research.

As noted above, advertising is part of the linguistic phenomena that define the linguistic landscape of an area, falling under the informative function (Hu, 2022) and under the bottom-top category of linguistic landscape (Li, 2015). Haider and Shakib (2018) define advertisement as a method of communication that conveys information to viewers and listeners, encouraging them to buy a product or service. Advertising is regarded as a crucial and necessary component for the economic development of marketers and enterprises (Ryans, 1996). Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013) opine that, typically, advertising is a sort of exposure or promotion that is paid for by a sponsor and spreads through a variety of media like televised media, print media (newspapers, magazines, posters and sign boards), internet media (blogs, mails, text messages), radio adverts, and outdoor advertising.

(Ryans, 1996). Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013), associate advertising with consumer exposure to products and brands focusing mainly on its promotional and behavioral dimensions. The present study differed by treating advertisement as linguistic landscape texts and examining how MTN Uganda Airtel Uganda use linguistic and visual resources to construct visibility, identity and meaning in the public spaces of Soroti City.

The major aim of advertising is to impact on buying behavior; however, this impact on brands is changed or strengthened frequently through people's memories which are formed by associations that are related to brand name in consumer mind (Khan, Van and Ritchie, 2012). The brands in turn continuously influence the target audience or consumers to consider, evaluate and finally purchase the products (Smith et al., 2006). A high-quality advertisement will probably persuade customers to purchase those goods, while a low-quality advertisement will more likely have the opposite effect (Haider & Shakib, 2018).

Comparing advertisement to sales promotion, Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2011) state that it is the structured and composed non-personal communication of information about products (goods, services, and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media aimed at reaching the target audience. Sales promotion, on the other hand, refers to as short-term incentives designed to stimulate the immediate purchase or sale of a product or service (Shimp, 2010).

As regards the language of advertisement, Johannessen, Meldere, and Torvik (2010) observe that advertisements reveal a blend of regular language and paralanguage, which encompasses nonverbal cues that emphasize and accompany the verbal content, such as facial expressions, gestures, voice quality, and letter sizes.

Language is in a constant state of change, shaped by evolving societal norms and individual behavior. This relates to my study because MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda advertisement in Soroti City constitute public texts through which changing linguistic and social practices can be observed.

Basyoni (2023) observes that old words and phrases take on new meanings and are re-contextualized, while new words are coined and the influence of English becomes increasingly evident in other languages. Various factors, including international or national influences, cultural and historical contexts, trends, events, and pre-existing perceptions of products or companies, can impact both the language used in advertisements and how people respond to it (Basyoni, 2023).

This study adopted the definition of advertisement according to Wells, et al. (2011), as the systematic and composed non-personal distribution of information about products (goods, services, and ideas) by specified sponsors through various media targeted at reaching the desired population. The language of advertisement does not have to be rigid, such as to make use of only one language. The study adopted that definition of advertisement because it clearly conceptualizes advertising as communicative rather than mere commercial display.

The linguistic landscape of an area may not be detached from the language policies of the country where that area is located (Spolsky, 2004). Language policy refers to a statement that outlines guidelines for the usage of languages within a society, addressing issues such as maintaining the dominance of one language over others in multilingual communities, aimed at regulating communication patterns and solving language-related problems (Torsten & Neville, 1985; Crystal, 1997, cited in Jjingo, 2011). According to Ruiz (1995), there are three types of language policy, which are: endoglossic, exoglossic and mixed language policies, where the endoglossic type means the granting of a native language the prime status; the exoglossic language policy on the other hand gives primacy to a foreign language, while the mixed type entails the use of both a native language and a foreign language to serve national and official functions. The relationship between language policies and linguistic landscape is especially noteworthy when considering the themes of globalization and migration. Spolsky (2004) observes that language policies are influenced by global forces more and more, and that these policies are manifested in the linguistic landscape.

Language policies are negotiated and disputed in a dynamic linguistic environment as nations grapple with the issues of multiculturalism and the presence of many languages within their borders (Shohamy, 2006). The interplay between multiple linguistic communities and their coexistence in urban environments is visible, as it shapes the sociolinguistic fabric of the region and influences the visibility of individual languages (Gorter, 2006).

As argued by De Beaugrande (1977), stylistics operates at the interface between grammar and rhetoric, giving rise to English stylistics and linguistic literary studies as recognised sub-branches of linguistics. Consequently, the study legitimately examines linguistic and stylistic features as a unified entity, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of stylistic analysis in English.

1.1.2.2 Contextual background

Scholars such as Shohamy and Gorter (2009) underline the importance of linguistic landscape in understanding sociolinguistic dynamics, language policies, and the function of languages in varied metropolitan areas around the world.

In the African context, with hundreds of languages spoken across the continent, linguistic diversity is a defining element (Brock-Utne, 2004) as the African linguistic landscape reflects historical, colonial, and post-colonial influences, resulting in a rich tapestry of languages coexisting in distinct places (Adegbiya, 2004), argue that English in African context undergoes domestication as users adapt it to their sociocultural experiences and communicative needs. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a complex linguistic landscape that has been affected by colonial legacies, language policies, and ongoing sociolinguistic developments (Mazrui, 2004).

In the Ugandan linguistic situation, Uganda has a high level of language diversity and multilingualism, which is typical of most African countries, characterized by a shifting, multilingual reality for hundreds of years, particularly in East and West Africa, with unresolved issues about how to accommodate them in the context of formal education (Westbrook et al, 2026).

The linguistic landscape in Uganda, a country with over 40 indigenous languages (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig, 2023), exhibits a balance between English as an official language and a varied range of local languages. With over 40 different indigenous languages, Bantu languages dominate the Central, Eastern, and Western regions, whereas Nilotic languages dominate the North and North East (Westbrook et al., 2026).

Uganda is one of the countries operating on an exoglossic language policy, with English as the functional official language, and Kiswahili the second (and less functional) official

language. Kiswahili and languages spoken by refugees from Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia, and Eritrea are mainly spoken in the north, east, and in Kampala (Amone, 2021; Heugh & Mulumba, 2013, as cited in Westbrook et al., 2023).

Although English retains its hegemony as the functional official language, as Tembe (2015) has argued, Kiswahili has recently gained the status of a 'working language' (cited in Westbrook et al., 2023, p. 1). Reh (2004), in a study carried out in Lira Municipality (now Lira City), states that, in tandem with the current expansion of society and individual multilingualism, there is also an increase in the availability and demand for multilingual written texts of all forms. The number and type of texts such as adverts in a given area are determined by a variety of factors, including the number of languages present, language policy, the status of speakers, the self-esteem of speakers, the reader-orientation of text suppliers, etc. Thus, the number and type of these texts portray the social profile of any given community (Reh, 2004).

The local languages in Soroti City, located in Uganda's Eastern Region, manifests coexistence of languages such as Ateso, English, and other regional languages that influences the city's linguistic landscape as they are used in public domains, including educational institutions and marketplaces. This represents the linguistic practices of the local community.

Currently, Uganda has over thirty telecommunication service providers (Uganda Communications Commission [UCC], 2023) but this study focused on two telecommunications companies, which are MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda.

MTN Uganda Limited is a telecommunication company operating in Uganda with the strategic purpose of providing solutions in line with both telecommunication and digital migration for Uganda's economic development (MTN Uganda, 2023). Currently, it has a presence in all 134 districts of Uganda such as Gulu, Lira, Kampala and Soroti City an area of the study. MTN Uganda telecommunication coverage is now rated at 70% from the initial

0.27% and a range of innovative and digital services including financial services (MTN Uganda, 2023).

Airtel Uganda is a multinational mobile telecommunications network operating in different parts of the globe especially in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Airtel Uganda is an extension of an Indian-born company, Bharti Airtel Limited, which operates in over twenty countries in Asia, Africa, and the Channel Islands (Airtel Uganda Report, 2023). Airtel now commands a broad market with a customer base of over 8 million subscribers, having acquired Warid Telecom in 2013, making it the second largest telecommunications company in Uganda (Airtel Uganda Report, 2023). The two companies, alongside other business companies, have ever since engaged in sales promotion using different forms of advertisement including outdoor signs, which form part of the linguistic landscape of advertisement of Soroti City.

This study therefore sought to find out the linguistic landscape of Soroti City from the perspective of advertisement, viewed through the lenses of telecommunications, using the two prominent telecommunications companies in Uganda: MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda.

1.1.2.3 Historical background

This study sought to examine the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City, using a case study of telecommunication companies active in the area, i.e. MTN and Airtel.

Historically, Airtel was the first mobile telecommunication company in Uganda, having been introduced in 1995 as Celtel, and, throughout the years, it has transformed by name from Celtel in 1995 to Zain in 2007 and now Airtel (Airtel Uganda Report, 2023).

MTN became fully-fledged in Uganda in 1998 after being successfully incorporated on 21 October 1998. It aimed at operating as a second national operator of a telecommunications network at a time when access to mobile cellular service in the country was very much wanting, rated at just 0.27% (MTN Uganda, 2023). MTN therefore took up the mantle of

development from that point and has since then contributed tremendously to the growth of the telecommunications sector in Uganda (MTN, Uganda, 2023).

Soroti City is a recent creation, following an Act of Parliament, in which 12 municipalities were elevated to the status of city, including Soroti City alongside Mbale, Fort Portal, Hoima, Gulu, Arua, Lira, Masaka, Jinja and Entebbe, together with Moroto, though not yet operationalized (Ministry of Local Government, 2023). This study focused on the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City, a geographical area that has not benefited yet from research works pertaining to linguistic landscape.

Since the early 19th century, public opinion on advertising has been mixed attracting both favorable and unfavorable perceptions (Nevett, 1982). In (1958), Mayer (1958) highlighted that advertising professionals regularly encounter substantial commercial, social, and psychological uncertainties. More recently, William (1992) noted that British advertising has evolved in less than a century from the enthusiastic deceit of a small industry to the anxieties of a dominant global business, often stretching beyond its financial limits. This reveals how advertisement has evolved over time. Despite these challenges, advertising is acknowledged as essential for informing the public, driving demand, stimulating the economy, and funding media platforms like newspapers and television (McDonald & Scott, 2007).

Linguistic landscape research is relatively new within sociolinguistics (Abramova, 2016). Huebner (2016) notes that the term "linguistic landscape" was introduced into modern research and sociolinguistic studies by Landry and Bourhis (1997) through their influential article, which spurred numerous subsequent papers using the term. Since gaining scholarly attention in 1997, linguistic landscape research has consistently yielded significant findings (Hu, 2022).

The inaugural International Conference on Linguistic Landscapes held in 2008 at Tel Aviv University, Israel, attracted global scholars, marking a great moment (Hu, 2022). The

establishment of the journal *Linguistic Landscape: An International Journal* in 2015 further signified the field's growing recognition and popularity as a distinct research area (Hu, 2022).

According to Nankindu (2020), Uganda's language policies have evolved through colonial and post-independence phases, reflecting shifting political and educational priorities. The author adds that under British rule, (1894–1962), English was institutionalized as the language of administration and education, while Luganda gained prominence due to Buganda's alliance with colonial authorities; missionaries developed orthographies for local languages such as Ateso, Kumam among others, to facilitate literacy and religious instruction, with early policies favoring vernacular education in primary schools before transitioning to English (Nankindu, 2020).

The Post-World War II reforms (1944–1961) reinforced English dominance, though the 1947 Colonial Office Memorandum advocated initial vernacular instruction, while post-independence governments (1962–1988) retained English as the primary medium despite attempts to introduce Kiswahili as a National Language during the 1970s (Nankindu, 2020). The 1989 Kajubi Commission and 1992 White Paper established a dual system: while rural schools used local languages in early grades before switching to English, while urban schools adopted English throughout, with Kiswahili mandated as a compulsory subject but inadequately implemented (Nankindu, 2020). Persistent challenges include inadequate teacher training, insufficient materials for indigenous languages, top-down policymaking, and unresolved tensions between multilingual realities and the privileging of English, highlighting the need for more inclusive and systematically resourced language planning to address Uganda's linguistic diversity and educational equity (Nankindu, 2020).

Given the above historical situation this study seeks to establish the linguistic landscape of Soroti City, an urban centre in Eastern Uganda, as no single study on linguistic landscape exists from this perspective to my knowledge.

1.1.2.4 Theoretical Background

This study was underpinned by the linguistic landscape theory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The Linguistic Landscape (LL) theory, provides a framework for analyzing the visibility and function of languages in public spaces.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) argue that these linguistic markers serve both informational and symbolic functions: they convey practical information while also signaling the status, dominance, or coexistence of different languages within a community.

In line with this theoretical grounding, this study sought to examine the linguistic landscape of Soroti City, using outdoor signs from two telecommunications companies in Uganda. A detailed theoretical framework is provided in section of theoretical framework.

1.1.3 Problem Statement

Multilingual practices in urban areas in Uganda, in general, and in Soroti City, in particular, have permeated several domains including commercial spaces. Advertisements in the telecommunication businesses in Soroti City seem to be characterized by aspects of multilingual practices, as well as intrinsic linguistic features, all of which define the linguistic landscape of advertisement in the city. However, information concerning studies conducted on the linguistic landscape of Soroti City still remains scanty. There have been studies conducted in the field of advertisement, such as the one by Haider and Shakib (2018), Ryans (1996), Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013), all of which focused on particular attributes of advertisement, moreover in different geographical locations. None of the studies has been conducted in Soroti City with a focus on the linguistic landscape of advertising, making it necessary to conduct a study of this kind. This study therefore sought to examine the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising in Soroti City while focusing on language pattern, stylistic features and the relationship of advertisement and language

policies and practices in Uganda, using a case study of two telecommunication companies operating in the area.

1.1.4 Purpose of the study

The study aimed at examining the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City, using a case study of two mobile telecommunications companies, i.e. MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda.

1.1.5 Specific Objectives

The study was be guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising in Soroti City;
- ii. To assess the stylistic features of the language of advertisement used by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City;
- iii. To establish the relationship between the linguistic landscape of advertising in Soroti City with the language policies and practices in Uganda.

1.1.6 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the patterns of linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City?
- ii. What stylistic features are employed in the language of advertisement by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda?
- iii. What is the relationship between the linguistic landscape in Soroti City with the language policies and practices in Uganda?

1.1.7.0 Scope of the study

1.1.7.1 Content scope

This study focused on the linguistic landscape of advertising in Soroti City, with particular attention to mobile telecommunications companies and their outdoor advertising systems, specifically those of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda because of their wider coverage. Its objectives are to investigate the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunications advertising in Soroti City; and to analyze the stylistic features of the language employed in their advertisements, and explore the relationship between the linguistic landscape of Soroti City and the broader language policies and practices in Uganda.

1.1.7.2 Geographical scope

The study was conducted in Soroti City located in Eastern Uganda within Teso sub region. It is surrounded by Soroti district and lies north of Kyoga. Soroti is approximately 326 km northwest of Kampala by road. Its approximate coordinates are 1.42°54'N, it is one of the newest cities created in Uganda in the 2020/2021 financial year, by an Act of Parliament on 30th July 2020 (Omuya, 2020). Soroti City is the principal commercial and administrative Centre of Teso sub region.

1.1.7.3 Time scope

The research was conducted from January 2025 to April, 2026. Within that period, the researcher developed the concept paper, the proposal, collected the data and analyzed the data, culminating in the current thesis.

1.1.8 Justification for the study

Soroti City, represents a dynamic socio-cultural landscape where mobile telecommunications compete for consumer attraction. Essentially, therefore, advertisement becomes a must as a

means of maximizing sales. The extent of public use of language for advertising therefore varies due to different factors.

Many studies have been conducted on linguistic landscape; for instance, Haider and Shakib (2018) carried out a study on the influence of advertisement on consumer buying behavior, while Ryans (1996) looked at consumer resources and Ahmed and Ashfaq (2013) studied the impact of advertising on consumers' buying behavior through persuasiveness, brand image, and celebrity endorsement. Since no published study has so far been conducted with a focus on the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Uganda, and particularly in Soroti City, it is important to find out this dimension in the world of linguistic landscape. This study aims to shed light on the linguistic landscape of Soroti City, with a focus on advertisement.

1.1.9 Significance of the study

It is hoped that this study will be useful to a number of stakeholders in Soroti City and beyond as specified below:

This study will be a basis for knowledge creation as it will provide both general information and literature that is specific to the field of linguistic landscape, which will add a body of knowledge to the research world as a whole.

It is believed that this study will benefit advertisers, linguists, and marketing professionals in crafting more effective and culturally sensitive communication strategies as an analysis of the linguistic landscape of advertisements provides an opportunity to explore how language is strategically employed in marketing and sales promotion.

The findings will also have important implications for marketing professionals and academics who are interested in the relationship between language and advertising in various cultural contexts. In the end, this study advances knowledge of how language is used in communication tactics and consumer behavior in the digital era.

It is further hoped that this study will help researchers in the field of linguistics to delve into the area of linguistic landscape and conduct more research in related areas other than advertising, or look at advertising by other companies.

1.1.10 Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the Linguistic Landscape Theory introduced by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The theory investigates visible language and linguistic features in public areas, with a focus on the socio-cultural and political dimensions of language use in a community.

According to the theory, linguistic landscape, which includes signs, billboards, and public messages, reflects power dynamics, language policy, and identity politics in a specific setting. The Linguistic Landscape Theory provides a holistic understanding of language use by considering its visual representation in public spaces, thereby capturing a broader sociolinguistic context and insights into the political and cultural dimensions of language use, making it a valuable tool for researchers interested in understanding how language operates within specific socio-cultural contexts (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

It will also investigate whether the linguistic landscape mirrors linguistic diversity, cultural inclusivity and related elements in Soroti City.

