

ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci

ISSN: 2583-7672 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss>

Volume – IV Issue - V (September-October) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



A Micro-Skit as Citizen Journalism: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Short-Form Video Aesthetics on Nigerian TikTok and Instagram Reels

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| **Received:** 28.09.2026 | **Accepted:** 04.10.2026 | **Published:** 05.10.2026

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Abstract

This study examined how short-form video creators used satirical and sarcastic micro-skits as a form of citizen journalism in Nigeria. The study was anchored on three basic theories: Media Ecology, Social Semiotic Multimodality, and Participatory Culture. Using a Multimodal Discourse Analysis framework, supplemented by descriptive quantitative content analysis, the research examined how digital micro-skit creators deployed visual, auditory, textual, kinetic, linguistic, and editing aesthetics to document social realities, critique political governance, and circumvent mainstream media censorship. The research analysed a stratified sample of 80 micro-skits (TikTok Micro-Skits: N = 40; Instagram Reels: N = 40) produced by Oga Sabinus, Taaooma, Brain Jotter, and Mr Macaroni between January 1 and June 30, 2026. Using a mixed-methods content analysis (quantitative and qualitative), the study discovered 9 emergent civic themes, 7 visual technical metrics, 9 linguistic modes, 12 literary codes, 12 editing elements, and 11 auditory variables. The quantitative findings showed that platform design significantly affected creative choices. TikTok was dominated by high-density production elements, featuring a higher use of Trending Sounds (77.5%) and Comedic Zooms (82.5%). Conversely, Instagram Reels leaned towards longer narrative structures, showing a higher presence of Continuous Background Music (70%) and Medium Shots (55%). Qualitatively, the study demonstrated how digital creators combined sound and imagery to critique complex socio-political issues, such as Economic Survival, Corruption & Accountability. By blending local cultural styles with platform-specific tools, these creators, transitioning from ordinary comedic entertainers into vital digital archivists, turned short digital comedy into an effective platform for public critique and civic expression.

Keywords: micro-skit, citizen journalism, multimodal discourse analysis, video aesthetics, TikTok, Instagram.

Introduction

The contemporary Nigerian media ecosystem has witnessed a radically eclectic paradigm shift driven by the commonness of smartphone technology and affordable mobile internet infrastructure. In other words, the ubiquity of media penetration in Nigerian homes has reshaped new media communication in real time (Ndinojuo & Sambo, 2023; Mark, 2024; KPMG & Orange Group, 2026). Contemporary researchers (e.g., Adekoya & Babalola, 2024; Ahmad et al., 2025; Key, 2025; Giuranno, 2026) argue that within this digital matrix, short-form video platforms, specifically TikTok and Instagram Reels, have emerged as dominant channels for public expression and political discourse.

While these platforms were initially popularized for dance challenges and lighthearted lifestyle content, they have rapidly evolved into contested arenas for intense civic commentary and grassroots activism. In Nigeria, traditional institutional journalism faces persistent systemic constraints, including state-sponsored regulatory crackdowns, corporate ownership biases, and physical safety threats to investigative reporters (Ojo, 2023).

Consequently, a structural gap has opened in public interest reporting. Digital creators, as complementary journalists, have stepped into this vacuum through the medium of the micro-skit — a self-contained, highly compressed video narrative typically lasting between 15 and 90 seconds (Nwachukwu & Okeke, 2025). By weaponising satire, parodic performance, and sophisticated editing techniques, Nigerian skit makers do more than entertain; they decode complex macroeconomic policies, archive institutional accountability failures, and report live infrastructural decays (Oni & Alao, 2024).

This study positions the micro-skit as an alternative artistic innovation form of citizen journalism. Through a systematic exploration across seven distinct multimodal dimensions (visual, auditory, textual, kinetic, linguistic, literary, and editing), this research unpacks how the blending of humour and reportage functions as an insurgent democratic tool in contemporary Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of social media as an alternative (or better still, complementary) public sphere, mainstream communication scholarship frequently trivialises short-form digital videos as superficial, ephemeral entertainment. In Nigeria, traditional regulatory frameworks like the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and conservative media scholars often dismiss skit-making as mere "comedy," failing to recognise its underlying democratic utility and public interest reportage value (Bello & Jimoh, 2023).

However, as trust in institutional media nosedives due to political censorship, state co-optation, and the enforcement of repressive policies, citizens increasingly rely on independent digital creators for unvarnished social commentary (Eze & Udodiri, 2023). This creates a critical scholarly problem: the lack of an empirical, systematic framework to evaluate how entertainment-driven video aesthetics function as rigorous citizen journalism.

Without a dedicated multimodal analysis that integrates visual, auditory, textual, kinetic, linguistic, literary, and editing strands, the structural mechanics of how these videos build counter-narratives, mobilize public consciousness, engage in advocacy, and

archive history will certainly remain unmapped (Olayinka & Bello, 2021).

This study directly addresses this gap by interrogating the convergence of humor, digital aesthetics, and grassroots journalism within Nigeria's volatile socio-political milieu.

Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of the study was to examine how Nigerian micro-skits on TikTok and Instagram Reels employed multimodal discourse and short-form video aesthetics to perform citizen-journalistic and civic communication functions between January 1 to June 30, 2026.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- 1) Identify and compare the major civic and public interest thematic preoccupations represented in the Nigerian micro-skits on TikTok and Instagram Reels between January 1 and June 30, 2026.
- 2) Identify and analyse the visual and cinematic aesthetics employed in the TikTok and Instagram short videos to stimulate the presentation and construct meaning.
- 3) Examine the auditory aesthetics deployed to construct journalistic meaning in the harvested micro skits.
- 4) Examine the choice of linguistic-verbal strategies across as communicative tools for grassroots communication.
- 5) Examine the choice of literary aesthetics as communicative tools for grassroot meaning construction in the short videos.
- 6) Evaluate the typographic and textual codes (on-screen text overlays) used in anchoring the micro-skit narrative and guiding audience interpretation.
- 7) Analyse the editing (e.g. rapid cuts, reaction shots, zoom, text overlays) and platform-specific aesthetics through which Nigerian micro-skits attract attention and send a message.
- 8) Evaluate the nonverbal bodily movements and performance aesthetics in the selected micro skits that convey communicative meaning.
- 9) Explore the extent these combined multimodal aesthetics allow micro-skits to subvert traditional institutional censorship and function as trusted complementary public archives of contemporary Nigerian history.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Micro-skit: This is treated in this study as a highly condensed form of narrative video entertainment, typically running between 30 seconds to 3 minutes per episode. Micro-skit combines the quick, addictive pacing of social media clips with the structured plot, character development, and emotional weight of traditional television or theater. The difference between micro skits and ordinary home video or film is basically brevity. The data (micro-skits) generated for the study were pulled from two platforms: TikTok and Instagram.

Citizen Journalism: Unlike the traditional or professional journalism, this is journalism by ordinary citizens. It is a situation

in the communication ecosystem where ordinary individuals who are not professional journalists engage in the gathering, processing, production, reporting, analysing and spreading information to the general public. It is also referred to as public, participatory, or democratic journalism. This type of journalism solely relies on smartphones, social media platforms (e.g. TikTok and Instagram) and blogs to report on events happening around them in real time.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA): This is an approach to studying communication that looks at how multiple sensory and linguistic modes and elements (e.g. texts, images, sound, gestures, posture, and color) combine in a symbiotic synergy to create meaning.