As already mentioned above, the Linguistic Landscape Theory was used to examine how language policies present themselves in marketing. It will entail understanding whether the commercial advertisements promote specific languages, linguistic ideologies, or cultural identities, as well as how these choices connect with or challenge existing language policies.

Several scholars, notably Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), have endorsed the view that commercial advertisements promote specific languages, linguistic ideologies, or cultural identities. Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) were particularly interested in how observable language characteristics in

public spaces reflect and influence the sociolinguistics dynamics of a community. Their enthusiasm for the theory arises from its ability to highlight the symbolic and political aspects of language use in a particular context. By exploring linguistic landscapes, Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) have contributed to a deeper understanding of how language contributes to identity development, cultural representation, and power relations in a range of social contexts.

Some researchers notably (Blommaert, 2013), have criticized the Linguistic Landscape Theory. For example, they say that the theory focuses exclusively on the visibility of language while ignoring the interaction and negotiation of language in public settings.

(Gorter, 2013), contend that the theory overemphasizes the relevance of visible language in public areas while overlooking the dynamic and evolving character of language use in society. Despite these apparent flaws, the Linguistic Landscape Theory remains a useful framework for examining the linguistic landscape in the advertisements of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunications in Soroti City. The theory serves as a lens through which the research can illuminate the intricate interplay of language, culture, policies, and business in the context of Soroti City, with a focus on advertising of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies,

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 Introduction

This section presents the review of related works and these are thematically presented as guided by the objectives of the study which include; (i), to examine the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising in Soroti City; (ii), to assess the stylistic features of the language of advertisement used by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda; iii) to establish the relationship between the linguistic landscape of advertising in Soroti City with language policies and practices in Uganda.

1.2.2 The Patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising

Studies by Baker (2006) and Hernandez (2012) stress the use of English in mainstream advertising but acknowledge the usage of Spanish and other language of dominance to reach certain demographic groups in America. Thus, the bilingual character of outdoor advertising in America emphasizes the society's multicultural fabric. Just as it is the case with America, it was useful for this study to investigate whether similar situations of bilingualism as those in America exist in the context of Soroti City's.

Zeng and Luo (2019) observe, the absence or presence of a language on a linguistic landscape might indicate the significance or social status of the language in a particular place because a linguistic landscape is sometimes bilingual or multilingual (containing markers, signs, guideboards, institution names, and announcements, etc.). It can also represent the social standing, cultural status, and social power of those who speak the language, which can have a significant impact on others who speak it, thus serving a symbolic function (Rabiah, 2018).

On the other hand, Europe, with its many languages and various cultural landscapes, presents a complicated setting for outdoor advertising. According to Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) and

Pérez-Llantada (2014), outdoor advertisements in Europe frequently include numerous languages to cater for local communities. The same studies note further that the use of English as a lingua franca is widespread, particularly in international advertising campaigns aimed at reaching consumers across European countries. Based on the European experience, where one language (English) appears to dominate the linguistic landscape of advertisement, this study seeks to establish whether there is a language that dominates the linguistic landscape of advertisement in the geographical context of Soroti City.

Similarly, looking at the Asian linguistic space, outdoor advertising takes on distinct qualities in the continent of Asia, with its dynamic and linguistically diverse milieu. Cheng and de Bres (2009) and Liao (2017) affirm that there is the utilization of several Asian languages in outdoor advertising campaigns. They note that local languages are intentionally blended to connect with distinct cultural subtleties, but English is frequently used for its global appeal. The multilingual nature of Asian outdoor advertising reflects the region's linguistic diversity (Liao, 2017). Given that Soroti City is also a multilingual environment, since Uganda is a multilingual country (Eberhard et al., 2026), the study intended to determine whether what the situation of outdoor advertising of Asia portrays could also be the case in Soroti City.

Linguistic landscape serves two primary functions, namely: the informative function and symbolic function (Hu, 2022), whereas Li (2015), while viewing linguistic landscape as a branch of sociolinguistics or applied linguistics, classifies linguistic landscape into two: (a) the top-bottom type, which includes official and public linguistic landscape, under which there are names of government institutions, official notices, street names and advertisements for general service; (b) the bottom-top, under which there are both private and commercial linguistic landscapes, including personal businesses such as shops, hotels, jewelry stores and advertising.

Adeyanju (2009), referring to the position of English vis-à-vis Nigerian languages, contends that due to its official status in Nigeria, English serves as the language of bureaucracy, with government affairs and official communication predominantly conducted in English, arguing further that this official recognition of English, similar to the situation in South Africa, influences people's sociolinguistic, sociocultural, socio-economic, and sociopolitical states of affairs. It is therefore worthwhile to carry out a study of this nature to find out what happens particularly in the domain of outdoor advertising in Soroti City, Teso Sub-Region, regarding the role of English in the linguistic landscape of the area.

It is also worth noting that, across nations, similarities appear in some patterns, stressing the strategic use of languages in outdoor advertising. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997), the linguistic environment, including outdoor advertising, is a reflection of a community's power relations, cultural identities, and language regulations. Thus, language selection in outdoor advertising, together with the resultant patterns in the linguistic landscape of the area, is not only a marketing decision, but also a sociocultural one, including the linguistic ecology in the area, which this study also seeks to discover in the context of Soroti City, through the linguistic field of advertisement.

The study by Akinyi (2017) reveals a consistent and patterned use of multilingual resources in commercial print advertisements, particularly within the mobile telecommunications and banking sectors. The advertisements predominantly employ English and Kiswahili, with strategic insertions of Sheng which is the hybrid sociolect or a way of speaking that mixes Kiswahili, English and other selected indigenous languages. This pattern reflects the multilingual reality of urban spaces and the need for advertisers to appeal to diverse audiences simultaneously. Language mixing is realized through identifiable linguistic processes such as intra sentential, where there is use of more than one language within the

same sentence for example, I am going to the market “*kesho*”. The literal meaning of Kiswahili word ‘*kesho*’ is (tomorrow).

Inter sentential mixing involves the use of different languages in separate sentences within a single stretch of communication. It denotes a form of code-switching in which language shifts occur between sentences. ‘We shall met tomorrow. *Tutaonana kesho*’ is an example of inter sentential mixing. Other forms of code-mixing include blending, compounding, and morphemic integration in which word takes grammatical markers, prefixes and suffixes from another language ‘ *Njaku*-download a file (njaku-luganda which is an infinitive prefix). These linguistic choices are not random but are carefully structured to enhance clarity, attraction, and memorability within the limited textual space of advertisements. The implication of this pattern is that multilingual advertising language functions as a persuasive communicative strategy that allows advertisers to project modernity and credibility through English while maintaining cultural proximity and inclusivity through local and hybrid languages (Akinyi, 2017).

Akinyi (2017) further demonstrates that advertising language is highly interactional, characterized by the frequent use of imperative constructions and direct address forms, imperative prompt action immediately and create sense of urgency. Examples include, ‘Buy Now and Save More’, ‘Order Today’ among others. The use of second person pronouns such as “ You” in expressions like ‘ Your Health is our priority’, ‘ You Deserve the Best’, this pattern positions the consumer at the center of the communicative act and creates a sense of personal engagement and urgency.

The use of figurative language, including metaphors, slogans, and culturally familiar expressions, further strengthens emotional appeal and brand identification. When combined with code mixing, these linguistic features make advertisements achieve greater relatability and persuasive appeal. The implication is that advertising language contribute to evolution of

public language use by validating language mixing in formal setting while affirming the cultural significance of local language in commerce (Akinyi, 2017).

1.2.3 Stylistic features of the language of advertisement

The language of advertisement has a number of stylistic features. Thus Leech (1966, p.309) refers to the language of advertising as “loaded language”, describing its intention to influence and change the will and the attitude of its recipients. It was therefore necessary for this study to assess and determine whether the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City is equally characterized by such loaded qualities.

The language of advertising shows particularities in its style. According to Richards, Platt and Weber (1985), style can be seen as variation in discourse, be it oral or written. Accordingly, style varies based on a number of parameters, e.g. interlocutors, location, topic under discussion, etc Richards et al., 1985). Hence, the term *stylistic* relates to style. The variations in style manifest themselves as features, known as *stylistic features* (Crystal, 1995). According to Crystal (1995), stylistic features involve, among others, personal preferences, and varieties of language that relate to occupational groups or trades. Studies on the stylistic features of the language of advertisement at a global level reveal common strategies employed by advertisers to engage and persuade audiences.

According to McQuarrie and Mick (1999), global advertising often utilizes stylistic elements such as rhetorical figures, vivid imagery, and emotional appeals to create a memorable and persuasive impact on consumers. The language used in global advertising is characterized by its creativity, conciseness, and adaptability to diverse cultural contexts (Belch & Belch, 2018), thereby emphasizing the linguistic particularities that are observable in the linguistic landscape of Soroti City with respect to outdoor advertising involving MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunications companies.

Research carried out in the United States reveals the necessity of humour in advertising. According to Weinberger et al. (2012), humour has become so popular in advertising, especially in the United States that scholars interested in consumer behaviour have had to do a lot of research in the field of advertising humour, but noting that the use, interpretation and impact of humour are influenced by the cultural context of the targeted audience. This study seeks to establish the applicability or non-applicability of this to advertising in Soroti City, an area that has not received attention from the research world in the area of linguistic landscape, especially in the commercial field of advertisement.

On the African context, the language of advertisement is influenced by linguistic diversity and cultural nuances (Oyesomi & Salawu, 2019). Oyesomi and Salawu, note that advertisers in Africa often incorporate indigenous languages, proverbs, and culturally relevant symbols such as metaphor, allusion, symbolism, eulogy, sarcasm, pun, anaphora, repetition, hyperbole, simile, alliteration, rhetorical question in the selected advertisements that they studied. Therefore, they recommend, among others, that advertisers should pay serious attention to the use of figurative language that can attract the audience to their services and show the uniqueness of indigenous languages to resonate with local audiences. This being too general, covering the whole of Africa, makes it unable to address adequately the situation of Soroti City. Thus, it is essential to apply the knowledge to a smaller geographical context, which in this case is Soroti City.

Alozie (2005), in a study on advertisement in the Nigerian context, in which he investigated the role of advertising in the socio-economic and national development of Nigeria, made a thorough observation of the role of advertising in the formation of social mobilization and modernization in Nigeria. He examined cultural reflections, the nature and characteristics of the messages, and the values and symbols conveyed in Nigerian mass media advertisements using content and ideological analyses. His study exposed mostly the business-oriented

aspect of advertisement, where he discovered that advertising tends to promote foreign products over locally made Nigerian products.

Much as the study revealed mostly the purpose of advertisement and its situation in Nigeria, the method of analysis that is content analysis and advertisement as a unit of analysis used helped the current study to produce a context-specific outcome while investigating the stylistic features used in the language of advertisement in Soroti City.

The stylistic features of the language of advertisement constitute a carefully engineered linguistic system designed to persuade, influence, and shape consumer attitudes through strategic language use. Advertising discourse is characterized by deliberate lexical selection that foregrounds positivity, desirability, and superiority, often through the use of emotive adjectives, superlatives, and evaluative terms such as *new*, *best*, *perfect*, and *guaranteed* (Leech, 1966; Goddard, 2002). Such lexical choices are rarely neutral, as they function to construct idealized representations of products and services while suppressing alternative interpretations. Advertisers also rely heavily on semantic ambiguity and polysemy, allowing words and phrases to carry multiple interpretations that appeal to diverse audiences simultaneously (Cook, 2001).

At the syntactic level, the language of advertisement frequently departs from conventional grammatical structures in favor of brevity, fragmentation, and syntactic economy. Short clauses, incomplete sentences, and verbless constructions are common, as they enhance readability and immediacy while maintaining rhetorical force (Myers, 1994). Imperative structures such as *Buy now*, *‘Experience the difference’*, and *‘Switch today’* directly address the audience and position them as active participants in the communicative act (Dyer, 1982). In addition, figurative language plays a central stylistic role in advertising, with metaphors, similes, personification, and hyperbole being used to exaggerate product qualities and to

translate abstract benefits into vivid, concrete experiences (Forceville, 1996). These stylistic strategies reflect a systematic manipulation of language forms in which persuasion overrides informational clarity, thereby demonstrating how advertising language operates as a powerful rhetorical tool rather than a purely descriptive medium.

Beyond structural and lexical considerations, the stylistic features of advertising language are deeply embedded in social context, cultural meaning, and ideological positioning. Advertisements draw extensively on shared cultural symbols, social norms, and collective aspirations in order to establish familiarity and credibility with target audiences (Fairclough, 1995). Through intertextuality, advertising discourse often echoes popular songs, proverbs, everyday expressions, and well-known narratives, thereby borrowing authority and emotional resonance from pre-existing texts (Cook, 2001). Repetition, parallelism, and strategic redundancy are frequently employed to reinforce key messages and ensure that brand names and slogans remain memorable over time (Crystal, 2003). Phonological stylistic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and rhythm enhance the aesthetic appeal of advertisements and contribute significantly to audience recall, particularly in radio, television, and digital platforms where sound plays a central role (Leech, 1966).

In multilingual and postcolonial contexts, stylistic choices increasingly include code-switching, borrowing, and mixed language use, which function to signal modernity, authenticity, and social identity while appealing to diverse linguistic communities (Piller, 2001; Cook, 2001). These stylistic patterns are not random but ideologically motivated, as they align consumer goods with particular lifestyles, values, and social identities. Consequently, the language of advertisement operates at the intersection of language, culture, and power, using stylistic manipulation to shape perceptions, influence behavior, and sustain consumer-oriented ideologies within contemporary society. The studies above relate to my

research at the linguistic-analysis level, their study further demonstrates that advertising use deliberate linguistic choices that serve communicative and persuasive purpose.

1.2.4 Relationship between linguistic landscape and language policies and practices in a country

Globally, Shohamy and Gorter (2009) underline the importance of linguistic landscape in reflecting and shaping language policies on a global scale. They claim that language visibility in public settings is a type of language policy itself which influences language use and identity. Taking a guide from the above literature, this study examined whether the linguistic landscape of Soroti City conforms to the National Language Policy of Uganda inscribed in the Government White Paper [GWP] (1992) and other legal frameworks, through investigating the relationships in terms of actual language use in relation to policy documents such as the GWP (1992).

Similarly, in Italy, Dal Negro (2008), while referring to Laundry and Bourhis (1997)'s definition of linguistic landscape as the written use of languages in public space, observes that the connection between linguistic landscape (LL) and language policy, in terms of explicit and conscious intervention on language form and functions, can have at least two aspects: firstly, LL can reflect a specific sociolinguistics context, and secondly, it can serve as a tool to implement and illustrate new language policies, thereby shaping new sociolinguistics environments. With such literature available, though in Italy, which may not reflect the situation of Uganda, it is important to investigate the relationship between linguistic landscape and language policy, using the language of advertisement by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in the context of Soroti City.

On the African scene, Opeibi (2012) investigates how the African linguistic environment reflects the continent's complicated language policies, noting that prior academic works on the intricate linguistic landscape of Africa have covered language planning techniques and

policy frameworks used in several African countries. The research emphasizes the impact of historical, colonial, and post-colonial language policy on the linguistic mix of African public places especially in the field of commercial advisements. If this is true of Africa as a continent, then it is important to find out what is reflected in Soroti City, an urban setting in Eastern Uganda.

In East Africa, studies, such as the one carried out by Mazrui (1998), dig into linguistic landscape as a reflection of the region's diverse linguistic mosaic, noting that East Africa's linguistic diversity, shaped by varied colonial histories and post-independence language regulations, is seen in public settings. The current study therefore intended to find out more about such a historical reflection of language policy on linguistic landscape, given that Soroti City is part of Uganda, a former colony of Great Britain, one of the European powers whose colonial influence has shaped a great number of language policies in both Africa and outside Africa.

In Kenya, Obonyo (2012) investigates Nairobi's linguistic landscape, focusing on how language regulations, such as the usage of English and Kiswahili as official languages, are portrayed in public signage. The research uncovers the negotiation and contestation of language choices in urban settings. The above situation could be equally experienced in Soroti City; thus, this study seeks to unveil it.

Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004), while examining language policies and practices in Tanzania and South Africa, focusing on problems and challenges, note that in both Tanzania and South Africa, the language policies, especially in education, tend to favor foreign languages over local languages, leaving the African child at the risk of achieving little. Given that their study focused on the field of education, yet their findings are very crucial in informing studies relating to language policies, it is worthy to apply their insights into the

area of linguistic landscape in relation to advertisement, which this study seeks to do in the context of Soroti City.

Westbrook et al. (2023, p. 849) in a study in Uganda, note that language policy aggravates regional linguistic disparities. Referring to scholars from Uganda, they note that the language policy, which demands that either one local language or English be taught at a time, is effectively "either/or"-monoglot/monolingual and isolates languages, dividing people in multilingual situations. The above study, however, focuses more on language use in school settings generally, but since there is the language policy document in function in Uganda, which the study by Westbrook et al. (2023) refers to, this study will rely on the same document and other related policy documents to investigate and establish how the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti City adheres to or departs from the national language policy and practices of Uganda.

1.2.5 Conclusion and implications for this study

The reviewed literature provides very vital information for this study. For instance, Zeng and Luo (2019) in their observation of linguistic landscape, Sekhar (2017, p. 309), in their mention of the language of advertising as “loaded language”, Shohamy and Gorter (2009), who related linguistic landscape to language policies, all provide a good ground for analysing data related to linguistic landscape. However, since the studies are either too general, such as Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001), who focused on the whole of Europe, Cheng and de Bres (2009) and Liao (2017), whose studies looked at the languages of advertisement in Asia, while Oyesomi and Salawu (2019) focused on Africa as a continent, and paid attention to advertisements in East Africa. It was important to carry out this study so as to add a body of knowledge by focusing on the geographical context of Soroti City and the thematic orientation of advertisement, particularly by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research approach and design, study area, the study population, the sample size and sampling techniques, methods of data collection, research procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations.

1.3.2 Research approach and design

A study design or research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to enable the integration of different components of the study. It enables one realize a coherent and logical flow, effectively addressing the research problem; thus, the type of research design is determined by the research problem (De Vaus, 2006). This study used a blend of descriptive e design and a comparative design. The descriptive design helped to provide a systematic account or description of a given population according to (Dulock, 1993).

On the other hand, a comparative design examines differences by analyzing a small number of cases, without relying on statistical probability methods (Bukve, 2019). This study made a systematic and detailed description of the components of the linguistic landscape in Soroti City, thereby justifying the choice of the descriptive design. It enabled a researcher to examine the patterns of the linguistic landscape of telecommunications advertising in Soroti City, to assess the linguistic features used by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies, as well as establishing the relationship between linguistic landscape and language practices and policies in Uganda.

The comparative design was adopted because while examining the patterns of linguistic landscape of the telecommunication advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda (objective 1) and assessing the stylistic features of the language of advertisement used by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda (objective 2), there was a comparison of the two

telecommunication networks. As for the research approach, the study used qualitative, so as to make in-depth information gathering of and reporting on the subject under study.

1.3.3 Study area

This study was carried out in Soroti City, the business and industrial hub of the Teso sub-region. Soroti City is one of the newest cities created in Uganda in the 2020/2021 Financial Year, by an Act of Parliament on 30th July 2020 (Omuya, 2020). Soroti city provided a relevant urban commercial and multilingual setting in which the advertising language of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda were examined.

1.3.4 Study population

This study targeted 20 streets, buildings with outdoor advertising in Soroti City. The focus of the study was however be on the outdoor advertising signs (billboards, posters, brochures, flyers, sign posts/boards and stickers) from the two mobile telecommunications companies: MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. The two companies were chosen because among the many companies providing telecommunications services in Uganda, only the two have got good grounding beyond Kampala, the capital city; thus, they are reliably grounded in Soroti City.

1.3.5 Sample size and sampling procedure

The researcher used the sample size of 30 signs for MTN Uganda and 30 signs of Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies. I used simple random sampling and purposive sampling procedure. I purposively selected MTN and Airtel signage, then, I applied simple random sampling to get the desired number of signs, that is, thirty signs for MTN and thirty signs for Airtel. This ensured equal opportunities for each of the signs in the group of the initially purposively selected signs. The choice of thirty signs align with the view of Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) who argue that qualitative sample adequacy depends on information power rather than a fixed numerical requirement.

1.3.6 Data Collection

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering relevant information from selected sources. The study used different data collection methods.

1.3.6.1 Data collection methods

Observation method

The study used observation as one of the primary methods of data collection. This was chosen because the phenomena under study could not provide verbal information about themselves (Choudhury, 2023). Observation involved a careful visual examination of the identified advertisement signs, noting down essential information that could provide the required data. This observation generated information for objective one and partly for objective

Document Analysis

The study also used document analysis to collect data. This method entailed a detailed review of the Government White Paper (1992), which contains Uganda's National Language Policy, as well as other relevant legal documents such as the Constitution of Uganda. The researcher identified and extracted relevant content from these documents and related it to field findings to ensure accurate interpretation. Document analysis was also applied to the written texts of advertisements to analyze their stylistic features.

1.3.6.2 Data collection instruments

The study used the following research instruments to collect data from the field.

Observation Checklist

An observation checklist was designed to guide the systematic study of advertisement signboards, billboards, posters, flyers, and other outdoor displays. The checklist focused on capturing stylistic features and other relevant elements of the advertisements.

Document Analysis Guide

A document review checklist was developed to guide the examination of the Government White Paper (1992) and other documents related to Uganda's language policy. It was also applied to advertisements requiring textual analysis, such as brochures and flyers. Textual analysis was considered an extension of document review, as it focuses on uncovering intricate details within the documents to achieve a deeper understanding (Stewart, 2024).

1.3.7 Data quality control

Under this, I considered credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and reflexivity, as advanced by Stenfors, Kajamaa and Bennett (2020). According to Stenfors et al. (2020), credibility refers to the consistency between the theory, research question, data collection, analysis, and results, ensuring that the sampling strategy, data depth, and analytical methods are suitable for the study's framework.

Dependability indicates that enough detail is provided for another researcher to replicate the procedural steps, even if they might arrive at different conclusions. Stenfors et al. (2020) also observe that confirmability involves researchers demonstrating how they reached their findings through detailed descriptions and the use of quotes, while transferability means that the findings can be applied to other settings, contexts, or groups. The authors also state that reflexivity is the continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research.

To ensure credibility, I had a maximum field engagement in Soroti City, making careful and persistent observation and documenting advertisements of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda mobile telecommunication companies in order to be able to gain a deep understanding of the linguistic features.

For dependability, I ensured that detailed records of all processes followed in the course of carrying out were kept; such as collection of raw data, field note-taking, and coding strategies, and other decision-making processes. This was done to allow any other researcher to follow the research steps and verify the consistency of the study.

To ensure confirmability, I maintained a journal record in a reflexive journal to help keep a track of reflections, possible biases, and assumptions that may influence the research process, to help in achieving and maintaining objectivity.

To achieve transferability, I provided a rich and detailed description of the study area, participants, and respective settings. This will create provision for other researchers to assess the extent to which the findings can be applied to similar contexts. I made a careful selection of the sites that are representative of the broader advertising practices in Soroti City, so that the findings could be used to improve on the findings in other less concentrated areas.

Reflexivity was achieved through continuous self-reflection throughout the whole process of the study, looking at how components like the background, the research questions and methodology can influence the study outcomes so as to ensure alignment with the data. And, lastly, I engaged in a critical reading of my research thesis before submitting it to the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training.

1.3.8 Research procedures

I sought an introductory letter from the Faculty of Education and Humanities and use the letter to access the signs under study, through permission from local authorities. I proceeded to the field to collect the data using the designed instruments, focusing on the advertisement signs of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in the streets, on houses, and other public spaces such as the Independence Ground, as well as other advertisement documents like flyers and brochures accessible from company shops and agent outlets.

1.3.9 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the act of transforming collected data into informative knowledge (Taherdoost, 2022). For this study, after collecting the field data, I sorted, compiled, coded and presented all the sorted data. Since this study was qualitative, I applied content analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013), content analysis involves finding specific words or concepts in qualitative data and using them to infer or deduce an explanation for a phenomenon. Specifically, content analysis looks at who says what, to whom, and with what effect in order to characterize the qualities of the content of the text.

1.3.10 Ethical considerations

In order to ensure adherence to the ethics of research, I ensured that data collection only proceeds after accessing due permission from the rightful authorities. There was due acknowledgement of the works of other authors and researchers in the literature through in-text citations and references to avoid any tendency of plagiarism. I also sent my work for the anti-plagiarism check and generated a certificate too.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and discusses the findings of the study titled "*The Linguistic Landscape of Advertisement in Soroti City: A Case Study of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda Telecommunication Companies.*" The study was guided by a qualitative research approach, which allowed for an in-depth understanding of language use in the public advertising space. It employed observation and document analysis as the primary methods of data collection, enabling the researcher to gather relevant visual and textual data from the field.

The research adopted descriptive and comparative designs to systematically describe and contrast the linguistic features evident in the advertisements of the two telecommunication companies. The study was underpinned by the Linguistic Landscape Theory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997), which offered a comprehensive lens for examining language use by focusing on its visual representation in public spaces within the context of outdoor advertising in Soroti City. Accordingly, this theory enables an in-depth exploration of how MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda use language on signage to reflect broader sociolinguistic dynamics. This chapter, therefore, presents the findings in line with the objectives of the study and sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What are the patterns of linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City?
- ii. What stylistic features are employed in the language of advertisement by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda?
- iii. What is the relationship between the linguistic landscape in Soroti City with the language policies and practices in Uganda?

CHAPTER TWO

Patterns of linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda

2.0 Introduction

The analysis of data obtained through field observation revealed clear patterns of linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City. Notable trends emerged in relation to linguistic dominance, multilingual signage, and spatial distribution, and these are presented in the subsequent sections.

2.1 Spatial distribution

One salient linguistic pattern that emerged from the field observation method pertains to the spatial distribution and coverage of outdoor advertising across Soroti City. This distribution was analyzed from two distinct perspectives. While signage from both MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda was observed throughout Soroti City, advertisements affiliated with MTN, typically characterized by a prominent yellow color, were notably more prevalent than those of Airtel Uganda, with MTN signage estimated at over 300 and Airtel at over 200. These observations were made specifically in key commercial areas, including Soroti Main Market and the main street of Soroti City, providing a representative view of the distribution and visibility of advertising for the two telecommunication companies. This notable disparity in visibility suggests a possible dominance or greater market presence of MTN Uganda within Soroti City, as evidenced by the numerical and spatial superiority of its advertisements relative to those of its competitor. Secondly, through observation, the spatial allocation of signage within the city reveals further insights.

A comparative observation between the central business district and the peripheral areas of Soroti indicates that advertising signage is significantly more concentrated in the urban core

than in the outskirts. The inner city exhibits a denser and more conspicuous presence of advertisements, whereas the peripheral zones feature comparatively sparse displays. This variation in density may imply that telecommunications companies prioritize visibility in areas with higher human traffic and commercial activity, potentially reflecting a strategic alignment with zones presumed to have greater customer engagement or purchasing power.

The findings reveal that MTN Uganda's advertising signage is more widely distributed and more dominant than that of Airtel Uganda across Soroti City aligns with broader trends in the national telecommunications sector, despite increasing competition in Uganda's telecommunication industry, MTN Uganda has consistently maintained its market leadership, largely due to its strategic and substantial investments in marketing.

The visibility of MTN's branding in the city's public space, as revealed in this study, thus reflects the company's broader marketing philosophy and resource allocation, which has historically positioned it as the most prominent player in the industry. In 2011, MTN was the leading spender on marketing and publicity, investing a substantial Shs31.8 billion, far surpassing Airtel's Shs23.7 billion (Shinyekwa, 2013). This considerable investment explains the Firm's sustained dominance in terms of brand visibility, which this study confirms through its analysis of Soroti City's advertising landscape.

As noted in Shinyekwa (2013), MTN's high advertising budget corresponds to its frequent launch of new products and services, necessitating aggressive and widespread promotion. Whereas Shinyekwa (2013) attributes MTN's dominance in the telecommunications sector to its substantial advertising expenditure, the present study reveals that the spatial and quantitative prominence of MTN's outdoor advertisements in Soroti City not only reflects broader national marketing trends but also underscores the deliberate exploitation of the linguistic landscape as a strategic instrument for asserting market dominance and enhancing brand visibility within Uganda's telecom industry.



Figure 1: An extract showing the concentration of signage of MTN and Airtel Uganda advertisements in Soroti City Main Market

As reflected in the figure one above, there was concentration of advertising notices within the market and main street by both MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti city. I suppose it was meant to attract wide range of customers within the city.

2.2 Visible languages (i.e. English language, Kiswahili, Ateso, Luganda and Kumam)

The current findings demonstrate the deliberate use of five languages; English, Kiswahili, Ateso, Luganda and Kumam, in the signage of MTN and Airtel Uganda. However, while five languages were noticeable across both companies' advertisements, there were no instances of a single Airtel Uganda signage incorporating all five languages, unlike MTN, which occasionally included four languages on a single display in Soroti City, reflecting a distinctly multilingual linguistic landscape¹. Each of these languages served specific communicative functions, indicating a strategic deployment of multilingual resources in advertisement. Notably, the use of greetings such as *hello* (English), *hujambo* (Kiswahili), *biaibo* and *yoga* (Ateso), and *yoganu* (Kumam) exemplifies positive politeness strategies, phatic expressions used to establish rapport, reduce social distance, and simulate interpersonal interaction within

¹ Note that the use of Kiswahili and Kuman is reflected in Figure 3 and Luganda in Figure 4.

public signage. Furthermore, interrogative forms like *hujambo?*, *biaibo?*, and *yoganu?*, all translating roughly to ‘how are you?,’ operate as indirect speech acts whose communicative function is not to solicit a response but to attract attention and establish a conversational tone, thereby drawing the reader into the advertised message. Complementing these are imperative constructions such as Dial *165# (English), *itosom *165# arai MoMo app* ‘use *165# or MoMo app’ and *otac kitosomai MoMo* ‘pay using the MoMo app’ both in Ateso, which perform directive speech acts and are syntactically marked by the use of the imperative mood across the respective languages. Consider the following figures:



Figure 2: An extract showing the use of Ateso in MTN advertisement



Figure 3: An extract showing the use of English in the Airtel Uganda advertisement

These constructions function to guide consumer action, emphasizing instructional clarity within the multilingual space. The deliberate integration of these linguistic forms across multiple local and official languages not only enhances the inclusivity and accessibility of the advertisements but also reflects a pragmatic exploitation of the linguistic repertoire available in Soroti City. Thus, the findings underscore how the multilingual landscape of outdoor advertising operates as a communicative ecology in which language choice, speech act types, and sentence moods are tactically employed to fulfil diverse pragmatic goals in a competitive commercial environment.

The multilingual composition of outdoor advertisements observed in Soroti City closely aligns with global patterns of linguistic representation in public commercial spaces, particularly as evidenced in the Asian and Nigerian contexts. The current findings, which demonstrate the deliberate use of five languages, English, Kiswahili, Ateso, and Kumam, in MTN Uganda's advertising campaigns, corroborate observations made by Cheng and de Bres (2009) and Liao (2017) regarding Asia's advertising landscape. In their analysis, the Asian linguistic space is characterized by a strategic interplay between local languages and English, where English serves to project cosmopolitan appeal while local languages are embedded to establish cultural resonance and increase consumer relatability. Similarly, in Soroti, the integration of indigenous languages such as Ateso, Luganda and Kumam alongside English and Kiswahili not only reflects the multilingual reality of the city but also functions as a pragmatic advertising strategy tailored to the sociolinguistics profiles of the target audience. This deliberate language selection, as observed in both contexts, signifies a linguistic commodification wherein language choice is guided by the functional and symbolic capital each language carries within a given locality.

Further reinforcing this pattern is the Nigerian example, which confirms the prevalence of multilingualism and code-switching in commercial linguistic practices (Dalamu, 2017).

Scholars such as Kress (1981), Putz (1997), and Buda (2006) conceptualize language choice within sociolinguistics and stylistics as a dynamic negotiation shaped by audience, context, and communicative intent. Buda (2006), in particular, emphasizes that bilingual and multilingual individuals often shift between languages, such as English, Yoruba, and Igbo, in response to contextual demands, a behavior that advertising agencies adopt to appeal to diverse audiences (Dalamu, 2017). Thus, the linguistic landscape in Soroti is not isolated but fits within a broader global trend of multilingual advertising, where language becomes a flexible and strategic resource in the pursuit of effective consumer communication across diverse sociolinguistics environments.

2.3 Use of multilingual signage

Observation from the field revealed that both monolingual and multilingual signages were noticeably employed in the outdoor advertisements of MTN and Airtel Uganda across Soroti City. These linguistic forms were not only visible across various commercial spaces but also demonstrated a deliberate pattern of language use in the advertising strategies of the two companies. While certain advertisements relied solely on one language, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, others strategically combined multiple languages within a single signage, as reflected in Figure 3 below. This alternating pattern between single and multiple language usage was consistent across different advertising locations, suggesting a structured yet diverse linguistic landscape characterizing the visual language of telecommunications advertising in Soroti City. Consider Figure 3 and Figure 4 below:



Figure 4: An extract showing the use of Ateso, English, Kiswahili and Kumam



Figure 5: An extract showing the use of English and Luganda

The presence of multilingual signages in the outdoor advertisements of MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City reveals differentiated linguistic strategies employed by the two telecommunication companies. While both companies are prominently represented in the urban linguistic landscape, a clear distinction exists in their linguistic encoding. Airtel Uganda's signage predominantly features Kiswahili, English, and Luganda. In contrast, MTN employs a wider range of languages, including Kiswahili (e.g., 'Hujambo', 'hello'), English

(e.g., 'dial'), Kumam (e.g., 'Yoganu', 'hello'), and Ateso (e.g., 'biabo', 'hello'). Airtel's signage, on the other hand, typically uses Kiswahili (e.g., 'paka-night', 'till night'), Luganda (e.g., 'Tugabane', 'let's share'), and English (e.g., 'dial', 'pay', 'happiness'), but does not combine all four languages on a single display.

Clearly, MTN incorporates more local languages to establish a stronger connection with the community, whereas Airtel targets a broader consumer base, which may include non-local residents. Notably, English remains dominant across both companies' signage, reflecting a streamlined and economically efficient approach, yet one that may underrepresent the multilingual complexity of the region. These findings align with the Linguistic Landscape theory of Landry and Bourhis (1997), which emphasizes how language displayed in public spaces reflects social, cultural, and economic dynamics within a community. This divergence suggests that MTN is more likely to address the multilingual makeup of the speech communities in the region, thereby enhancing accessibility and resonance with a broader demographic than Airtel Uganda, whose linguistic strategy appears more limited in scope.