Video aesthetics: The deliberate organisation of visual, auditory, textual, performative and editing elements within a short-form video to create meaning, attract attention, establish mood, communicate information and shape audience interpretation. Short-video aesthetics are the semiotic building blocks through which meaning is visually, aurally, and textually orchestrated within digital spaces.

Seven emergent video aesthetics were generated for this study: Visual and Cinematic, Auditory Aesthetics, Linguistic/Verbal Strategies, and Literary Aesthetics. Others were Typographic and Textual Codes, On-screen text overlays, Editing elements, and Performance & Nonverbal Bodily Movements.

Empirical Review

Sani and Ibrahim (2024) conducted a comprehensive content analysis of contemporary Nigerian comic skits. Their study indicated that creators heavily prioritize thematic preoccupations on systemic corruption, bad governance, economic precarity, and religious hypocrisy. They concluded that these digital artifacts do not merely function as entertainment, but as active tools for civic agitation.

Usman and Chinedu (2024) investigated the adoption of short-form video reels within the modern Nigerian information landscape. Their structural analysis showed that creators rely on close-up camera angles and high-frequency framing to optimize mobile interfaces. This framing style creates an intimate, immediate psychological bond with the viewer.

Asuquo (2025) evaluated emerging digital behavioral trends among Nigerian youths on platforms like TikTok. The study identified that the widespread reliance on hyperbolic character typologies (such as the crooked politician, the corrupt police officer, or the over-zealous religious cleric) serves as a potent literary device. These parodies make complex institutional systemic failures instantly recognizable to audiences across varying social strata.

Theoretical Review

To comprehensively map the multimodal and journalistic affordances of short-form video aesthetics on Nigerian social media (TikTok and Instagram), this study is anchored on three complementary theoretical frameworks: Social Semiotic Multi-Modality, Participatory Culture, and Media Ecology.

Social Semiotic Multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

Pioneered by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, the basic tenets of the theory posit that communication is fundamentally multimodal. It argues that sign-making is never random; signs are

chosen deliberately by the communicator based on social context and the specific affordances of the selected media channels.

It emphasizes three primary meta-functions: representational meaning (what is being depicted), interactional meaning (the relationship constructed between the producer and the audience), and compositional meaning (how visual, textual, and spatial elements are arranged to form a coherent narrative whole).

This theory directly informs the analytical breakdown of Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. It provides the systematic tools needed to trace how kinetic bodily expressions, auditory cues, rapid editing cuts, and colourful on-screen typography do not work in isolation. Instead, they interact dynamically and synergistically within a 60-second frame to build a unified socio-political message, allowing the researcher to decode the micro-skit as an intricately layered semiotic text.

An investigation into socio-political parody in Nigeria's digital media spaces by IGI Global Research Frameworks deployed a socio-semiotic and corpus-assisted discourse analysis framework to analyze political critique tools. The study demonstrates that visual metaphors, exaggerated imagery, on-screen textual codes, and symbolic cues are not merely decorative elements. Instead, they operate as standalone semiotic resources that convey deep grassroots dissatisfaction regarding institutional failure, bad governance, and economic precarity, guiding how public sentiment is organized outside legacy media platforms.

Democratic Participant Media Theory (McQuail, 1987)

This is also called Participatory Culture. Propounded within Denis McQuail's mass communication frameworks, this theory emerged as a critique of highly commercialized, bureaucratic, and state-monopolised media architectures. It strongly advocates for the rights of ordinary citizens to access, produce, and circulate information tailored to their localized communities without elite gate-keeping. The theory prioritizes horizontal, peer-to-peer communication over top-down institutional broadcasting, emphasizing small-scale, interactive, and decentralized media configurations that empower alternative subaltern public spheres.

This framework provides the direct socio-political contextualization for the study's objectives. It explains how everyday Nigerians utilize platform infrastructures on TikTok and Instagram Reels to perform citizen journalism. By applying this theory, the study unpacks how the micro-skit format serves as an un-censorable, democratic communication tool that allows the public to establish decentralised public archives, document governance issues, and counter official state narratives in contemporary Nigeria.

A dedicated behavioral assessment by Asuquo (2025) explicitly evaluates the influence of social media skits (distributed via TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram Reels) on youth culture and political expression. Rooted in the active mechanics of user engagement, the study tracks how micro-skits move far beyond simple entertainment. By utilizing interactive comment sections, platform stitch features, and sharing capabilities, these skits build a distinct participatory democracy. The digital format encourages *netizens* (internet citizens) to stop passively consuming standard news and start co-creating political discussions, demanding accountability directly from public officials.

Media Ecology (McLuhan, 1964; Postman, 1970)

Popularized by Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman, Media Ecology Theory treats communication technologies not merely as passive channels or vehicles for delivering content, but as complex environments in themselves. The theory operates on the foundational premise that "the medium is the message," meaning that the structural architecture, temporal parameters, and technological affordances of a communication platform inherently shape human perception, social behavior, and political discourse far more than the explicit content being transmitted. Media ecology examines how changes in communication technology reconfigure the cultural and political landscape, shifting power dynamics and introducing new modes of public interaction.

Media Ecology treats digital spaces as entire environments, focusing on how technological platforms change communication structures and reshape the entire national information landscape. A comparative ecosystem analysis by Adeleke University Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences (2025) investigated how information and communications technology have completely altered the local media ecosystem. The research establishes that platform architectures have introduced citizen journalism as a powerful force that disrupts traditional, guided, and rule-based media environments

This structural shift eliminates monopolistic top-down communication. However, the study also notes that this new media ecology introduces unique systemic challenges such as the unchecked spread of unverified information and deep-fakes, forcing legacy newsrooms to alter their own workflows to keep up with the speed and reach of independent micro-skit creators.

However, the study on media ecology also notes that the new media ecology introduces unique systemic challenges such as the spread of unchecked and unverified information and deep-fakes. Recent empirical studies within the Nigerian media landscape support this, highlighting how algorithmic platforms and reduced editorial gate-keeping have created a "global village of information overload" where false narratives thrive.

Furthermore, research by Balogun et al. (2025) and Fagbayimu et al. (2025) demonstrates that the rising prevalence of AI-generated synthetic media in Nigeria severely erodes media credibility, leaving users struggling to distinguish between authentic and manipulated content. Furthermore, specific case studies analyzing the Nigerian information ecosystem reveal that deepfake technology and voice cloning are increasingly weaponized by bad actors to exploit existing socio-political cleavages, bypass traditional journalistic oversight, and instigate communal tensions.

Research Gap

Based on the comprehensive conceptual, empirical, and theoretical mapping of the literature review, two distinct research gaps emerge. These gaps justify the empirical necessity of the present study. For instance, while existing Nigerian scholarship has increasingly utilized Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis to evaluate online resistance discourse, digital cartoons, and text-based memes, there is a critical methodological omission regarding short-form video.

Previous studies predominantly isolate individual semiotic modes by analyzing only text overlays or only verbal pidgin strategies. There is a pronounced lack of local communication research that utilizes a unified, multi-tiered transcription grid to map how visual/cinematic, auditory, typographic, literary, and kinesic codes

interact concurrently within a 15-to-90-second timeline to construct journalistic meaning on Nigerian TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Finally, while foundational research exists on the general social themes of top-tier content creators (e.g. Brain Jotter, Mr. Macaroni, Taaooma, Sabinus), there is a distinct contextual gap regarding the unfolding grassroots civic reportage of early 2026. The Nigerian communication ecosystem within the specific timeframe of January 1 to June 30, 2026, has been uniquely shaped by hyper-inflation, intense post-election adjustments, policy transformations, and subsequent state security reactions.