These findings resonate with Fiveable (2024), who posits that multilingual signage and advertising not only reflect demographic realities and language hierarchies but also perform symbolic functions, signaling inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and responsiveness to the presence of both local and transregional language groups. The use of Kiswahili, for instance, aligns with its role as a transregional lingua franca in East Africa, while the inclusion of indigenous languages such as Ateso and Kumam foregrounds a recognition of local linguistic ecologies. Moreover, Fiveable (2024) emphasizes the economic and communicative relevance of multilingual signage, as it allows broader audience engagement through a single resource.

2.4 Language of dominance

Another salient pattern emerging from the analysis of outdoor advertising in Soroti City pertains to the prominence of English across both monolingual and multilingual signage. Although MTN Uganda employed a multilingual strategy incorporating English, Kiswahili, Ateso, and Kumam, and Airtel Uganda relied more on English, with few instances of Luganda and Kiswahili. This linguistic predominance underscores the deep-rooted status of English as Uganda's official language, reflecting its institutionalized role in governance, education, and formal communication domains.

The repeated distribution of English in advertising, often in combination with or in preference to local languages, suggests its perceived utility and wider communicative reach within the speech community. Despite the evident multilingual composition of Soroti City, as demonstrated by the inclusion of other regional languages in MTN signage, the linguistic landscape reflects an implicit hierarchy in which English holds symbolic and pragmatic primacy. The frequency and visibility of English in signage thus appear to be a strategic communicative choice, anchored not merely in a seemingly official language policy, but in its socio-economic currency and broader audience intelligibility. This pattern reinforces the notion that while multilingualism is acknowledged in the public space, English functions as the *lingua franca* that unifies heterogeneous linguistic groups, ensuring effective message transmission. The communicative implications of this are twofold: first, it suggests that advertisers prioritize reach and clarity by using English, assuming a high degree of English comprehension among the urban population; and second, it may reflect and further entrench socio-linguistic inequalities by positioning English above local languages in public communication hierarchies. Importantly, this finding aligns with broader patterns of linguistic dominance in postcolonial African contexts, where English serves as both a practical medium and a symbol of modernity, access, and authority (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1993).

This current state of affairs, where the English language features as the most prominently displayed language across the observed advertisement signage in Soroti City, despite the visible presence of other languages, i.e., Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili in MTN advertisements, highlights a distinctive linguistic hierarchy in the city's advertisement landscape. MTN's multilingual signage contrasted sharply with Airtel Uganda's predominantly monolingual English signage, yet in both cases, English retained a dominant visual and textual presence. This empirical realization aligns with Bhatia's (1987) analysis of South Asian advertising, where over 90% of the 1,200 advertisements examined utilized English in product naming, pointing to its elevated socio-economic value. Similarly, Baker (2006) and Hernández (2012) document the predominance of English in American advertisement spaces while noting the strategic deployment of minority languages to appeal to targeted demographics. The situation in Soroti echoes this dual dynamic: the multilingual signage in MTN suggests an acknowledgment of the local speech communities, but the overarching recurrence of English, irrespective of the platform, attests to its institutional legitimacy, its communicative efficiency, and its perceived prestige.

In contexts like Indonesia, where English is not widely spoken, Da Silva (2014) illustrates how English permeates media and advertising as a mark of global modernity, despite the existence of hundreds of indigenous languages. This global pattern, as framed by Kachru's (2005) *Expanding Circle*, finds resonance in Uganda's linguistic reality, where English, despite being one among many, rises above as the default code of visibility, authority, and aspirational appeal in public signage and advertising.



Figure 6: An extract showing dominant use of English in Airtel advertisement

2.5 Forms of outdoor advertisement media

Observations made from the field regarding the patterns of advertisement materials employed by both MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City reveal a significant deployment of diverse outdoor media tailored to maximize public engagement and visual penetration.

The advertisements manifested consistently in the form of billboards, shopfront signs, branded kiosks, and street banners, each with a functional and strategic significance in shaping the city's linguistic and commercial landscape. Billboards, towering above major roads and intersections, served not only as large visual advertisement media but also as markers of prestige, suggesting that the language and design choices inscribed on them were deliberate and meant to speak authoritatively to a wide and mobile audience. Shopfront signs, affixed directly to vendor premises, revealed a more community-embedded advertising logic, strategically placed where language choice could reflect local affiliations and immediate linguistic relevance. Branded kiosks, often mobile or semi-permanent structures operating within densely populated trade zones, combined functional commerce with linguistic display,

thereby are embedding the language of branding directly within the sphere of everyday interaction.

Street banners, on the other hand, exhibited more temporal and campaign-specific messages, often displayed a cross roads or tied to poles in clustered formations, signaling urgency, festivity, or promotional activities. That both telecommunications companies mirrored each other in the deployment of these materials not only points to a standardization in advertising modes across corporate actors but also raises critical questions about the underlying language choices on each medium, particularly with regard to audience segmentation, spatial visibility, and communicative intent within Soroti City's linguistic landscape of advertisement.

The realisation that both MTN and Airtel Uganda actively deploy a range of outdoor advertising materials, specifically billboards, shopfront signs, branded kiosks, and street banners, throughout Soroti City concurs with the findings in Shanmugathas (2018) and Max (2025), which affirm the communicative and psychological effectiveness of such media. Billboards, for instance, as observed in the local context, were consistently employed in prime urban spaces, roundabouts, highway junctions, and commercial corridors, mirroring Shanmugathas's (2018) assertion that their large size and visibility ensure maximum audience reach, particularly in vehicular and pedestrian zones. The finding that these structures are preferred by the telecommunications companies aligns with Max's (2025) evidence showing high retention and response rates associated with signage, especially digital variants (which was also noticeable in the context of Soroti City), even though the latter is not yet fully fledged in Soroti City. Likewise, the use of shopfront signage and branded kiosks reflects a nuanced adaptation to the communicative economy of the everyday, a medium through which localised, enduring brand presence is maintained. This observation correlates with Max's (2025) notion of signboards as durable, weather-resistant, and strategically fixed communicative tools, allowing for prolonged visual interaction with the

brand. Posters, which showed dominance Soroti City, emerged sporadically, offering immediate, low-cost communication that supports Max's claim about their functional use in busy pedestrian areas. Moreover, Omuzinny (2023), through Martin Sebuliba's commentary on the ecological impact of billboard casings, invites critical reflection on the sustainability of such pervasive advertising forms. While this issue was not directly observable in the field, its relevance becomes apparent considering the extent of billboard coverage across Soroti. Importantly, the localisation of these global advertising practices not only signals an incorporation of corporate communication strategies in Uganda's urban situation, but also raises essential questions regarding linguistic inclusivity, material sustainability, and spatial advertisement.



Figure 7: An extract showing different forms of outdoor advertisements in Soroti City

The billboard above is taken from the Soroti-Mbale highway, next to Soroti Secondary School and opposite Hass Patrol Station. This outdoor signpost is meant to attract wide range of customers including students, parents and the entire community within Soroti City.

2.6 Thematic patterns

Observations conducted in Soroti City reveal a prominent pattern in the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertisements, particularly those of MTN and Airtel Uganda, where signage conveys messages intricately tied to the theme of business and socio-economic structures of the local community, revealed by the use of customer's directives on transaction and persuasive language. A recurring communicative thread in these advertisements is the overt emphasis on financial transactions, most explicitly signaled through the universal mobile money access code *165#, which, while serving all networks, stands as a linguistic shorthand for economic mobility and digital finance. Beyond this, the theme of education was also noticeable, denoted by matrix code of payment of school fees, utility facilitation (water and electricity bills), and governmental operations such as taxation compliance, all presented in a language and form that bridges commercial intent with civic relevance. This linguistic encoding of social services into the landscape suggests that telecommunications advertisement in Soroti functions not merely as a vehicle for brand visibility but as a dynamic interplay between corporate service provision and the functional imperatives of urban livelihoods. The interpretive implication here is significant: these signs are not neutral artifacts but act as a mirror of social issues, pointing out obligations and addressing the need of the community of Soroti City.

The findings demonstrate that advertisements in Soroti, particularly those of MTN and Airtel Uganda, actively reflect and shape the city's multilingual public sphere. MTN's use of multiple local languages alongside English shows a deliberate strategy to connect with the community and acknowledge local cultural identities, while Airtel's more limited linguistic range targets a broader, potentially non-local audience. This observation aligns with Landry and Bourhis' (1997) Linguistic Landscape theory, which posits that the languages displayed in public spaces are not merely communicative tools but also markers of social, cultural, and

economic relations. In this context, the strategic deployment of languages in signage illustrates how commercial practices both mirror and influence social hierarchies, cultural recognition, and community belonging. The differential use of languages by the two companies further highlights how linguistic landscapes mediate local engagement, showing that language in public advertising operates as a subtle instrument for negotiating identity, asserting presence, and shaping socio-economic participation within a multilingual urban setting. Consider Figure 5 and 6 below:



Figure 8: An extract showing multiple thematic presentations

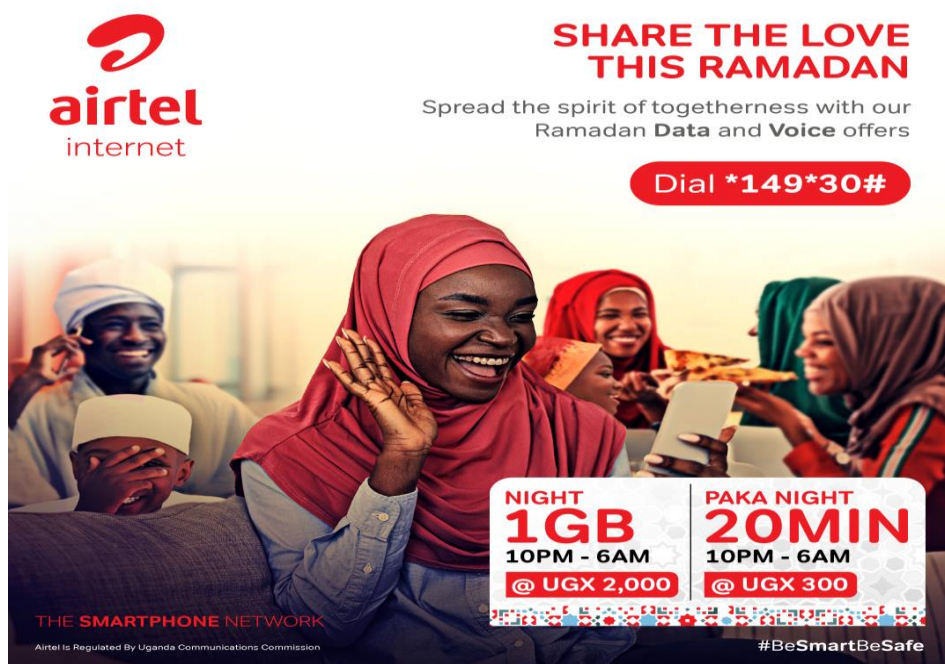


Figure 9: An extract showing the celebration of Ramadan

As can be seen from above, the current state of affairs on the different dimensions of thematic patterns (i.e. theme of family, happiness and religion) in Soroti City's linguistic landscape agrees with established scholarly and institutional understandings that corporate advertisement in multilingual urban contexts now operates beyond mere commercial promotion, entering the domain of civic engagement and social advocacy. Observations of MTN and Airtel Uganda's signage indicate a recurring emphasis on socio-economically salient themes, particularly financial inclusion, utility facilitation, public health, and education, communicated through iconic codes such as *165#, and statements encouraging tax payment, school fees settlement, and bill clearance. These patterns align with Landry and Bourhis's (1997) Linguistic Landscape Theory, which asserts that public signage not only reflects but also constructs the social reality of a community by indexing power, access, and participation. The resonance of these patterns is further confirmed by Airtel Uganda's 2023 partnership with UNICEF, which seeks to provide zero-rated access to online learning platforms, digitally connect 100 schools, and empower marginalized learners, thereby embedding educational equity into the telecommunications discourse (Airtel Uganda, 2024). Simultaneously, MTN Uganda's tariff communications (MTN Uganda, 2024) and Airtel's deployment of public health messages during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate how advertisement texts have evolved into mechanisms for guiding civic behavior and shaping public consciousness. Thus, the findings from Soroti strongly affirm that linguistic landscapes now serve as hybrid communicative spaces where thematic patterns of economic survival, digital literacy, health adherence, and governance are linguistically encoded, correlating with the theoretical and applied perspectives that view signage as a dynamic intersection of corporate intention, community needs, and state priorities.

2.7 Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal distinct yet complementary patterns in the language use of advertisements by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City. Both companies employ a diverse range of multimedia signage, including billboards, signposts, and flyers, to communicate their messages effectively to the local community. A significant aspect of the linguistic landscape uncovered through observation is the use of multilingual signage, reflecting the region's linguistic diversity and the companies' efforts to engage a broad demographic. The patterns of language use across MTN and Airtel advertisements are notably similar, with both brands incorporating key elements such as financial service promotions (e.g., mobile money access), utility payments, and educational initiatives. These advertisements not only serve commercial interests but also reflect socio-economic imperatives, providing a bridge between corporate marketing and public service. The consistent use of visual and linguistic strategies by both telecommunications giants underscores a shared approach to reaching urban populations while also reinforcing the role of advertisements as a dynamic tool for public engagement and community involvement.

CHAPTER THREE

Stylistic features of the language of advertisement used by MTN Uganda and Airtel

Uganda

3.1 The Nature of Code Mixing/Code Switching

The analysis of my findings indicates that both code-switching and code-mixing were observable in the advertisements of MTN and Airtel Uganda. Code-mixing was exemplified in an Airtel signage with the phrase ‘paka-night’ (see Figure 4), whereas code-switching was more characteristic of MTN advertisements, which integrated multiple languages such as Kiswahili (‘Hujambo’), English (‘Hello’, ‘app’), Ateso (‘Biai bo’), and Kumam (‘Yoganu’). These patterns reflect the deliberate use of multilingual strategies to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. The analysis of the advertisements revealed distinct patterns of code-mixing and code-switching, reflecting strategic multilingual communication by both MTN and Airtel Uganda. In Airtel signage, code-mixing was evident in phrases such as ‘paka-night’ (see Figure 4), where Kiswahili (‘paka’) is combined with English (‘night’) within a single expression, creating a concise and culturally resonant message for bilingual audiences. MTN, however, exhibited more complex code-switching, integrating multiple languages within a single advertisement, including Kiswahili (‘Hujambo’), English (‘Hello’, ‘app’), Ateso (‘Biai bo’), and Kumam (‘Yoganu’). Each language served a specific function: Kiswahili and English enhanced intelligibility and aligned with broader national and commercial norms, while Ateso and Kumam reinforced local identity and community engagement. These observations align with Myers-Scotton’s (1993) definitions, which describe code-mixing as the blending of elements from two or more languages within a single utterance, and code-switching as the alternation between languages across contexts or utterances. The patterns demonstrate that code-mixing and code-switching are deliberate strategies rather than incidental features, with Airtel targeting a broader, potentially non-local

audience, while MTN leverages multilingualism to cultivate cultural affinity and strengthen brand presence within Soroti's multilingual urban space. Collectively, these findings illustrate how advertising functions as a linguistic landscape, mediating both commercial objectives and socio-cultural identities in a multilingual environment.

Generally speaking, the present study's findings on code mixing, particularly the deliberate use of English alongside Ateso, Kumam, Luganda and Kiswahili in advertisements by MTN and Airtel in Soroti City, correspond closely with research findings on multilingual advertisement. For example, the findings agree with Dzahene-Quarshie (2013), who also found out that bilingual advertising, especially where English is paired with local languages, is increasingly becoming a global trend. The study posits that English, as a prestigious second language, tends to evoke associations with modernity, global identity, and upward mobility, suggesting its sociopolitical implication as assumed by Landry and Bourhis's (1997) Linguistic Landscape Theory. This theoretical framing correlated with the current findings, where English, although not indigenous to the sociolinguistic environment of Soroti, is prominently featured in advertising messages. Its inclusion reflects not only its international prestige but also its function in indexical branding, where it signals sophistication, professionalism, and connection to the global digital economy (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). Furthermore, Dzahene-Quarshie (2013) identifies three distinct language strategies used in Swahili newspaper advertisements: exclusively Swahili, exclusively English, and bilingual formats involving code-switching between Swahili and English. A similar pattern emerges in the present study, where advertisements sometimes appear entirely in English, except in the case of local language such as Ateso and Kumam; however, a bilingual situation was most commonly involving English mixed with either Ateso, kumam or Kiswahili. Such linguistic diversity suggests that code mixing is not random but audience-specific, adapted to the linguistic profiles and expectations of the immediate community (Landry & Bourhis's (1997).

The non-inclusion of other Ugandan languages in the advertisements, despite their national presence, confirms this locality principle; languages are selected based on their functional value and presence within the target speech community. This aligns with Bwenge (2021), who asserts that Kiswahili, being a regional lingua franca, plays a unifying communicative role in East Africa and enhances brand relatability and reach, especially where it overlaps with the everyday language of consumers.

Leung's (2010) empirical study on code mixing in Hong Kong further extends the comparative value of the current findings. Leung (2010) observed that code mixing, particularly between Cantonese and English, is prevalent in the advertising of convenience and shopping products. In Soroti, the telecommunications services offered by MTN and Airtel fall into a similar product category, affordable, mobile, and embedded in daily life. The use of English in these advertisements appears to fulfil the same function observed by Leung (2010): to attract consumer attention, signal product quality, and address lexical gaps where local terminologies are insufficient or overly formal. Moreover, Leung (2010) noted that English elements in advertisements serve as emotional buffers, especially in contexts where direct expression might be culturally dispreferred. While this nuance was not the central focus of the Soroti findings, the emotive tonality and euphemistic undertones in English-tagged advertisements observed in the study echo this insight.

Leung (2010) also found a strong correlation between English usage in advertising and perceived social prestige, with English being favoured by younger and more educated audiences. This is consistent with the Soroti-based observation that English is often used in advertisements directed at students, urban dwellers, and business clientele, groups typically associated with higher education and economic ambition. Importantly, Leung (2010) emphasized that code mixing strategies should align with the linguistic capacities and socio-economic profiles of the target market. In the Ugandan context, where English holds official

status and is linked to formal education and employment, its presence in advertisements aligns with consumer aspirations, particularly among those who view English as a vehicle for economic advancement and cosmopolitan identity.

Nonetheless, contextual differences between Hong Kong and Uganda must be acknowledged. In Hong Kong, code mixing is normalized across virtually all domains due to institutionalized bilingualism (Leung, 2010), whereas in Uganda, multilingualism is more community-dependent and varies by region. The prominence of Ateso and Kumam in the Soroti advertisements is therefore reflective not of national linguistic policy but of localised communicative dynamics. Yet, even with this divergence, the common thread across these studies remains clear: code mixing is a deliberate, audience-specific communicative resource that not only enhances message comprehension but also encodes identity, aspiration, and cultural belonging (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013; Bwenge, 2021; Leung, 2010). The findings from Soroti thus substantiate and localise a growing body of global research on the symbolic and strategic functions of multilingualism in advertising.

3.2 Humour

Observational data from the linguistic landscape of Soroti City reveal that a notable stylistic feature in the advertisements of MTN and Airtel Uganda is the deployment of humour, prominently conveyed through visual imagery and facial expressions on signage that depict individuals in states of animated laughter or exaggerated amusement. These visual cues are not arbitrary; they function as a calculated stylistic strategy intended to trigger emotional resonance and foster an affective connection with the target audience. In semiotic terms, the laughter serves as an indexical sign pointing to positive user experiences, satisfaction, and the lightheartedness associated with brand interaction. Psychologically, such depictions operate as a form of emotional catharsis, subtly allowing viewers to associate the advertised service

with relief, pleasure, and communal joy, which is particularly persuasive in a socio-economic context where daily challenges may heighten the appeal of emotionally uplifting content.

This use of humour aligns with broader advertising principles in which levity is used to disarm, engage, and retain audience attention, making the advertisement not only more memorable but also more palatable. Additionally, it reflects an astute understanding of the local communicative environment where humour is a valued social lubricant and a culturally grounded medium of interpersonal connection. Therefore, the recurrence of such visuals on billboards, banners, and posters affirms that telecommunications companies are not merely disseminating information but are also crafting affective encounters that reinforce brand loyalty through aesthetic and emotional appeal. The aspect of humor can be seen below:



Figure 10: An extract reflecting humour

The strategic deployment of humour in the advertising campaigns of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda exemplifies a culturally calibrated semiotic and portrayal of them of happiness practice intended to foster emotional resonance and brand intimacy within a diverse consumer base. This phenomenon finds theoretical support in the work of Weinberger et al.

(2012), who underline the ubiquity and persuasive strength of humour in advertising, particularly in its capacity to increase engagement and message retention. However, they emphasize that its effectiveness is inseparable from the socio-cultural frameworks in which it is situated. The Ugandan context demonstrates a high sensitivity to these frameworks, where the humour employed is carefully tailored to local sensibilities, avoiding ambiguity or offensiveness. Eisend (2018) further reinforces this argument by framing humour as a psychosocial mechanism capable of mitigating consumer defensiveness, enhancing message processing, and shaping favourable emotional states that are conducive to brand receptivity. In this sense, humour does not merely function decoratively, but emerges as a central rhetorical device within the advertising schema, actively cultivating consumer goodwill and fostering a shared emotional terrain between advertiser and audience.

Mailchimp (2025), argue that miscalculated humour, particularly that which leans toward sarcasm, cynicism, or the macabre, can rapidly alienate audiences and generate reputational harm.

Though humour create memorable and widely disseminated campaigns, the scholars introduce a critical caution regarding its dual-edged nature. This caution is particularly salient in the Ugandan advertising space, where the humour employed by both telecommunications companies is evidently designed to be inclusive, non-threatening, and emotionally affirmative, thereby adhering to ethical boundaries while maximising affective appeal. The nuanced orchestration of humour observed within these local advertisements thus substantiates the broader academic consensus that humour, when contextually appropriate and ethically framed, serves as an efficacious communicative strategy that bridges corporate messaging with the affective and cultural realities of its intended audience.

The results drawn from both document analysis and systematic field-based observation in Soroti City uncovered code mixing as a recurrent stylistic feature in the language of

advertising by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. This linguistic phenomenon manifested prominently through the blending of English with local languages such as Ateso and Kumam, as well as Kiswahili, each interspersed across signage, posters, and digital billboards. The incorporation of these languages was neither random nor ornamental; it reflected a deliberate communicative strategy shaped by the sociolinguistic profile of the immediate audience. The presence of Ateso and Kumam, predominantly spoken within the region, attests to the advertisers' attention to linguistic proximity, ensuring that their message resonates within the cultural and linguistic comfort zones of the target consumers. Kiswahili, serving a broader interethnic function, operates as a bridge language, expanding communicability without alienating local identity. English, although not indigenous, occupies a unique position as a globally recognized and administratively sanctioned language, appearing primarily in contexts demanding a sense of formality, prestige, or transregional intelligibility.

The absence of other Ugandan languages from the advertising scripts, despite their national presence, underscores the audience-specific orientation of code mixing, pointing to the demographic and geographic determinacy of language choice in commercial messaging. Thus, the linguistic intricacies observed are not merely stylistic embellishments but fundamental indicators of how language operates as a cultural and commercial signifier within the advertising landscape, aligning linguistic form with contextual relevance and communicative efficiency.

3.3 Repetition

Another salient stylistic feature that emerged distinctly from the field-based observations was the pervasive use of repetition in the advertising language of both MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. This repetition manifested in several linguistic forms, including recurring brand

slogans, application names, and frequently cited USSD² codes. For instance, Airtel Uganda consistently reiterated phrases such as *Dial*, *The Smartphone Network*, and *My Airtel App* across various signage, while MTN Uganda prominently featured expressions like *Everywhere You Go*, *Yellow* alongside repeated use of the brand name *MTN*. Additionally, specific service codes such as *165# for MTN and *1001# and *185# for Airtel were prominently and repeatedly displayed across multiple advertisement platforms. This repetitive stylistic approach serves multiple communicative functions. Primarily, it enhances memorability and ensures that key brand messages and service instructions are easily retained by the target audience. It also reinforces brand identity and familiarity, making the advertised content more recognisable and accessible. Such repetition, strategically employed, points to a deliberate linguistic tactic designed to maximise cognitive reinforcement and recall among consumers, thereby contributing significantly to the persuasive intent of the advertisements.

Repetition, as revealed through the analysis of advertising discourse in the current study, stands out as a central rhetorical device used to imprint brand identity and operational familiarity among consumers. This finding aligns with a well-established body of literature which underscores the instrumental role of reiteration in enhancing consumer engagement and information retention. Vuokko (1997) emphasizes that repeated contact with an advertisement fosters heightened awareness and facilitates the internalization of its content. Similarly, Schmidt and Eisend (2015) demonstrate that such recurrence cultivates favorable attitudes and strengthens memory traces, thereby rendering the message more cognitively accessible. The scholarly consensus recognizes the strategic value of repetition in securing brand recognition and influencing purchase intentions, even though debates persist concerning the threshold at which repetition remains effective. While minimalist theorists

² USSD stands for Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (Taskin, 2012). It is a communication protocol used by GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications (originally *Groupe Spécial Mobile* in French) cellular telephones to communicate with the service provider's computers (Taskin, 2012). USSD codes typically begin with an asterisk (*) and end with a hash (#), such as *165#. They are commonly used for services like mobile banking, balance inquiries, and activating data bundles.

such as Krugman (1972) argue that limited exposures may suffice to achieve maximum communicative effect, with empirical support from McDonald (1971) and Gibson (1996), others contend that continued exposure is necessary to reinforce message salience and build enduring consumer-brand relationships. Within this continuum, the present findings resonate more closely with the repetitionist perspective, where repeated linguistic cues are understood not as redundant but as cumulative, promoting gradual familiarization and long-term recall. Schmidt and Eisend (2015) further assert that such reiteration is indispensable for cultivating trust and encouraging brand loyalty, especially in markets where advertising serves both informational and persuasive functions. Thus, the recurrence of specific phrases and symbols within the sampled advertisements reflects a deliberate stylistic and psychological strategy deeply rooted in contemporary advertising theory, reinforcing the notion that repetition is not merely a linguistic ornament but a fundamental communicative architecture through which commercial messaging achieves its persuasive power.

3.4 Imagery

The analysis of field data revealed that imagery as a stylistic feature was not limited to linguistic constructions alone but extended meaningfully into visual representation, particularly through the deliberate deployment of colour schemes, iconic illustrations, and branded graphic elements. MTN Uganda's advertisements consistently featured a dominant yellow background, symbolising energy, optimism, and visibility, while Airtel Uganda employed deep red tones, connoting passion, urgency, and attention-grabbing appeal.



Figure 11: An extract showing the visual representation of yellow MTN Uganda color as opposed to the red color used by Airtel

These colour choices are not accidental; rather, they are deeply embedded in the symbolic strategy of brand identity construction, designed to evoke emotional responses and reinforce consumer recall. No doubt, this perspective regarding the significance of the yellow color correlates with MTN Group (2024), who contends the colour yellow in MTN's branding embodies vitality, optimism, and warmth, symbolising energy and positivity. It reflects the company's cultural identity by projecting confidence, resilience, and a forward-looking spirit. As a dominant visual element, yellow reinforces MTN's commitment to progress and empowerment, creating a strong emotional connection with the public and positioning the brand as vibrant, approachable, and socially engaged. Additionally, both telecommunications companies frequently employed culturally resonant drawings and symbols, such as images of families using smartphones, young people engaging in digital experiences, and locally dressed models, to create relatable mental pictures for their audience. These visual cues serve as a form of non-verbal communication that complements the linguistic content, forming a holistic sensory appeal that is crucial to the effectiveness of the advertisements. In the context of this study, such use of visual imagery signals the interplay between visual semiotics and language in shaping public communication spaces, reflecting how commercial discourse in

Soroti City is increasingly multimodal and strategically curated to capture both the cognitive and emotional attention of consumers.

The findings from the field confirm that imagery serves as a vital stylistic and communicative device in the advertising practices of MTN and Airtel Uganda within Soroti City, functioning not merely as an ornamental component but as a strategic tool for enhancing attention, evoking emotion, and reinforcing brand identity (Ampadu, Aboagye, Ampadu & Ampadu, 2015). The advertisements consistently employed purposeful colour schemes, MTN's dominant use of yellow and Airtel's consistent use of red, alongside pictorial representations such as culturally familiar scenes, locally dressed figures, and technology-oriented visuals. These visual elements signify more than surface appeal; they are semiotic resources that carry affective and cognitive weight, shaping how messages are received and remembered. This observation aligns with the assertions of Bulmer and Buchanan (2006), who argue that imagery is essential in advertising due to its capacity to engage audiences emotionally, build enduring brand associations, and influence consumer behaviour. Similarly, Kovella (2025) posits that although words remain important, it is often compelling visuals that initially arrest the viewer's attention and incite emotional reactions such as excitement, comfort, or curiosity, an effect observed in the visual materials used in both MTN and Airtel's campaigns in Soroti.

The emotional impact of these advertisements is further amplified by deliberate applications of colour theory, a phenomenon extensively documented in marketing literature. According to Guys (2025), specific colours are psychologically encoded to elicit targeted emotional responses: red may suggest passion, urgency, or excitement; yellow communicates energy, joy, and optimism; and blue or white might be used to signify trust or purity. The MTN yellow and Airtel red, as found in this study, therefore do not operate as arbitrary design choices but function as deliberate rhetorical strategies that support brand differentiation and

consumer engagement, confirming Guys' (2025) argument on the strategic deployment of colour in branding. Additionally, the inclusion of culturally resonant imagery, such as local attire, familial settings, or depictions of community interactions, functions to foster identification and relatability, thus enhancing the persuasive power of the message. This is consistent with Kovella's (2025) view that effective imagery must not only attract but also resonate, prompting reactions such as "this looks accessible" or "I feel represented." Collectively, these findings reinforce the broader theoretical position that visual imagery in advertising is a central mode of meaning-making, one that intersects with sociolinguistic realities and branding strategies alike. In the context of Soroti City's multilingual and culturally diverse landscape, such use of imagery not only enhances the effectiveness of advertising but also reflects deeper socio-cultural negotiations embedded in public discourse. The convergence of the current study's findings with those of Bulmer and Buchanan (2006), Kovella (2025), and Guys (2025) therefore underscores the integral role of imagery in shaping the communicative and commercial success of visual advertisements in contemporary Uganda.

3.5 Typographical features

While comparing the typographical design of Airtel's advertisement with that of MTN, a distinct yet complementary approach to corporate communication emerges. As can be seen in Figure 7 above, Airtel's signage employs a clean sans-serif typeface resembling Helvetica or Arial, marked by a deliberate hierarchy in font size and weight that reinforces branding and clarity. The headline '*SMILES BROUGHT TO YOU BY AIRTEL*' is set in an oversized, bold style (approximately 48–60pt), with the brand name '*Airtel*' itself reaching 60pt or more, projecting dominance and corporate identity. Subheadings such as '*Available on MyAirtel App*' and promotional phrases like '*1.8GB & 50MINS @UGX 7,500*' use medium-large fonts (30–36pt), while explanatory text is scaled down to about 16–20pt, maintaining readability

without detracting from the headline. In contrast, MTN's signage employs its proprietary *MTN Brighter Sans* typeface, another modern sans-serif that emphasizes uniformity and brand exclusivity (i.e., Consider Figure 8 below). The typography demonstrates greater variation in weight and style, with bold fonts in the headline '*Best deals with MTN Super bundles*', italicized elements in '*Nothing less!*' and '*everywhere you go*' to soften the corporate tone, and tabular fonts in the pricing table to ensure numerical clarity. The call-to-action '*Dial *160*60#*' is bolded in a larger size to foreground consumer engagement. Thus, while Airtel relies on oversized bold fonts and a structured hierarchy to foreground visibility and brand recall, MTN employs a broader typographic palette to balance corporate authority, emotional appeal, and functional precision. Together, these choices highlight how the two companies use typography not only as a tool of readability but also as a semiotic resource within the linguistic landscape, echoing Landry and Bourhis's (1997) argument that public signage conveys symbolic as well as informational functions in multilingual spaces.

Best deals with MTN Super bundles.
Nothing less!
everywhere you go

VALIDITY	MINUTES (MTN to MTN)	DATA	PRICE (UGX)
3 days	35	500MB	4,500
14 days	750	1GB	20,000
30 days	1,200	6GB	40,000

Dial ***160*60#** for the best deals.

MTN

To B Co supply. For more information, call MTN customer care on 300 (Toll Free). MTN Uganda is regulated by the Uganda Communications Commission, reachable on 0800222777 (Toll Free).

Figure 12: An extract showing typographical features of an MTN signage

The field data revealed that typographical features constitute a significant stylistic dimension in the visual language of advertising by MTN and Airtel Uganda within Soroti City. Both companies deploy distinct typographic strategies to reinforce brand identity, enhance

message salience, and attract consumer attention. MTN advertisements prominently feature bold, sans-serif fonts, often capitalized and rendered in large font sizes to amplify visibility and reinforce authority. The dominant use of bright yellow backgrounds contrasted with black or blue lettering accentuates clarity and visual hierarchy. In contrast, Airtel Uganda consistently employs sleek, modern sans-serif fonts, typically italicized or slightly curved, which convey dynamism and fluidity. The red-and-white color scheme, central to Airtel's visual branding, is maintained across typefaces, with white text often embossed against a red backdrop to ensure stark contrast and instant recognition. Additional typographic elements such as strategic kerning, consistent letter spacing, and symmetrical alignment were observable in both brands, serving to establish visual harmony and facilitate quick readability. These typographic choices, beyond aesthetic appeal, function communicatively by structuring meaning, evoking emotion, and guiding interpretation in a linguistically diverse urban landscape like Soroti City.

The findings from Soroti City that indicates MTN and Airtel Uganda deploy typography as a central stylistic resource in shaping consumer interaction with their advertisements, with distinctive choices in font size, style, and colour, e.g. *MTN Brighter Sans*, Yellow, 'Dial *160*60#' , etc., used to generate visual emphasis, reflect the typographical framework discussed by Amar et al. (2017), who show that typography operates as a deliberate visual system aimed at drawing consumer attention and making language both legible and emotionally resonant. In the context of Soroti City, where audiences interact with static media such as billboards, posters, and flyers in public spaces, the role of typography becomes even more pronounced. This aligns with Childer and Jass (2002), who maintain that in non-audio advertising, the tone and voice of a message are projected through the physical appearance of the text itself, requiring strategic choices in typeface to communicate urgency, friendliness, professionalism, or innovation. The advertisements observed in the field

exemplify this, as typographical cues function as semiotic instruments that replace auditory persuasion with visual suggestion. The field evidence further supports McCarthy and Mothersbaugh (2002), who argue that when typography aligns cohesively with other visual elements, it enhances the readability, retention, and emotional appeal of the advertisement. In Soroti City, this is evident in how typographic consistency across different formats, billboards, shop banners, mobile pop-up ads, helps reinforce brand recognition and consumer trust. Additionally, the emphasis placed on headline prominence, text hierarchy, and chromatic harmony resonates with Bovee and Arens (1989), who argue that typography fitted to an advertising strategy enhances message effectiveness. Though McCarthy and Mothersbaugh (2002) note a scarcity of empirical studies directly linking typographic form with consumer persuasion, the present findings help bridge that gap by showing that in the Soroti context, typographical elements do not merely support the message but embody it, functioning as semiotic anchors that convey authority, urgency, or exclusivity depending on the campaign goal. Thus, the field results substantiate existing theoretical claims while also demonstrating that in the semiotic landscape of Soroti's advertising culture, typography is a primary conduit through which brands construct visibility, emotional connection, and communicative precision.