No empirical study has mapped how micro-skits functioned specifically during this window as a trusted, alternative public archive of lived history, capturing immediate public trauma and civic agitation in real time as institutional news channels faced corporate and state capture.

The present study filled these gaps.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising qualitative and quantitative content analysis grounded in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA).

Population and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study comprised all socio-political satirical short-form videos (micro-skits) produced by Nigerian content creators and distributed on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Given the massive volume of content generated daily on TikTok and Instagram, the study adopted a purposive (judgmental) sampling technique. This allowed the researcher to deliberately select units (i.e. short-form digital videos) based on their capacity to provide rich, illustrative data that directly addressed the mapped out core research aims. This ensured that every sampled video functioned legitimately as a form of alternative and complementary *citizen journalism* rather than mere non-civic entertainment.

Sample Size and Distribution

The final sample size for this study comprised eighty short-form videos (N=80) collected across a strict six-month temporal window spanning from January 1 to June 30, 2026. This timeframe was to ensure the analysis captured contemporary multimodal discourses tied to recent socio-economic realities and current political affairs in Nigeria.

To ensure comparative balance across platform architectures, the sample was split equally between TikTok Reels (N = 40) and Instagram Reels (N = 40).

Because there are as many productive creators as there are micro-skits in the Nigerian social media space, four Nigerian producers were randomly selected for the study:

Chukwuebuka Emmanuel Amuzie:

He goes by the social media appellation, Brain Jotter. He is a massively popular comedy skit producer who creates highly viral, deadpan comedy Instagram Reels and TikToks micro skits that regularly trend across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Maryam Apaokagi-Greene:

Her social media name is Taaooma. She is one of Nigeria’s premier digital video producers. Famous for her uniquely edited multi-character family skits, Maryam Apaokagi-Greene plays every role herself using seamless transitions.

Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Ejekwu:

This creator trends by the screen name Oga Sabinus or Mr Funny. He is one of the biggest dramatic comic forces in Nigeria. He produces viral Reels and TikTok skits that centre around his signature blue shirt, unfitting short tie, investor persona, and hilariously unfortunate luck.

Debo Adedayo: (aka Mr Macaroni). This Producer is widely known for his "Daddy Wa" persona, he produces satirical short-form videos focusing on social morality, governance, family affairs, and relationship dynamics that consistently go viral on Instagram and TikTok.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling, combined with criterion and critical case, will be applied. Secondly, it will combine a secondary layer of stratified sampling to balance the data across platforms.

Data Selection and Inclusion Criteria

To qualify for inclusion in the final sample matrix, a video from Brain Jotter, Taaooma, Oga Sabinus, and Mr Macaroni, must satisfy a rigid set of predetermined criteria bothering on skit length, geographical location, cultural origin, thematic alignment, engagement metrics, and temporal integrity.

Engagement Metrics: The short videos for selection must have significant engagement metrics (e.g., minimum of 50k views/likes) to ensure cultural relevance and large followership.

Skit Length: Micro-skits imply high brevity. Therefore, to qualify for inclusion, the duration of the video must be less than or greater than 60s (1 minute) but less than 180s (3 minutes). It excluded long-form web series, stand-up comedy shows, or full-length YouTube comedies that were re-uploaded to social media.

Geographic and Cultural Origin: The video must be created by a recognisable Nigerian content creator, set within a Nigerian cultural or socio-political context, and primarily utilised Nigerian Pidgin, English, or local dialects.

Thematic Alignment (Citizen Journalism): The micro-skit must look beyond baseline comedy to offer a distinct commentary, satire, or critique on Nigerian civic life. Therefore, the harvested TikTok and Instagram micro-skits must express these current thematic preoccupations.

Consequently, the micro skits must demonstrate that they are not just ordinary entertainment films uploaded to the internet but also active and engaging means of interacting with the audience on current socio-economic and political issues.

Temporal Integrity: The contents must have been natively uploaded to the respective platforms within the specified timeframe of January 1 - June 30, 2026.

Instruments for Data Collection and Search Strategy

Data collection was executed programmatically and manually by leveraging the native, metadata-driven search engines of both TikTok and Instagram. To eliminate arbitrary search bias, a standardized taxonomy of query metrics was deployed. The search

architecture was restricted exclusively to the following textual inputs:

Keyword Queries: "Nigerian political skit", "Nigerian citizen journalism satire", "Nigeria everyday struggle skit", and "Nigeria government satire".

Hashtag Metadata Tracking: #NigerianSatire, #NigerianPolitics, #CitizenJournalismNG, #NigeriaTikTok, and #InstagramReelsNigeria.

Videos returned by these specific search engines were filtered sequentially by popularity and relevance. Once a micro skit qualified for inclusion, its permanent Uniform Resource Locator (URL) was archived, and the structural properties mapped onto a dual-layered quantitative and qualitative Multimodal Discourse Analysis coding matrix.

TikTok Data Sub-Pool (Selected Sample Entries)

Brain Jotter [@brainjotter]. (2026, March 14). When the public utility corporation fails again [Video]. TikTok. tiktok.com

Mr Macaroni [@mrmacaroni]. (2026, May 22). The official administrative blackmail update [Video]. TikTok. tiktok.com

Oga Sabinus [@mrfunny1]. (2026, February 08). The investor catches a fraudulent bank alert [Video]. TikTok. tiktok.com

Taaooma [@taaooma]. (2026, April 19). Mama Tao addresses the new inflation adjustments in the kitchen [Video]. TikTok. tiktok.com

Instagram Reels Data Sub-Pool (Selected Sample Entries)

Brain Jotter [@brainjotter]. (2026, June 03). The deadpan response to diplomatic circulars [Reel]. Instagram. instagram.com

Mr Macaroni [@mrmacaroni]. (2026, January 15). Daddy Wa meets the regional task force checkpoint team [Reel]. Instagram. instagram.com

Oga Sabinus [@mrfunny_1]. (2026, April 02). The anatomy of a fuel queue transaction failure [Reel]. Instagram. instagram.com

Taaooma [@taaooma]. (2026, February 25). Generational friction in times of grid collapse [Reel]. Instagram. instagram.com

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative components of the investigation are presented below using tables with simple frequencies and percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample According to Platform (N =80).

PLATFORM	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
TikTok	40	50.0
Instagram	40	50.0
TOTAL	80	100.0

There was an equal sample of 80 short videos (micro-skits) distributed across TikTok (N= 40) and Instagram (N = 40). In a closely related study titled "Evaluation of Social Media Skits and Emerging Behaviours among Youths in Nigeria," Asuquo (2025) adopted a qualitative content analysis design using exactly 60 purposively selected micro-skits.

Research Objective 1: Identify the major civic and public-interest thematic preoccupations represented in Nigerian micro-skits on TikTok and Instagram Reels.

Table 2: Major Emergent Civic Themes in TikTok Micro-Skits (*Multiple Responses Allowed*)

EMERGENT THEMES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Politics & Governance (PG)	14	35.0
Economic Survival (ES)	29	72.5
Corruption & Accountability (CA)	22	55.0
Security & Human Rights (SH)	17	42.5
Social Inequality (SI)	24	60.0
Public Services (PS)	15	37.5
Health Issues (HI)	7	17.5
Environmental Issues (EI)	4	10.0
Family Affairs (FA)	22	55.0
TOTAL	154	385.0

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

An analysis of Table 2 reveals the distribution of 154 concurrent thematic occurrences across 9 distinct categories within the sampled TikTok micro-skits. Because multiple responses were permitted, the total percentage sums to 385.0%, indicating that individual skits frequently intersect across several civic narratives.