3.6 Syntactic features

The language of MTN and Airtel Uganda advertisements predominantly employs the imperative mood, using commands such as "Buy now," "Send today," "Get more," "Join," "Subscribe," "Activate," and "Check" to directly engage consumers and prompt immediate action, often paired with incentives like "free data" or "bonus airtime" to enhance persuasiveness. A similar argument is made by Yu (2017), who notes that the imperative mood is employed to persuade readers to take positive and effective action, with imperatives being the most direct means of persuasion. In public service announcements, the imperative

mood is used primarily to convey persuasion, advice, or instructions (Yu, 2017). The indicative mood also appears, though less prominently, in factual statements such as “MTN offers 10GB free data this month,” “Airtel delivers uninterrupted network coverage in Soroti,” and “Enjoy unlimited calls with our weekend bundle,” which provide credibility and inform consumers about products or services. Looking at this discussion, will allow us relate it to Yu (2017) who argues that this type of mood is the most frequently used in advertising to directly address consumers and encourage them to take a particular action , particularly simple positive declarative sentences. It serves as the primary way to convey information clearly and accurately, allowing the advertising message to be communicated effectively. Declarative sentences also help emphasize key points and facilitate repetition, ensuring that the audience retains the essential information. (Yu, 2017).

The subjunctive mood is largely absent because hypothetical or wishful forms, for instance if they ever used “May you enjoy faster internet with our new plan” or “If you were to join Airtel today, you could get bonus airtime,” it would weaken the urgency and immediacy critical to effective advertising.

In other words, the interplay of these moods illustrates a deliberate linguistic strategy. One should note that imperatives drive action, indicatives assert reliability, and subjunctives are rarely used to maintain persuasive clarity and cognitive impact. After all, Yu (2017) indicates that advertisers can convey varying degrees of certainty regarding the truth of a claim. This concept can be partially formalized by defining three core levels on the scale: high, medium, and low. This connects to Landry and Bourhis’ (1997) theory. This is because the linguistic choices advertisers make, including mood and modality, work together as interpersonal resources through which advertisers construct relationships with the customers. It establishes the type of interactions and also function as visible signals that communicate authority, social

meaning, and the intended impact on the audience. This reflects how language conveys power and shapes perception.

A comparative analysis of the current findings on the syntactic structure of MTN and Airtel Uganda's advertisements in Soroti City and the extensive insights by Malyuga and Tomalin (2020), as well as Emodi (2022), reveals both convergence and divergence in the use of linguistic features that enhance advertising efficacy. Similar to Malyuga and Tomalin's assertion that English-language advertising discourse encompasses declarative, imperative, exclamatory, and interrogative sentence types, the current findings affirm the prevalence of imperative constructions as a dominant syntactic strategy employed by both telecom brands. Expressions such as "Buy now," "Send today," or "Dial this code" reflect what Malyuga and Tomalin classify as low-pressure commands used to prompt action with persuasive immediacy, thus aligning with the theoretical view that imperatives are efficient in eliciting consumer responses. Additionally, the concise and fragmented syntax documented in the current study mirrors Emodi's (2022) observation that advertisement language thrives on syntactic minimalism and elliptical constructions to generate urgency, clarity, and rhythm. However, a notable difference lies in the syntactic diversity. While Malyuga and Tomalin present a broad typology of sentence forms, including interrogatives, exclamations, and rhetorical constructions supported by stylistic figures such as antithesis, inversion, and gradation, the MTN and Airtel ads in Soroti City exhibit a comparatively narrow syntactic range, with little evidence of interrogative or exclamatory forms. This could be due to low education levels of the local communities with the social setting of Soroti city. Moreover, while Malyuga and Tomalin explore the use of expressivity-enhancing devices like syntactic anaphora, antimetabole, and oxymorons to heighten consumer emotional engagement, such stylistic flourishes are largely absent in the Soroti advertising landscape, where functional clarity and immediate call-to-action appear to override expressive ornamentation. Therefore,

while the syntactic strategies employed by MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti City resonate strongly with global advertising norms in their use of imperatives and concise constructions, they diverge in their minimal use of interrogative and expressive sentence forms, reflecting a localized linguistic economy tailored for clarity, directness, and mass accessibility.

Furthermore, analysis of findings from observation and document analysis, typical of MTN and Airtel Uganda advertisements in Soroti City, reveals a deliberate and strategic use of punctuation marks to reinforce clarity, urgency, and persuasive appeal in the advertising discourse. The most prominent among these are exclamation marks, full stops, commas, and ellipses, each serving distinct communicative functions within the concise and directive language of commercial messaging. Exclamation marks were frequently employed to inject enthusiasm and emotional intensity into slogans and calls to action, thereby enhancing the expressive force of imperatives such as “Buy now!” or “Get yours today!”, marking urgency and energizing consumer response. Full stops were used to segment short, fragmented phrases into punchy, stand-alone statements that heighten clarity and memorability, such as “More data. Better value. Faster network.” This syntactic fragmentation, punctuated by full stops, contributes to rhythm and emphasis, allowing each phrase to register individually in the consumer’s mind.

Commas were used primarily to list features or benefits in a seamless flow, maintaining cohesion without slowing down the pace of the message, as in “Fast, reliable, affordable.” Ellipses, though less frequent, were occasionally utilized to create a sense of anticipation or continuity, suggesting that the service or offer extends beyond the text and inviting the consumer to imagine further possibilities. The cumulative effect of these punctuation choices demonstrates a calculated stylistic minimalism in which punctuation is not merely a grammatical necessity but a rhetorical tool. This contributes significantly to the effectiveness of advertisement communication in Soroti City, where brevity, emotional immediacy, and

cognitive impact are crucial in influencing consumer behavior within a multilingual and visually competitive urban environment.

The current findings on punctuation use in MTN and Airtel Uganda advertisements in Soroti City, particularly the deliberate deployment of full stops, exclamation marks, and the rare, strategic use of ellipses, resonate with and contrast, existing scholarly literature. Fontana (2021) and Mounir (2025) stress the traditional role of the full stop as a conventional marker that closes advertisement headlines and aligns them with accompanying visuals, signaling that the text is embedded within a larger communicative ensemble. This tradition is evident in the local advertising practices of MTN and Airtel, where full stops are systematically used to punctuate short memorable phrases (taglines), enhancing the clarity, finality, and formal structure of the messaging. However, the findings from Soroti City also indicate a localized evolution of this practice, where full stops are not merely formal markers but are used stylistically to fragment short ‘yellow’ punchy slogans ‘*everywhere you go*’ thereby reinforcing message retention in a linguistically diverse consumer base.

The analysis also shows that while Fontana (2021) advises restraint in using exclamation marks, arguing that they should not substitute for lexical or semantic intensity, the telecom advertisements in Soroti City employ them, albeit sparingly, to infuse emotional urgency or youthful exuberance, especially when targeting youth and urban audiences. This measured application suggests a shift from strict traditionalism toward a hybrid model that accommodates both global advertising conventions and local rhetorical needs. Furthermore, ellipses, which Fontana critiques for undermining rhetorical surprise by telegraphing the punchline, are minimally but tactically used by both MTN and Airtel to build suspense or conversational tone in their mobile money and promotional texts. Thus, while Fontana (2021) and Mounir (2025) promote a disciplined and text-image integrated punctuation philosophy, the Ugandan context reflects a pragmatic adaptation of these norms, balancing conventional

professionalism with context-sensitive creativity to maximize advertising impact in an increasingly multimodal, linguistically fragmented, and attention-scarce environment. In the specific sociolinguistic landscape of Soroti City, where consumers engage with competing visual stimuli and limited time for message processing, this syntactic minimalism emerges as a strategic asset that increases message salience, improves recall, and reinforces brand familiarity.

The deployment of imperative syntax in particular operates not merely as a linguistic choice but as a performative act that transforms passive viewing into an active transactional invitation, thereby enhancing the communicative efficacy of the advertisement. Consequently, these syntactic features and strategies observed in the field are not only linguistically significant but also central to the persuasive mechanics of MTN and Airtel Uganda's branding, contributing meaningfully to the success and penetration of their advertising campaigns within the multilingual and culturally dynamic urban environment of Soroti City.



Figure 13: An extract showing short notices by both MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies

The notices are directed to customers to action about the cellular services provided by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda telecommunication companies.

CHAPTER FOUR

The relationship between the linguistic landscape in Soroti City with the language policies and practices in Uganda

4.0 Introduction

This section rigorously presents and critically analyzes the results, focusing on the interplay between the linguistic landscape in Soroti City and the broader language policies and practices in Uganda. It examines how public language visibility, usage patterns, and signage reflect, reinforce official regulations, cultural norms, and constitutional mandates, offering insights into the practical implementation and social impact of Uganda's language policy.

4.1 Highlights on Language policy guidelines

Uganda's language policy is a comprehensive framework designed to navigate the complexities of multilingualism while promoting national unity, educational equity, and cultural preservation. Rooted in the Constitution of Uganda, particularly Articles 6 and 37, the policy emphasizes the use of non-explicit or obscene language in public communication, advocating for decorum and respect to maintain inclusivity and social harmony. It underscores the importance of reflecting cultural context in language use, ensuring that communication is contextually relevant and culturally sensitive, thereby fostering mutual respect and understanding among the diverse communities. The policy also observes English as the official language, serving as the primary medium of instruction in education and the principal language for government and legal affairs, facilitating communication across the diverse linguistic groups within the country and aligning with international standards. Simultaneously, it advocates for justice for native languages, acknowledging the significance of Uganda's indigenous languages and promoting their preservation and integration into the educational system and public life (Chibita, 2009). This approach aligns with Article 37 of

the Constitution, which affirms every person's right to enjoy, practice, and promote their culture, language, and traditions. Through these principles, Uganda's language policy aims to create an inclusive society where all languages are valued and respected, contributing to the nation's social cohesion and cultural richness. This chapter will therefore examine how findings from the study as far as language use is concerned correlates and adheres to these language policies in Uganda. The subsequent sub sections therefore provide a detailed examination of how the findings from the study on language use in Soroti City correspond to, reflect, and align with Uganda's language policies.

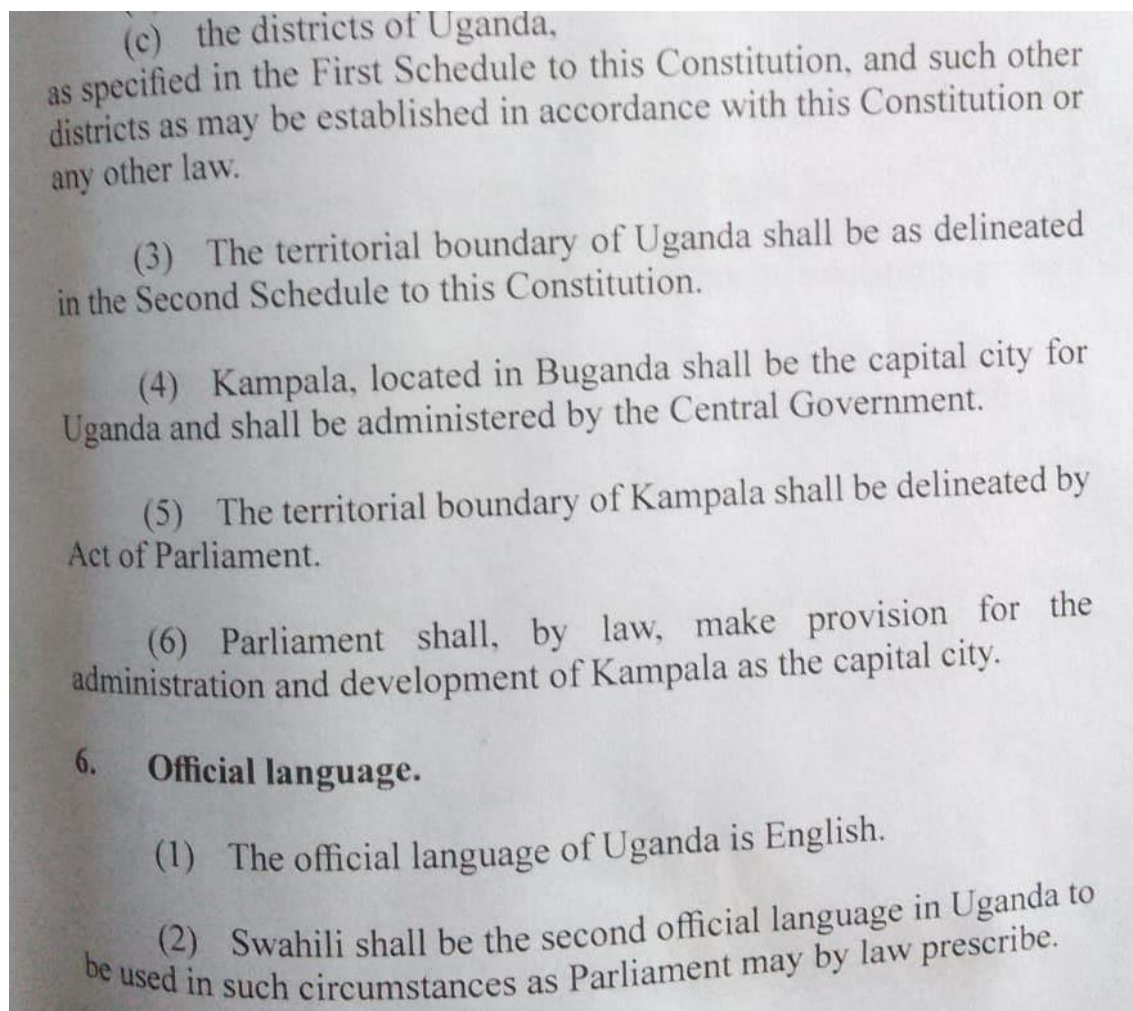


Figure 14: An extract showing the constitutional provision of language guidelines

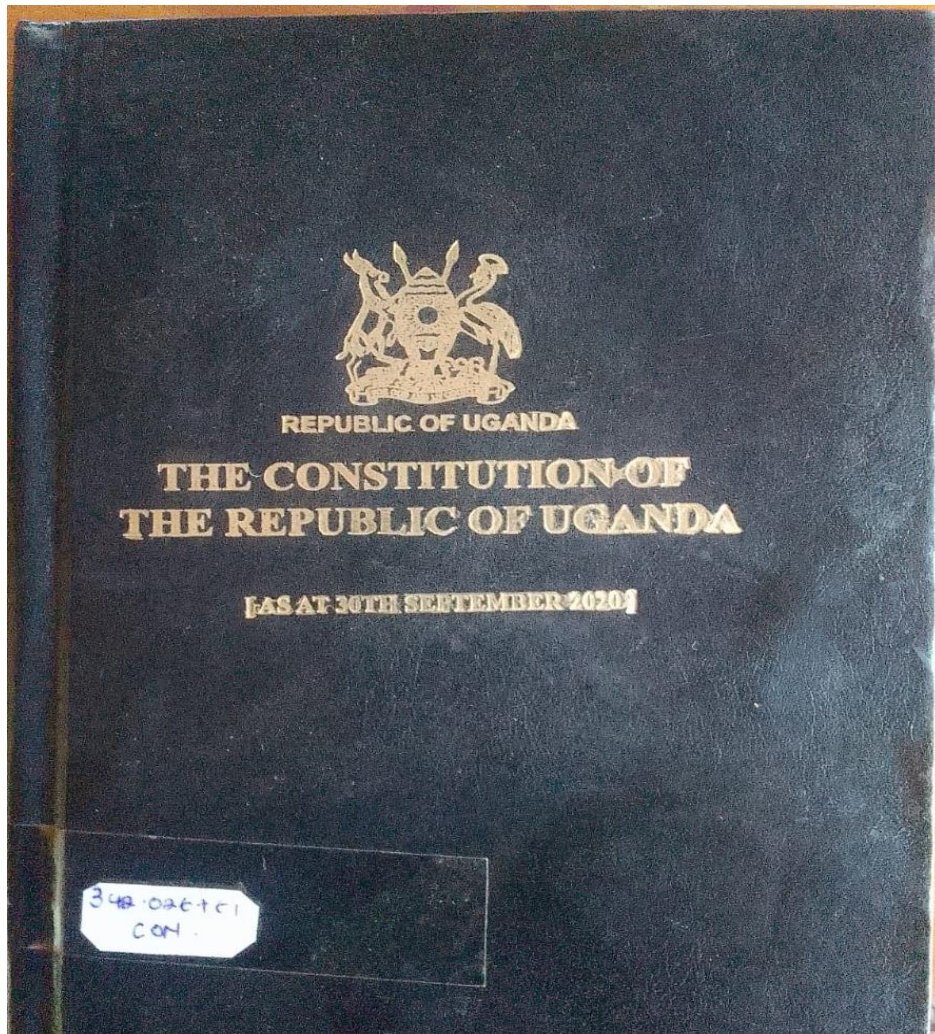


Figure 15: An extract showing a constitution

The constitution is the supreme book of the country showing what needs to be followed and penalties for breaches. The figure above gives highlights on the policies relating to my objective 3.

4.2 Use of non-explicit or obscene language

Observations of the linguistic landscape of MTN and Airtel Uganda advertisements in Soroti City reveal a consistent and deliberate adherence to respectful and socially responsible language, in full compliance with the principle of non-presentation of explicit, defamatory, or body-shaming content. Both telecommunications companies employ messaging that reflects cultural sensitivity and corporate ethics, steering clear of vulgarity or sensationalism, and instead embracing a noble and community-centered tone. For instance, MTN's signage includes statements like **"Dial 165# for instant access to school fees payment, utility bills,*

and more. Keeping your family supported, always” and *“Stay connected with the ones you love. MTN, everywhere you go,”* which emphasize care, familial unity, and accessibility without resorting to exploitative language. Similarly, Airtel Uganda’s advertisements project a dignified tone, as seen in expressions such as *“Airtel Money, sending love, not just money. Pay school fees, support health, and stay connected”* and *“Empowering Uganda through fast, safe, and secure mobile money. Airtel cares,”* which frame financial and digital services in the context of social upliftment and empathy. These messages not only demonstrate a high level of decorum in public communication but also suggest a deliberate alignment with Uganda’s cultural norms and advertising ethics, reinforcing the idea that the linguistic choices in corporate advertising serve both functional and moral purposes. The language used by both MTN and Airtel in Soroti’s advertising landscape affirms that public signage can act as a tool for positive social messaging, projecting civility, cohesion, and collective responsibility, rather than simply being a vehicle for commercial persuasion.

The finding that MTN and Airtel Uganda's advertisements in Soroti City avoid explicit, abusive, body-shaming, or defamatory content and instead employ language that is respectful, socially appropriate, and morally sound aligns with established academic and regulatory perspectives on ethical advertising and the linguistic landscape. For example, Snyder (2003) highlights the dangers of incorporating offensive or sexually suggestive content into public advertisements, warning that such messages can disrupt social harmony and violate cultural sensibilities. In Soroti City, no advertisements observed from either company displayed such content; rather, they adopted expressions such as “Pay your Yaka and Water Bills instantly” (MTN) and “Pay school fees the easy way” (Airtel), both of which reflect civic responsibility and commercial utility without breaching community standards. This finding also corresponds with the guidelines provided by Group Mobile Advertising (2023), which emphasize that advertisements must avoid content likely to cause serious or widespread

offence and should respect prevailing social norms and privacy expectations in each market. Similarly, Howells (2016) asserts that advertisements should not portray individuals without their explicit consent and must steer clear of sexually suggestive or socially inappropriate material. The absence of such content in the observed advertisements indicates a deliberate corporate decision to maintain dignity and decency in public communication, reinforcing the idea that advertising in Soroti is not only about brand promotion but also about cultivating public trust and aligning with national ethical standards. Dal Negro (2008), building on Landry and Bourhis (1997), also affirms that linguistic landscapes reflect purposeful interventions in language use shaped by broader sociopolitical and cultural goals. In this sense, the observed advertisements in Soroti conform to the expectations of Uganda's multilingual and multicultural society by preserving neutrality, promoting socially constructive messages, and aligning with both official language policy and local moral expectations. The implication is that the linguistic landscape of Soroti is being shaped by a form of commercial discourse that integrates with public morality and social order, contributing to a communicative environment that respects diversity while reinforcing national cohesion among the Uganda nationals within the locality of Teso.

4.3 Reflection of cultural context

The linguistic landscape of advertisements by MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti District reveals a deliberate effort to resonate with the cultural rhythms and social experiences of the community, reflecting values and practices that are deeply embedded in the society. The implication is that the linguistic landscape of Soroti City is shaped by a form of commercial discourse that interacts with public morality and social order, creating a communicative environment that respects diversity while reinforcing national cohesion. The observed languages, Ateso, Kiswahili, Kumam, and Luganda, identify specific local communities and reflect their cultural identities and social presence within the city. This demonstrates that

language use in public spaces not only facilitates communication but also signals ethnic affiliation and aligns with Uganda's language policies, which promote cultural representation, social harmony, and respect for indigenous languages alongside English as the official language. From the perspective of Landry and Bourhis' theory (1997), these public language choices function as visible markers of social meaning and power, showing how the linguistic landscape communicates identity, status, and community belonging in a manner consistent with broader social and policy frameworks.

This finding shows that the visual and textual elements employed in the advertising signage do more than promote products and services; they symbolically participate in the cultural calendar and emotional life of the people. For instance, during significant cultural and religious festivals such as Ramadan and Christmas, both MTN and Airtel display messages like "Celebrate the joy of giving this Ramadan with MTN Mobile Money" or "This Christmas, share love with Airtel, send money and gifts instantly," aligning commercial communication with communal sentiments and sacred observances. These culturally tailored messages strengthen the connection between the brands and the everyday lives of citizens, enhancing relevance and emotional appeal. Moreover, rather than engaging in polarizing gender narratives or controversies, the advertisements promote harmonious relationships, particularly romantic love between men and women, as illustrated in Figure 6, where imagery and phrasing evoke mutual affection, shared experiences, and emotional support. In doing so, the companies underscore social cohesion and relational values instead of contesting gender identities or roles. Additionally, educational advancement is recurrently spotlighted in the advertising landscape, with phrases like "Pay your school fees with ease" or "Support your child's future with Airtel Money," signaling a corporate acknowledgment of the role of education in personal and societal progress. This embedding of cultural observances, relational norms, and social concerns into the semiotic fabric of advertisements confirms that

MTN and Airtel not only function as commercial entities but also serve as communicative agents that reflect, reinforce, and even shape the socio-cultural consciousness of Soroti District.

The finding that MTN and Airtel Uganda's advertisements in Soroti District resonate deeply with the community's cultural practices and social concerns is consistent with Alozie's (2005) observation that advertising serves not merely as a vehicle for commercial promotion but also as a mechanism for social mobilization and cultural reflection. In the Nigerian context, Alozie identified that advertisements mirror and shape the ideological, cultural, and developmental trajectory of society by embedding values, symbols, and themes that align with local realities. This parallels the current study's observation that advertisements in Soroti are strategically crafted to coincide with cultural events such as Ramadan and Christmas, promote relational harmony, and support social institutions like education. Such alignment of corporate messaging with social values reinforces the argument that advertising can influence modernization while preserving cultural coherence. Moreover, Parsons and Schumacher (2012) emphasize that effective advertising is contextually adaptive, drawing upon cultural norms to ensure resonance and relevance within its target audience, which further validates the presence of culturally reflective messaging in the Soroti linguistic landscape. The strategic inclusion of love themes and festive greetings in local advertisements does not only signal a cultural familiarity but also enacts a form of ideological alignment that nurtures social cohesion and community identity. This phenomenon finds additional theoretical grounding in Landry and Bourhis's (1997) Linguistic Landscape theory, which posits that visible public language is not merely decorative but indicative of the socio-political and cultural dynamics of a given space. In Soroti, the signage deployed by MTN and Airtel exemplifies this theory by functioning as symbolic texts that articulate and circulate social meaning, reflect power relations, and echo the broader language ideologies of

inclusion, respect, and community engagement. Thus, the linguistic landscape of telecommunication advertisements in Soroti not only supports economic messaging but also acts as a dialogic space where cultural values, national identity, and social priorities are actively negotiated and communicated.

4.4 Acknowledgment of English as the Official Language

The linguistic landscape of advertisements by MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti District reveals a pronounced adherence to the Ugandan national language policy, particularly in the use of English as the official and the national media of communication in public and formal domains. A critical observation of the signage environment indicates that English (and slightly Kiswahili) overwhelmingly dominates the textual composition of advertisements, suggesting its entrenched role as the preferred language for conveying official and commercial messages. This dominance is not only visible in outdoor advertising but also extends into corporate operations, where all communication materials such as service booklets, user manuals, and customer guides are composed entirely in English and, to a smaller extent, in Kiswahili as the national language (Kanana, 2013). From the perspective of Landry and Bourhis's (1997) the Linguistic Landscape Theory, these public language choices are not neutral; they act as visible markers of social meaning, authority, and identity. The dominance of English in advertisements and corporate communications signals both institutional power and socio-economic prestige, while Kiswahili's limited presence reflects its role as a secondary but recognized national language. In this way, the linguistic landscape functions as a tangible representation of the social hierarchy and policy framework outlined by Uganda's language regulations. Moreover, the internal linguistic environment within the operational spaces of both MTN and Airtel demonstrates similar compliance, as all staff-customer interactions, official documents, and procedural signage are conducted and presented in English (Ssempuuma, 2013). This consistent application of English across varied

communicative modes and platforms confirms a strong alignment with the constitutional and educational policies of Uganda, which designate English as the language of instruction in schools, governance, and formal transactions (Ssempuuma, 2013). The presence of English in these advertisements, therefore, is not a mere stylistic preference but a deliberate observance of state language policy, reinforcing its institutional legitimacy and functional primacy in Uganda's socio-economic and administrative structures (Ssentanda & Nakayiza, 2017). The advertising landscape in Soroti thus serves as a microcosmic reflection of the broader national linguistic order, where English assumes the role of a unifying and authoritative medium in official and commercial discourse.

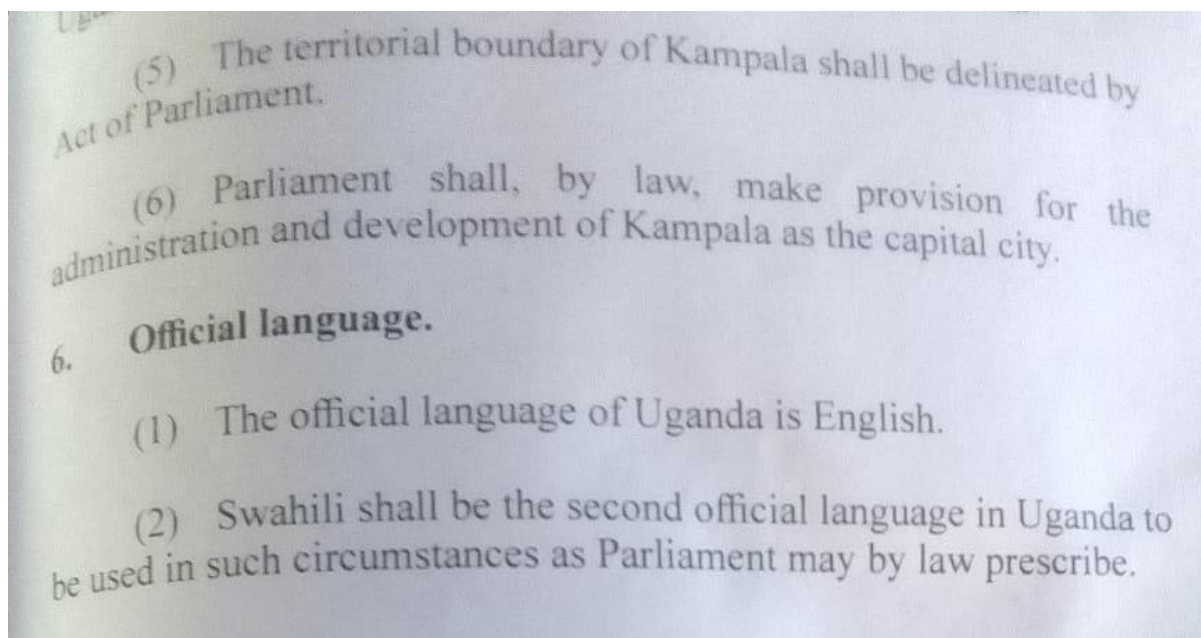


Figure 16: An extract showing constitutional provision of article 6

4.5 Justice for the native languages

The linguistic landscape of advertisements by MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti District reveals a notable and deliberate inclusion of native languages such as Ateso and Kumam, as well as the regional lingua franca Kiswahili, alongside English, reflecting a significant step toward linguistic justice and the promotion of indigenous languages within the commercial sphere. While English, as the official language rooted in Uganda's colonial history,

dominates formal communication, the presence of Ateso and Kumam in several signage and service platforms, particularly those targeting local clientele, signals a conscious recognition of the linguistic and cultural identity of the local population. For example, promotional posters in selected vendor points and mobile money stalls incorporate Ateso phrases such as “Eyalama noi” (thank you very much) to express appreciation, while voice prompts in Kumam are occasionally used in customer service lines during localized campaigns. Similarly, Kiswahili features in mobile money agent training materials and public service messages related to social programs. These inclusions move beyond symbolic representation; they play a functional role in bridging communicative gaps, enhancing comprehension, and fostering inclusivity among community members who may have limited proficiency in English. The implication of this linguistic accommodation is profound, it not only democratizes access to services but also positions native languages within public and economic visibility, encouraging their vitality and relevance in modern communication spaces. By allowing Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili to co-exist with English in advertising, MTN and Airtel indirectly contribute to the preservation and functional expansion of local languages, challenging the colonial hierarchy that historically marginalized them. This approach aligns with contemporary discourse on linguistic human rights and language planning, where the equitable use of multiple languages in public spaces is seen as a pathway toward cultural empowerment, national cohesion, and sustainable multilingualism. In this regard, the advertising practices of MTN and Airtel in Soroti District stand as practical models for how corporate communication can serve both commercial and sociolinguistic objectives.

The finding that there is a close relationship between Uganda’s language policy and the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti District aligns with the scholarly assertions of Namyalo and Nakayiza (2015), who underscore the Ugandan government's deliberate efforts

to promote multilingualism within public domains. Their analysis reveals that despite the global challenge of enhancing multilingual spaces, Uganda has adopted progressive measures aimed at fostering the use of indigenous languages beyond traditional and domestic contexts. These measures explicitly advocate for the inclusion of native languages in wider functional domains such as media, education, governance, and notably, advertising. This policy direction reflects a growing recognition of the value of linguistic diversity as both a cultural resource and a tool for inclusive development. Namakula (2014) further reinforces this perspective by highlighting the government's encouragement of native language use even in formal legal domains, signaling a broader institutional commitment to linguistic pluralism. This commitment is vividly echoed in the advertising strategies of MTN and Airtel Uganda, as noted by Akorli (2016), who observes that these telecommunications companies frequently employ multilingual advertising formats that incorporate English, Kiswahili, and regional languages to communicate more effectively with Uganda's linguistically diverse population. Such practices not only enhance market accessibility but also align with national language policy objectives, as they promote inclusivity, socio-economic participation, and cultural representation within the commercial public sphere (Namakula (2014)). In Soroti District, this alignment is evident in the visible integration of Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili alongside English in promotional materials and customer interaction platforms. The implications of this multilingual advertising approach are multifaceted, it reinforces the legitimacy of indigenous languages in modern communicative settings, fosters identity affirmation among local communities, and exemplifies how commercial entities can serve as active agents in the implementation of national language policies. Thus, the relationship between language policy and advertising practice in Soroti not only affirms but also operationalizes Uganda's broader vision of cultivating a multilingual public sphere.

The findings of this study have significant theoretical implications for the Linguistic Landscape theory as articulated by Landry and Bourhis (1997), particularly concerning the informational and symbolic functions of language in public space. The deliberate inclusion of Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili alongside English in MTN and Airtel advertisements in Soroti District empirically substantiates Landry and Bourhis's (1997) assertion that public signage performs both communicative and socio-symbolic roles. Informationally, the use of indigenous and regional languages enhances accessibility, comprehension, and effective service delivery, thereby reinforcing the functional dimension of the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Symbolically, the visible presence of these languages indexes recognition, legitimacy, and identity affirmation for local communities, reflecting the power of linguistic landscapes to signal language status and social inclusion (Barni et al., 2014).