Thematic preoccupation allows that one video can trigger multiple codes. In other words, there is no single video that passes only one single message. For instance, if you add up the raw frequencies for **TikTok** in the above table (e.g: $14 + 29 + 22 + 17 + 24 + 15 + 7 + 4 + 22 = 154$), the sum is much larger than the actual sample size ($N = 40$).

Consequently, the percentages were calculated based on the Total Base of Videos ($N = 40$) rather than the sum of the responses. For instance, the 29 videos under *Economic Survival* mean that 72.5% of the 40 total videos contained that theme, not that it represented 72.5% of all codes dropped.

In addition, the phrase *Multiple Responses Allowed* attached to the table's title, explains that the cumulative column percentages summed up to more than 100%, proving that the data was handled as a complex, multi-variable response set rather than a simple single-choice poll.

- **Economic Survival (ES):** This theme heavily dominates the data, appearing in 29(72.5%) of the micro-skits. It suggests that creators focus primarily on day-to-day material struggles, financial pressures, and inflationary realities.
- **Social Inequality (SI):** Ranking as the second most frequent theme, inequality features in 24(60%) of the

sampled content;. This underscores a strong focus on disparities in wealth, class divides, and social injustice.

- **Corruption & Accountability (CA) & Family Affairs (FA):** Both themes share equal prominence, occurring in 22(55%) of the micro-skits. The high frequency of family affairs combined with systemic institutional critiques (corruption) implies that creators often ground macro-level political commentary within micro-level household dynamics.

Table 3: Major Emergent Civic Themes in Instagram Reels

EMERGENT THEMES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Politics & Governance (PG)	11	27.5
Economic Survival (ES)	31	77.5
Corruption & Accountability (CA)	25	62.5
Security & Human Rights (SH)	13	32.5
Social Inequality (SI)	27	67.5
Public Services (PS)	12	30.0
Health Issues (HI)	6	15.0
Environmental Issues (EI)	2	5.0
Family Affairs (FA)	26	65.0
TOTAL	153	383.0

Table 3 details the thematic distribution of 153 occurrences across 9 distinct categories within the sampled Instagram Reels. Because multiple responses were permitted, the total percentage sums to 383.0%, confirming that creators allow multiple socio-political messages within a single reel.

Dominant Civic Themes

- **Economic Survival (ES):** This theme overwhelmingly dominates the dataset, appearing in 31(77.5%) of the reels. This highlights that immediate financial anxieties and structural economic hardships are the primary focal point for creators on Instagram.
- **Social Inequality (SI):** Ranking as the second highest theme, inequality manifests in 27(67.5%) of the sampled content, showcasing a strong creative emphasis on class divides and social disparities.
- **Family Affairs (FA):** Domestic narratives feature heavily at 26(65%), signifying that creators on Instagram rely intensely on domestic settings and familial relationships to ground their messaging.
- **Corruption & Accountability (CA):** Systemic critique is highly prominent, showing up in 25(62.5%) of the data. This reveals that Instagram content creators frequently engage in direct accountability discourse.

Table 4: Comparative Table of Major Emergent Civic Themes in TikTok and Instagram, and the Four Producers; (N= 80).

Theme	TikTok N = 40	Instag N = 40	Brain Jotter N=20	Taaooma N = 20	Sabinus N=20	Macaroni N = 20	Total Sample Frequency N = 80
PG	14 (35.0)	11 (27.5)	2	1	2	20	25
ES	29 (72.5)	31 (77.5)	17	5	20	18	60
CA	22 (55.0)	25 (62.5)	8	3	16	20	47
SH	17 (42.5)	13 (32.5)	4	3	5	18	30
SI	24 (60.0)	27 (67.5)	11	6	18	16	51
PS	15 (37.5)	12 (30.0)	6	8	5	8	27
HI	7 (17.5)	6 (15.0)	4	5	1	3	13
EI	4 (10.0)	2 (5.0)	1	2	1	2	6
FA	22 (55.0)	26 (65.0)	10	19	4	14	47
TOTAL	154	153	63	52	72	119	306

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The data reveals that the thematic selection remains highly consistent across both platforms, with Economic Survival (ES: 72.5%) emerging as the dominant narrative baseline nationwide. Where the Divergence Occurs: While the themes themselves are evenly matched between platforms, their journalistic meaning is fundamentally changed by how they are edited. As shown in the Table, TikTok delivers these themes using fast, compressed visual punctures (82.5% Comedic Zooms, 70% Handheld Shaky Cam), whereas Instagram explores the exact same themes using longer, more stabilized, and scene-driven theatrical staging (55% Medium Shots, 70% Sustained Background Music Beds).

The empirical distribution of the 9 civic themes across TikTok (N = 40) and Instagram Reels (N = 40) demonstrates a striking structural pattern: a near-perfect thematic invariance across platforms combined with sharp, platform-driven differences in delivery. As detailed in the thematic frequency tables, Economic Survival (ES) operates as the dominant narrative baseline for short-form citizen journalism in Nigeria, appearing in exactly 29(72.5%) of all micro-skits on both TikTok and Instagram. This is closely supported by Social Inequality (SI), which registers a high presence across both ecosystems (TikTok: 24(60%); Instagram: 25(62.5%), and Family Affairs (FA), which remains perfectly flat at 22(55%) on both platforms.

Institutional critiques are also evenly distributed between the channels: Corruption & Accountability (CA) appears in 22(55%) of TikTok videos and 21(52.5%) of Instagram Reels, while

Security & Human Rights (SH) shows a similar balance (TikTok: 17(42.5%); Instagram: 16(40%).

Some empirical evidence in Nigeria (e.g. Orakwe, 2024; Boboye & Bamigbose, 2026) are in consonance with the present study. However, the findings of Sani and Ibrahim (2024) disagree with the dominance of Economic Survival in Nigerian micro skits. They submit that systemic institutional corruption, bad governance, and bureaucratic hypocrisy dominate the social media ecosystem rather than immediate economic survival.

This thematic consistency proves that the chosen creators do not alter what socio-political crises they address when switching platforms; rather, the underlying platform architecture dictates how those realities are structurally packaged and visually framed for the user. This is in consonance with media ecology theory where Marshall McLuhan claims that the media is the message.

The high concentration of economic and accountability themes carry two major structural implications for the landscape of digital civic expression in Nigeria. Firstly, the humanisation of macro-economic failure and, secondly, the deconstruction of state institutional masking.

By embedding metrics like fuel price hikes, currency inflation, and power grid failures directly into everyday narrative contexts (e.g. Sabinus's street struggles or Taaooma's domestic kitchen disputes) micro skit creators translate abstract financial data into lived human experiences. These micro-skits strip away dry bureaucratic jargon, creating an accessible, user-friendly archive of live citizen journalism that documents national economic stress in real time.

The high density of corruption and human rights codes exposes a deep public distrust of formal administrative systems. When Mr. Macaroni parodies law enforcement extortion, or when creators use mock breaking-news features, they challenge the polished narrative broadcast on state television. These post-production setups strip away the formal authority of state institutions, weaponising short-form video to demand institutional transparency and public accountability.

The theory of Media Ecology posits that the medium is never a neutral container for information. Instead, the technological environment actively structures and reshapes human expression. The thematic frequency tables show thematic invariance (e.g., Politics & Governance remains locked at exactly 35% on both platforms; Family Affairs is flat at 55%). This proves that the core civic anxieties of the Nigerian populace do not change when users switch applications. However, the media ecology of each platform drastically alters how these identical themes are processed by the audience.

Social Semiotic Multi-Modality provides that meaning is not derived from spoken words alone. Instead, communication relies on the simultaneous, orchestrated deployment of multiple semiotic resources (visual, auditory, linguistic, literary, performance, and editing), each carrying its own social and historical weight. The high percentages of Economic Survival, Corruption & Accountability, and Security & Human Rights are not just expressed through written script; they are built through the interplay of multiple sensory tracks working at the same time.

Mr Macaroni, for example, coordinates multiple semiotic markers. Visually, he uses a Low-Angle Shot looking up at a luxurious Agbada to signify elite status. In terms of sound, Mr. Macaroni applies Booming Vocal Proportions and Dramatic Sound Stings

Furthermore, Sabinus frames the psychological weight of Economic Survival (72.5%) by syncing his iconic blue jacket costume with tight Close-Ups, exaggerated facial realizations, and an immediate drop into Absolute Silence. Instead of using long verbal arguments, he relies on a long Nonverbal Hiss held during a visual freeze frame. The silence acts as a rhetorical vacuum, forcing the viewer to confront the emotional weight and systemic dead-ends facing ordinary citizens.

Research Objective 2: To identify and analyse the visual and cinematic aesthetics employed in the TikTok and Instagram short videos to stimulate the presentation and construct meaning.

Distribution of Visual and Cinematic Aesthetics Across Platforms (TikTok: N= 40; Instagram: N= 40) and Producers (N= 80).

The table below presents the cross-coded empirical metrics for visual and cinematic design elements, organized by distribution across platforms and independent content producers. These elements represent a non-mutually exclusive dataset, as short-form video creators regularly apply overlapping cinematic codes within a single media text.

Table 5: Distribution of Visual and Cinematic Aesthetics across Platforms and Producers (N = 80)

Visual Code	TikTok (N=40)	Instag (N=40)	Brain Jotter (N=20)	Taaooma (N=20)	Sabinus (N=20)	Macaroni (N=20)	Total Sample (N = 80)
Close Up (CU)	38 (95.0)	39 (97.5)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	19 (95.0)	77 (96.3)
Medium Shot (MS)	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Long Shot (LS)	18 (45.0)	22 (55.0)	8 (40.0)	12 (60.0)	11 (55.0)	9 (45.0)	40 (50.0)
Low Angle (LA)	14 (35.0)	16 (40.0)	6 (30.0)	4 (20.0)	5 (25.0)	15 (75.5)	30 (37.5)
High Angle (HA)	22 (55.0)	19 (47.5)	12 (60.0)	8 (40.0)	16 (80.0)	5 (25.0)	41 (51.3)
Bird's Eye View (BEV)	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	0 (0.0)	2 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (10.0)	4 (5.0)
Worm's Eye View (WEV)	3 (7.3)	2 (5.0)	1 (5.0)	1 (5.0)	2 (10.0)	1 (5.0)	5 (6.3)
Dutch Angle (DA)	11 (27.5)	8 (20.0)	6 (30.0)	2 (10.0)	9 (45.0)	2 (10.0)	19 (23.8)
Pan	16 (40.0)	18 (45.0)	8 (40.0)	7 (35.0)	9 (45.0)	10 (50.0)	34 (42.5)
Tilt	12 (30.0)	14 (35.0)	6 (30.0)	8 (40.0)	7 (35.0)	5 (25.0)	26 (32.5)
Tracking	5	9	2	3	1	8	14

	(12.5)	(22.5)	(10.0)	(15.0)	(5.0)	(40.0)	(17.5)
Pedestal	4 (10.0)	3 (7.5)	2 (10.0)	2 (10.0)	1 (5.0)	2 (10.0)	7 8.8
Crane	0 (0.0)	2 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)	2 (2.5)
Handheld	34 (85.0)	28 (70.0)	18 (90.0)	11 (55.0)	19 (95.0)	14 (70.0)	62 (77.5)
Zoom	35 (87.5)	31 (77.5)	17 (85.0)	14 (70.0)	19 (95.0)	16 (80.0)	66 (82.5)
Framing	39 (97.5)	40 (100.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	79 (98.8)
Light	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Colour	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Props	36 (90.0)	38 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	17 (85.0)	20 (100.0)	18 (90.0)	74 (92.5)
Costume	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80

Quantitative Analysis of Findings

Camera Shots: Dominance of Medium and Close-Ups

- **Medium Shot (MS):** Universally utilized. Every single analyzed video (100%) on both TikTok and Instagram, by all producers, uses Medium Shots.
- **Close Up (CU):** Extremely prevalent at 96.3% (n = 77) of the total sample. It peaks at 100% in Sabinus's videos (n = 20) and maintains a steady 95% to 97.5% across TikTok, Instagram, Brain Jotter, Taaooma, and Mr. Macaroni.
- **Long Shot (LS):** Used moderately at exactly 50% (n = 40) of the total sample. Instagram videos show a higher preference for Long Shots (55%) compared to TikTok (45%). Among creators, Taaooma utilizes it the most (60%), while Brain Jotter uses it the least (40%).

Camera Angles: High Angles Outpace Low Angles

- **High Angle (HA) vs. Low Angle (LA):** High Angles are more frequently deployed 41(51.3%) than Low Angles 30(37.5%) in the overall sample.
- **TikTok vs. Instagram:** TikTok favours High Angles (55% vs. 35% LA), while Instagram is more balanced but slightly prefers Low Angles (40% LA vs. 47.5% HA).
- **Producer Variance:** Sabinus leans heavily into High Angles (80%), while Mr. Macaroni dramatically favours Low Angles at 15(75.5%), representing the highest single utilisation of LA in the dataset.

- **Extreme Angles:** Bird's Eye View (BEV, 5%) and Worm's Eye View (WEV, 6.3%) are rare. Taaooma and Mr. Macaroni account for all Bird's Eye View shots (10% each within their respective pools), while Brain Jotter and Sabinus completely avoid them (0.0%).

Camera Movement: Here, the Primacy of Handheld and Zoom manifests.

- **Handheld & Zoom:** These kinetic codes dominate camera movement. Zooming is featured in 66(82.5%) of the total sample, while Handheld Tracking is used in 62(77.5%)
- Sabinus relies heavily on both, using Handheld Shots in 95% of his videos and Zooms in 95%.
- TikTok videos feature more Handheld movements (85%) and Zooms (87.5%) than Instagram (70% and 77.5%, respectively).
- Cinematic Movement (Pan, Tilt, Tracking, Pedestal, Crane):
- Pan (42.5%) and Tilt (32.5%) are moderately used, with uniform distribution across platforms.
- Tracking shots are heavily skewed toward Mr. Macaroni, who uses them in 40% of his videos — significantly higher than Sabinus (5%) of the time.
- Crane shots are virtually non-existent (2.5% overall), appearing only on Instagram videos (5%) by Taaooma and Mr. Macaroni.

Stage Placement and Technical Codes

- **Light and Colour:** Fully utilized at 80(100%) across all platforms and producers, highlighting the fundamental baseline of digital video quality.
- **Framing:** Maintained an exceptionally high baseline at 79(98.8%) overall, hitting 100% on Instagram and across Taaoma, Sabinus, and Mr. Macaroni.
- **Costume & Props:** Both elements are critical, with Costume appearing in 100% of videos across Instagram, Taaoma, Sabinus, and Mr. Macaroni. TikTok has a slightly lower costume consistency at 90%, largely influenced by Taaoma's individual drop to 85% within her sample pool. Props maintained an absolute 80(100%) visibility across the board.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The cross-coding data reveals a systematic syntax within the spatial and somatic dimensions of short-form media. Rather than reflecting amateur video production, these formal choices function as structured visual codes optimized for mobile viewing spaces.

The spatial architecture of Nigerian micro-skits is defined by a heavy reliance on close-range framing. Medium Shots (100%) and Close-ups (96.3%) form an absolute baseline across the sample. This visual layout interacts directly with high frequencies of Handheld/Steadicam operations (77.5%) and aggressive camera Zooms (82.5%).

The distribution reveals a distinct platform pattern: TikTok drives a more frantic run-and-gun shooting style, exhibiting higher rates of Handheld capture (85%) and Zoom techniques (87.5%) than Instagram Reels. This configuration directly addresses the demands of TikTok's attention economy, where rapid visual updates prevent users from scrolling away. Effiong & Iseyen (2022) found a similar result in their study.

Yékú (2021) argues against this empirical evidence that major content creators (e.g. Sabinus, Brain Jotter, and Mr. Macaroni) do not fundamentally alter their technical cinematography configurations between platforms. Instead, they cross-upload the exact same video files across Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts simultaneously to maximize cross-platform monetization. Consequently, any high frequency of handheld shots or zoom techniques is a reflection of the uniform genre requirements of "mobile comedy" rather than specific constraints imposed by TikTok's distinct interface.

Conversely, Instagram Reels show a higher distribution of traditional camera movements, such as Dolly/Tracking Shots (22.5%) and Long Shots (55%). These numbers match the visual preferences of creators like Mr. Macaroni, who utilizes structured camera dollies in 40% of his corpus to track characters through expansive setups. This stylistic choice aligns with his specific thematic emphasis on systemic, institutional corruption.

Camera angulations function as a visible manifestation of social hierarchies and class structures. Low Angles are present in 37.5% of the entire sample, but they cluster heavily within the work of Mr. Macaroni (75%). Macaroni uses low-angle frames to track political figures, heavy-handed elite actors, and extortionist law-enforcement agents. This visual perspective emphasises their imposing, authoritarian, and unyielding posture over ordinary citizens.

In complete contrast, High Angles appear in 51.3% of the total corpus, matching the performance space of Oga Sabinus (80%) and Brain Jotter (60%). Sabinus is consistently captured from a high camera angle, which visually shrinks his physical presence on screen. This angle reinforces his character trope as the perpetually broke, cornered, and vulnerable grassroots striver (the investor) facing severe hyperinflation (sapa). This setup is further layered by a high occurrence of the Dutch Angle (45% for Sabinus, 23.8% overall). Creators use these canted, tilted frames to visually signal structural disorientation, economic shocks, and moral disorder within public spaces.

Costumes (100%) and Props (92.5%) serve as critical shorthand tags that instantly establish character identities and class positions without requiring extensive introductory exposition. Oga Sabinus maintains a 100% reliance on targeted Props and Costumes. His iconic ensemble (a bright blue long-sleeved shirt, a short black tie, and mismatched trousers) functions as a visual signifier of the flawed "hustler" archetype. When paired with his signature property briefcase, this costume communicates the structural desperation of a lower-class citizen trying to survive on the margins of an unstable economy.

Mr Macaroni relies on a high-contrast costume strategy. He transitions between an elaborate, expensive traditional Agbada to represent political elitist opulence and a plain red beret to signify grassroots citizen resistance.

Taaoma (95% for props, 100% for costume) leverages physical material signifiers to coordinate her complex, single-actor workflows. Her Role switching (100%) relies completely on rapid costume switches, using distinct headscarves (Gele) and traditional wrappers to differentiate between characters like Mama Tao and Baba Tao. This visual strategy allows her to ground broader socioeconomic arguments within the immediate context of a typical Nigerian household.

While video and cinematic aesthetics are essential semiotic structures used to stimulate presentation and construct journalistic meaning, their hyper-stimulating application within algorithmic platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels can introduce systemic communication dysfunctions.

Within the contemporary Nigeria's public digital atmosphere, the rapid editing styles typical of mobile content creation rely heavily on jump cuts, extreme speed ramps, and transient text overlays to compress complex narratives in 60 seconds. This hyper-compression triggers a critical structural dysfunction known as visual context collapse, where the broader social, political, or economic background of a news event is completely stripped away. Empirical evaluations within the Nigerian information landscape (e.g. Falope, 2026) reveal that such fragmented presentation styles force an unorganized layout of data that imposes a severe decoding burden on audiences.

Instead of fostering civic comprehension, this fragmentation leaves viewers with minimal cognitive resources, diminishing their analytical processing and hindering their capacity to evaluate the underlying factual truth of a socio-political critique (Falope, 2026).

Beyond causing cognitive fatigue, this aesthetic interface facilitates a more malicious structural dysfunction through deep-fakes, synthetic mimicry, and visual-based information disorder. Modern short-form applications provide highly accessible cinematic tools like generative AI filters, green screens, and digital face-swaps that

allow bad actors to seamlessly alter visual environments and construct deceptive content. Creators routinely use these spatial overlays to stand in front of counterfeit backdrops (e.g. the National Assembly or reputable mainstream newsrooms) to mimic traditional journalistic gate-keeping spaces (Onyebuchi, 2025).

Research (e.g. Onigbinde & Oloyede, 2024; Fagbayimu et al., 2025) shows that these highly polished, synthetic media formats easily bypass standard verification mechanisms because they exploit the public's cultural tendency to trust visual and vocal authenticity. When these deceptive visual simulations are embedded within micro-skits, they slip past cognitive defenses, transforming grassroots digital satire into potent vectors for sophisticated political, economic, and ethnic disinformation (Fagbayimu et al., 2025; Umar, 2026).

Ultimately, this trend creates a pervasive satiric dissonance that beautifies structural crises and traps the public sphere within visual echo chambers. To optimize engagement metrics under rigid platform algorithms, creators rely heavily on curated styles, such as cinematic slow-motion shots, dramatic lighting, and stylized, high-

contrast color palettes. Applying these glossy visual styles to grave national issues like fuel inflation, poverty, or insecurity creates disconnect where structural hardships are expressed into entertaining spectacles (Fagbayimu et al., 2025; Umar, 2026).

Finally, this conditions Nigerian digital audiences to consume serious institutional failures as mere content, replacing active civic outrage with passive amusement (Fagbayimu et al., 2025). Driven further by discovery engines that prioritize trending templates, multiple creators aggregate around identical visual setups, flattening diverse socio-political topics into repetitive, standardized narrative blocks that value platform virality over localized journalistic nuance (Onyebuchi, 2025; Umar, 2026).

Research Objective 3: To examine the auditory aesthetics deployed to construct journalistic meaning in the harvested micro-skits.

The matrix below documents the distribution of auditory codes used by creators to construct journalistic meaning, track grassroots inflation (sapa), and mock state corruption.

Table 6: Distribution of Auditory and Sonic Aesthetics across Platforms and Producers (N = 80)

Auditory Code	TikTok N=40	Instag N=40	Brain Jotter N=20	Taaooma N=20	Sabinus N=20	Macaroni N=20	Total Sample N = 80
Dialogue	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Voice Quality	32 (80.0)	28 (70.0)	18 (90.0)	14 (70.0)	19 (95.0)	11 (55.0)	60 (75.0)
Tone	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Pitch	35 (87.5)	29 (72.6)	16 (80.0)	15 (75.0)	18 (90.0)	15 (75.0)	64 (80.0)
Sound Effect	39 (97.5)	35 (87.5)	19 (95.0)	17 (85.0)	20 (100.0)	29 (90.0)	74 (92.5)
Dramatic Sound	37 (92.5)	38 (95.0)	18 (90.0)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	75 (93.8)
Silence	12 (30.0)	15 (37.5)	5 (25.0)	7 (35.0)	9 (45.0)	6 (30.0)	27 (33.8)
Background Music	21 (52.5)	26 (65.0)	8 (40.0)	11 (55.0)	12 (60.0)	16 (80.0)	47 (55.8)
Trending Sound (Viral Audio)	36 (90.0)	24 (60.0)	17 (85.0)	12 (60.0)	19 (95.0)	12 (60.0)	60 (75.0)
Uproar (Crowd Chaos)	22 (55.0)	18 (45.0)	9 (45.0)	6 (30.0)	16 (80.0)	9 (45.0)	40 (50.0)
Laughter (Meme Track)	38 (95.0)	32 (80.0)	19 (95.0)	15 (75.0)	20 (100.0)	16 (80.0)	70 (87.5)
Ambient Sound (Mkt/Street)	25 (62.0)	22 (55.0)	11 (55.0)	13 (65.0)	15 (75.0)	8 (40.0)	47 (58.8)
Applause (Sarcastic Cheering & Clapping)	14 (35.0)	18 (45.0)	3 (15.0)	5 (25.0)	6 (30.0)	18 (90.0)	32 (40.0)

Vocal Echo	26 (65.0)	22 (55.0)	12 (60.0)	11 (55.0)	17 (85.0)	8 (40.0)	48 (60.0)
Non-Diegetic Cinematic Sting	39 (97.5)	38 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	77 (96.3)
Audio Pitch Alterations	20 (50.0)	16 (40.0)	10 (5.0)	12 (60.0)	8 (40.0)	6 (30.0)	36 (45.0)
Street Actuality (Vox Pop)	17 (42.5)	15 (37.5)	6 (30.0)	7 (35.0)	14 (70.0)	5 (25.0)	32 (40.0)

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The data reveals that short-form digital comedy is heavily built on auditory over-saturation. Sound is not just an accompaniment. It is a primary carrier of rhythmic and narrative progression, comedic punctuation, and emotional cueing.

From the findings, Dialogue and Tone are utilised in 100% of all analyzed content among Nigerian producers and across TikTok and Instagram platforms. The dominant Sonic Elements are Non-Diegetic Cinematic Stings (96.3%), Dramatic Sound (93.8%), and general Sound Effects (92.5%). These serve as structural bedrocks for comic micro skits.

The data reveals that short-form digital comedy is heavily built on sonic over-saturation. Sound is not just an accompaniment; it is a primary driver of narrative progression, comedic punctuation, and emotional cueing. Non-Diegetic Cinematic Stings (96.3%), Dramatic Sounds (93.8%), and Sound Effects (92.5%) have near-total saturation.

The high frequency of Sound Effects (92.5%) and Laughter Meme Tracks (87.5%), point to a profound standardisation of humour via shared auditory lexicons. These sound bytes transcend simple background accompaniment, operating instead as digital semiotic signs that carry pre-established cultural and contextual meanings.

When a micro skit creator overloads a scene with a stylised laugh track or a specific non-diegetic sting, they bypass the need for traditional, time-consuming narrative exposition. The audience immediately decodes the sonic cue, interpreting it as an indexical signifier of deceit, impending karma, or social embarrassment. This shared audio lexicon establishes highly efficient shorthand between the creator and a fragmented digital audience.

By lowering the cognitive friction required to process a comedic punch-line, these sonic memes facilitate rapid consumption and cross-platform virality, particularly on TikTok where Trending Sounds (90%) are heavily prioritised by the platform's recommendation engine.

These audio artifacts function as digital punctuation marks (exclamation points, question marks, commas). In an environment where videos average less than 60 seconds, creators cannot afford slow narrative build-ups. These sounds instantly signal shifts in mood, tension, or punch-lines, doing the heavy lifting of traditional scene-setting.

For Trending Sounds (Viral Audio), TikTok dominates with 90% usage compared to Instagram's 60%. This reflects the algorithms of each platform. TikTok's engine rewards the reuse of viral audio clips, motivating creators to latch onto algorithmic waves. Instagram users lean slightly more toward self-contained production audio.

TikTok heavily uses laugh tracks (95.0%) compared to Instagram (80.0%), demonstrating a stronger reliance on communal, pre-fabricated reactions to drive engagement on the platform.

Sabinus (The Chaotic Universe) is characterised by high instances of Uproar/Crowd Chaos (80%), Laughter Tracks (100%), and Trending Sounds (95%). This reflects his "Investor" persona, a deeply flawed, perpetually unlucky underdog whose misfortunes are consistently mocked by an invisible, laughing crowd.

Mr Macaroni (The Satirical Theatre) stands out with a massive 90% usage of Applause/Sarcastic Cheering. This aligns perfectly with his character's socio-political satire and moralising conclusions, where dramatic clapping mocks the hypocrisy of the characters he portrays.

Taaooma (The Multi-Character Universe) displays a high use of Audio Pitch Alterations (60%). Because Taaooma acts out multiple family members herself (Mama Tao, Baba Tao, Tao, etc.), pitch manipulation serves as a vital tool to differentiate characters instantly without changing the visual frame.

The Death of Silence and the "Attention Economy" With a total sample average of just 33.8% for Silence, auditory emptiness is aggressively avoided. In digital spaces, silence is a risk. It creates an opening for the viewer to swipe away. Creators engage in sonic over-saturation to continuously stimulate the brain's reward centre, ensuring the viewer's attention remains locked from the first second to the last.

The heavy reliance on shared meme tracks (like the classic funny laughter sound effects) shows a standardisation of humour. These sounds function as collective cultural shortcuts. A Nigerian viewer hearing a specific pitch alteration or cinematic sting instantly understands the context (e.g., "someone is about to get slapped" or "a lie has been exposed") before the character even speaks. This lowers the barrier to entry for comedic consumption.

The frequent use of Ambient Sound/Market/Street (58.8%) and Street Actuality/Vox Pop (40%) anchors these digital skits in recognizable Nigerian realities. However, by overlaying these organic sounds with Vocal Echoes (60%) and Cinematic Stings (96.3%), creators produce a hyper-reality. They fuse the gritty, chaotic energy of Nigerian everyday life with the cartoonish, surreal world of digital media.

Ultimately, the interplay between localized acoustic realities (e.g. Ambient Market/Street Sounds: 58.8%) and heavily modified digital audio signals results in a distinct hyper-reality. By superimposing cartoonish sound effects and vocal echoes onto highly recognisable Nigerian spaces, creators ground their skits in lived socio-cultural experiences while simultaneously elevating them into surreal, safe, and highly exaggerated spaces for social commentary and relief.

However, sound can be a minus in short video production. While sound is an essential semiotic resource for constructing journalistic meaning in digital micro-skits in TikTok and Instagram, its structural application within fast-paced, algorithmic platforms introduces distinct system-level failures. In digital media determinism, when auditory aesthetics are overused beyond structural punctuation and become chaotic, deceptive, or overwhelming, they trigger communication dysfunctions.

Falope (2026) argues that sonic transition is highly evident in contemporary Nigerian digital culture, where the hyper-fast multi-layering of trending voiceovers, loud musical drops, and sudden comedic sound effects over short-form videos often triggers severe cognitive overload. Instead of clarifying the primary journalistic meaning of a socio-political critique, excessive and chaotic auditory stimulation imposes an intense decoding burden that reduces processing capacity and diminishes analytical reflection among users.

Consequently, when audio elements cross this threshold from structural markers to overwhelming environmental noise, they actively obstruct deep comprehension and impair the audience's ability to evaluate the underlying factual truth of a message (Falope, 2026).

Beyond causing immediate cognitive fatigue, this auditory expansion facilitates a more insidious structural dysfunction known as sound-based information disorder. Fagbayimu et al. (2025) found that short-form media applications allow creators to completely detach an audio track from its original context and overlay it onto entirely new footage; the communicative integrity of the original sound is routinely compromised.

Recent empirical evidence (Onigbinde & Oloyede, 2024; Onyebuchi, 2025) reveals that in Nigeria's information ecosystem,

this capability is frequently weaponized through AI-driven voice cloning and sophisticated audio deepfakes that exploit the public's cultural tendency to associate the human voice with intimate credibility. When these manipulated or decontextualised audio tracks goes beyond pure entertainment and are embedded into satirical micro-skits, they slip past standard cognitive defenses, transforming grassroots digital satire into a potent vector for political and ethnic disinformation (Fagbayimu et al., 2025; Umar, 2026).

Ultimately, Fagbayimu et al. (2025) and Umar (2026) observe that this trend creates a pervasive satiric dissonance that systematically trivializes hard news and traps the digital public sphere within algorithmic echo chambers. When upbeat or humorous audio trends move beyond their comedic origins and are consistently overlaid as background music for grave societal issues like inflation, police brutality, or insecurity, they construct an atmosphere that is inherently unserious.

Finally, recent studies (e.g. Onyebuchi, 2025; Umar, 2026) document that this persistent juxtaposition conditions the audience to consume critical civic realities as mere digital entertainment rather than urgent, actionable data. Driven further by platform algorithms that prioritize trending sounds, multiple independent creators aggregate around identical audio loops, homogenizing diverse socio-political topics into similar superficial narrative templates that prioritize platform virality over authentic localized journalistic nuance.

Research Objective 4: To examine the choice of linguistic-verbal strategies across as communicative tools for grassroots communication.

The table below measures the oral-auditory variables driving the structural format of the micro-skits.

Table 7: Distribution of Linguistic and Verbal Codes (N = 80)

Linguistic Code	TikTok N = 40	Instag N= 40	Brain Jotter N= 20	Taaooma N = 20	Sabinus N = 20	Macaroni N= 20	Total Sample Freq N = 80
Standard English	22 (55.0)	26 (65.0)	10 (50.0)	12 (60.0)	6 (30.0)	20 (100.0)	48 (60.0)
Nigeria Pidgin	38 (95.0)	35 (87.5)	20 (100.0)	14 (70.0)	20 (100.0)	19 (95.0)	73 (91.3)
Indigenous Language	18 (45.0)	19 (47.5)	2 (10.0)	16 (80.0)	4 (20.0)	15 (75.0)	37 (46.3)
Code-Switching	32 (80.0)	34 (85.0)	14 (70.0)	18 (90.0)	15 (75.0)	19 (95.0)	66 (82.5)
Slang	40 (100.0)	38 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	18 (90.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	78 (97.5)
Proverbs	10 (25.0)	12 (30.0)	2 (10.0)	8 (40.0)	3 (15.0)	9 (45.0)	22 (27.5)
Praises	14 (35.0)	18 (45.0)	3 (15.0)	5 (25.0)	6 (30.0)	18 (90.0)	32 (40.0)
Greetings	25 (62.5)	28 (70.0)	11 (55.0)	14 (70.0)	12 (60.0)	16 (80.0)	53 (66.3)

Crowd	21 (52.5)	18 (45.0)	8 (40.0)	6 (30.0)	15 (75.0)	10 (50.0)	39 (48.8)
Chant	8 (40.0)	6 (15.0)	4 (20.0)	2 (10.0)	6 (30.0)	2 (10.0)	14 (70.0)
Silence	12 (30.0)	15 (37.5)	5 (25.0)	7 (35.0)	9 (45.0)	6 (30.0)	27 (33.8)
Nonverbal Vocalisation	36 (90.0)	34 (85.0)	18 (90.0)	15 (75.0)	20 (100.0)	17 (85.0)	70 (87.5)

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The data tracks linguistic preferences across platforms (TikTok vs. Instagram) and individual creators (Brain Jotter, Taaooma, Sabinus, Mr Macaroni), each with a sample size of (N=20) (totaling (N=80)).

- **Dominant Codes:** Slang is the most heavily utilized feature across the entire sample at 78/80(97.5%), followed closely by Nigerian Pidgin at 73/80(91.3%) and Nonverbal Vocalisation at 70/80(87.5%)
- **Platform Variation:** Instagram content exhibits a higher reliance on Standard English (65%) and Code-Switching (85%) compared to TikTok (55% and 80%, respectively).
- **Creator Profiles:**

Mr Macaroni relies heavily on structured and cultural language features. He leads the entire group in Standard English (100%), Code-Switching (95%), Praises (90%), and Crowd Chant (75%).

Taaooma is characterised by a strong infusion of cultural identity, dominating the Indigenous Language category at 80%.

Sabinus prioritizes colloquial and informal auditory cues. He records the lowest usage of Standard English (30%) but hits 100% in both Nigerian Pidgin and Nonverbal Vocalisation.

Brain Jotter maintains a moderate baseline across categories but shows the lowest reliance on traditional structures like Indigenous Language (10%) and Proverbs (10%).

For the convergence area, there is a universal Slang and Pidgin Integration discovered in the sample. All four creators converge almost perfectly on the use of Slang and Nigerian Pidgin. Both Brain Jotter and Sabinus use these codes in 100% of their sampled content, while Mr Macaroni and Taaooma rarely drop below 90% for either feature.

There is also heavy reliance on Nonverbal Cues. High percentages of Nonverbal Vocalisation are structurally embedded across the board (ranging from Taaooma's 75% to Sabinus's 100%), showing that sounds, gasps, or exclamations are universal comedic tools in Nigerian digital skits. Furthermore, there is a low baseline for Traditional Proverbs. There is a shared low preference for Proverbs across all creators (averaging just 27.5% overall). Even Mr. Macaroni, who uses them the most, only hits 45% this time.

The four producers diverge at certain points. For instance, in Standard English delivery, a massive gap exists between Mr Macaroni (100%) and Sabinus (30%). Mr. Macaroni builds his persona around an educated, elite "Daddy Wa" character, whereas

Sabinus portrays an everyday, lower-middle-class "Investor" caricature where formal English is discarded for comedic effect.

Taaooma (80%) and Mr. Macaroni (75%) frequently deploy local languages (such as Yoruba) to build family-oriented dynamics. In stark contrast, Brain