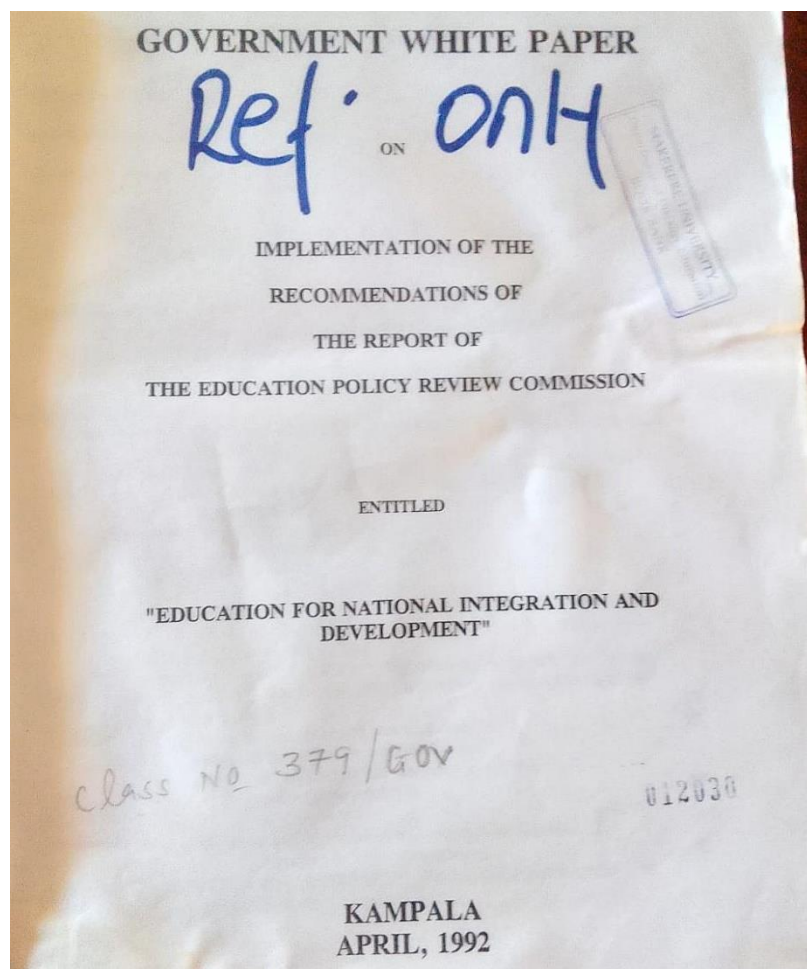


Figure 17: An extract showing a hard copy of Government White Paper

This is a document that contains language policy guidelines that my study sought to discover

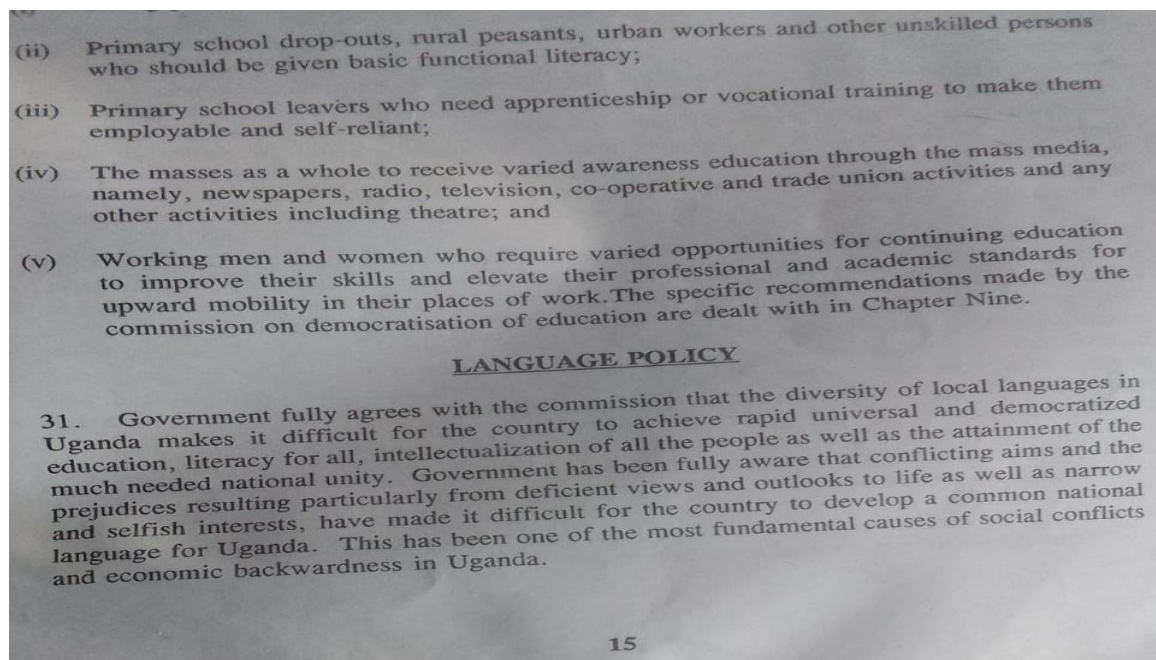


Figure 18: An extract of GWP showing policy issues on language

4.6 Adherence with Article 6 and Article 37 of the Constitution of Uganda

A critical finding emerging from the linguistic landscape of advertisement in Soroti District is that the choice and use of language in public commercial spaces are fundamentally aligned with the constitutional provisions of the Republic of Uganda. The analysis reveals that all the languages visible in public advertisement, most notably English, Kiswahili, Ateso, and Kumam, are consistent with the language framework stipulated in the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (as amended), specifically Articles 5, 6, and 37 (Malan, 2011). Article 6(1) explicitly recognizes English as the official language of Uganda, and this explains its predominance in signage, pamphlets, official guides, and general advertising discourse in Soroti. This is further reinforced by Article 6(2), which provides for Kiswahili as the second official language, and Article 6(3), which opens legal space for the use of other indigenous languages as determined by law (Malan, 2011). Notably, the presence of native languages such as Ateso and Kumam in the advertising landscape underlines the constitutional emphasis on inclusion

and cultural recognition, reflecting the practical implementation of Article 37, which guarantees every individual the right to enjoy, practice, maintain, and promote their language and culture (Malan, 2011). Further still, this pattern illustrates Landry and Bourhis' theory (1997) insightfully, showing that the deliberate use of English, Kiswahili, and indigenous languages in public spaces not only communicates authority and identity but also sustains the social and cultural order, with any deviation from these expected choices threatening to weaken the symbolic and functional coherence of the linguistic landscape. These provisions offer a legal and cultural justification for the inclusion of indigenous languages in advertisements across Soroti. What is equally significant is the absence of foreign languages such as Portuguese, Russian, or Hindi, which are not rooted in Uganda's cultural or constitutional framework and therefore hold no communicative or symbolic relevance in public advertisements. This absence further underscores the principle that public language use must resonate with the linguistic and cultural ecology of the immediate society, as stipulated under Uganda's language policy. The constitutional framework not only prescribes the acceptable languages for public and official domains but also ensures that language use in advertising becomes a vehicle for reinforcing national identity, cultural belonging, and the preservation of indigenous heritage. Thus, the advertising practices of MTN and Airtel Uganda in Soroti District are not random or market-driven choices, but rather a reflection of deeper constitutional mandates that embed language within the legal and cultural infrastructure of the nation. This finding aligns with the understanding that language policy is not merely a tool of communication but a constitutional and sociopolitical instrument that shapes public representation, inclusion, and the national narrative.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how commercial actors can function as active agents in language policy implementation, translating state-level multilingual ideals into observable linguistic practices in public space. This observation aligns with Namyalo and Nakayiza's

(2015) argument that Uganda's language policy framework promotes the expansion of indigenous languages into public and economic domains. By incorporating Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili in advertising, MTN and Airtel operationalized this policy vision within the commercial linguistic landscape, thereby challenging historically entrenched English dominance rooted in colonial structures (Namakula, 2014). In this respect, the study extends Linguistic Landscape theory by illustrating its applicability beyond state signage to corporate advertising, where multilingual visibility not only fulfils commercial objectives but also advances linguistic justice, language vitality, and inclusive urban multilingualism (Akorli, 2016).

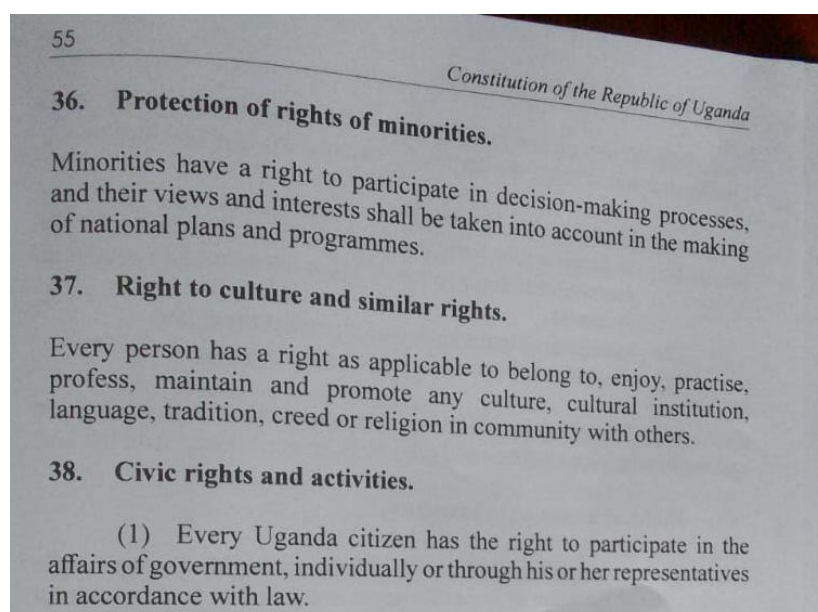


Figure 19: An extract with highlight on Article 37 of our constitution

4.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has revealed that the language of advertisement in Soroti District, particularly by MTN and Airtel Uganda, is shaped by distinct stylistic features such as symbolism, typographical emphasis, imagery, and simple syntax, all designed to engage and inform a diverse audience. These advertisements also reflect a strong relationship with Uganda's language policy by predominantly using English as the official language, in line with Article 6 of the 1995 Constitution, while also promoting linguistic justice through the

inclusion of indigenous languages like Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili. Moreover, the ads complied with ethical standards by avoiding explicit, offensive, or defamatory content. Overall, the findings show that advertising language in Soroti functions not only as a commercial tool but also as a medium for promoting inclusivity, cultural identity, and legal compliance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the study's key findings, draws general conclusions, and offers relevant recommendations. The summary is structured around the research questions that guided the investigation.

5.1 Summary of results

The findings of this study, based on the first, second, and third objectives, reveal a nuanced and multifaceted linguistic landscape of advertising in Soroti City, particularly as employed by MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda. For the first objective, the study establishes that both companies utilize a wide array of communicative tools, ranging from billboards, signposts, and flyers to in-store promotional materials, all of which contribute to a rich and varied visual and textual advertising environment. A striking feature observed is the use of multilingual signage, which demonstrates a deliberate engagement with the region's linguistic diversity. This multilingual strategy not only caters to the practical demands of marketing but also affirms the companies' attempts to include broader sections of the population, thereby fostering community inclusivity. The language use in these advertisements' centers around key service domains, such as mobile financial transactions, utility bill payments, and educational campaigns, revealing a pattern that aligns commercial messaging with vital socio-economic functions.

This consistency in content and linguistic form across both telecommunications providers signals a shared communicative ethos tailored to urban audiences. Regarding the second and third objectives, the language employed in advertisements in Soroti District is marked by identifiable stylistic features that enhance its communicative effectiveness, these include the

strategic use of symbolism, deliberate typographical choices, engaging imagery, and syntactically accessible constructions that ensure clarity and broad appeal. More significantly, these advertisements exhibit a conscious adherence to Uganda's national language policy, as enshrined in Article 6 of the 1995 Constitution, through the dominant use of English in official communication domains such as brochures, service manuals, and corporate interfaces. However, beyond mere compliance with official language norms, both MTN and Airtel advertisements also incorporate indigenous languages, most notably Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili, thereby contributing to linguistic equity and recognizing the cultural and linguistic realities of the local population. This gesture not only enhances accessibility and consumer connection but also aligns with the government's broader objective of promoting multilingualism in public domains. Moreover, the advertising content across both networks adheres to ethical standards by avoiding explicit, abusive, or socially insensitive language or visuals. In doing so, the companies project a socially responsible image that resonates with prevailing cultural values and community norms. Thus, the summary of findings reveals that advertising in Soroti City serves not just commercial imperatives, but also acts as a sociolinguistics platform through which language policy, cultural identity, ethical advertising, and inclusive communication intersect in meaningful ways.

5.2 General conclusion

By and large, this study has illuminated the intricate interplay between language use in advertising and Uganda's broader language policy framework. This reveals how commercial communication in Soroti City, particularly by MTN and Airtel Uganda, reflects both functional marketing strategies and deeper socio-linguistic commitments. The convergence of multilingual signage, stylistic clarity, ethical expression, and adherence to official language norms underscores a purposeful integration of linguistic diversity within the advertising domain. These findings not only affirm the communicative power of advertisements in

shaping public discourse but also highlight their potential as instruments for promoting cultural inclusion and language justice.

This research reinforces the view that language in public space is never neutral; it carries with it the values, priorities, and aspirations of the society it serves, and in doing so, becomes a silent yet powerful agent of social cohesion and policy realization.

5.3 Recommendations

The study suggests the following recommendations.

Promotion of Indigenous Languages in Advertising: Telecommunication companies such as MTN and Airtel Uganda should intensify the inclusion of indigenous languages like Ateso, Kumam, and Kiswahili in their advertising campaigns. This will not only align with Uganda's multilingual policy but also promote linguistic inclusivity and cultural preservation in public communication.

Standardization of Ethical Language Use in Advertising: The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) should enforce clearer guidelines and regular monitoring to ensure all advertisements comply with ethical standards by avoiding explicit, offensive, or discriminatory content, thereby maintaining the dignity of public communication across all media platforms.

Integration of Language Policy Awareness in Corporate Training: Companies operating in multilingual regions like Soroti City should integrate training on Uganda's language policy into their staff development programs, especially for marketing and communications departments, to ensure that advertising content is both linguistically inclusive and legally compliant.

In all, since the study was based on qualitative approach that it could have overlooked the significance of statistical information derived from the study, future studies could adopt a quantitative or mixed method approach to get information from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives.

5.4 Area for further studies

Future studies could look at the sociolinguistic scope of advertisement. This is because findings show that advertisement is to a planetary scale very culture specific to a particular society. Notably, findings only pertain social experiences with Teso region.

Future studies could also investigate the morphological structure of the language of advertisement, as findings show very interesting codes, words and linguistic items that are very significant in imparting meaning to the consumers.

5.5 Limitations and mitigation measures

The researcher anticipated challenges and solution such as:

There was a lack of cooperation from some local authorities, as the researcher feared they might misunderstand the purpose of the study and thereby restrict access to certain sources of information. To address this, the researcher conducted thorough briefings with all relevant authorities to explain the objectives of the study and ensure their understanding in time, thus avoiding any adverse actions.

Financial constraints also posed a challenge, particularly in relation to the production of resources and transportation, since the study area was vast and required full coverage within the set time frame. To mitigate this, the researcher had started saving early to cater for resource acquisition, production, and other logistical needs of the study.

The study adopted a qualitative approach to analyze the linguistic landscape of Soroti City, focusing on the visibility and representation of languages in outdoor signage from telecommunications companies. While this methodology provided rich and contextual insights into language use and sociolinguistic dynamics, it may have overlooked the value of quantitative data that could have provided a more statistically measurable understanding of language dominance, frequency, and distribution in public spaces.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Consent Declaration

Dear Participant,

My name is Ebogu Francis, a Master's student at Gulu University. I am carrying out data collection on the topic "**The Linguistic Landscape of Advertisement in Soroti City: A Case Study of MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda Telecommunication Companies**", which will lead to the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature and English Linguistics of Gulu University.

Your informed consent is respectfully requested, and your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to provide information of your own accord without any obligation.

Your identity will remain anonymous, and all issues discussed will be used strictly for academic and research purposes. Complete confidentiality of all information provided will be maintained.

Consent Declaration

I have carefully read and fully understood the above information and procedures relating to this study conducted for research purposes. I further acknowledge that by signing this consent form, I freely and willingly agree to participate in the study and to provide the required information voluntarily.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Appendix II: Document review checklist

Notes on the relationship between policy and practice in the context of Soroti City.

- Use of non-obscene expression
- Adherence to article 6&7 of the Constitution of Uganda
- Justice for native languages
- Use of English as official language
- Reflection of cultural context

□ Linguistic and other features:

- Tone and register (formal, informal, persuasive, etc.)
- Inclusion of cultural references or local idioms
- Syntactic features
- Nature of code switching/code mixing
- Imagery
- Humour
- Font types/size

Appendix III: Observation checklist

Date

Location

(Street, lane, building, plot number, etc.)

Advertisement Type

- ☐ Physical advertisements (billboards, posters, banners)
- ☐ Digital advertisements (electronic billboards, etc.)
- ☐ Print advertisements (flyers, brochures)

Patterns of Linguistic landscape

- Spartial Distribution
- Dominant language
- Other languages
- Media forms
- Visible language
- Multilingual signage
- Dominant language
- Thematic patterns

Stylistic Features

➤ Visual features:

- colors
- fonts
- images
- humor

➤ Linguistic features

- Punctuation
- Sentences
- Other particles of a sentences
- Word-structures
- words phrase

Description of the Advertisement

(What are the key features and messages conveyed?)

Notes/Comments

Appendix IV: A photo showing code mixing by MTN Uganda



Appendix V: A photo showing MTN Uganda dominance in Soroti City market street



Appendix VI: A photo showing Airtel use of English



Appendix VII: A photo showing short imperative mood by Airtel Uganda



Appendix VIII: Budget Estimate

ITEM	QUANTITY	RATE	TOTAL
Transport	15 times	50,000	750,000
Data collection	Lump sum	200,000	200,000
Data analysis	Lump sum	300,000	300,000
Proposal cost	Lump sum	150,000	150,000
Thesis cost	Lump sum	200,000	200,000
Meals and refreshments	15 days	20,000	300,000
Printing, photocopying, internet, etc.	Lump sum	600,000	600,000
TOTAL			2,500,000

Appendix IX: Introductory Letter

GULU
P.O. BOX 166 GULU



UNIVERSITY
TEL: +256471432922;

OFFICE OF THE DEAN, FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

February 11, 2025

TO : WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to introduce to you Mr. Ebogu Francis (Reg No. 20/U/1890/MEL/PS) a student pursuing a programme of study leading to an award Master of Arts in Literature and English Linguistics of Gulu University, Master of Gulu University.

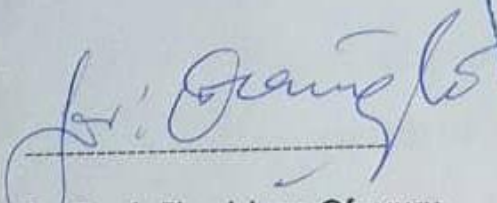
He is undertaking research on the Topic:

THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF ADVERTISEMENT IN SOROTI CITY: CASE STUDY OF MTN UGANDA AND AIRTEL UGANDA ELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES

Which is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award.

Any assistance rendered to him in relation to this research work will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Denis Thaddeus Ofoyuru
Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities

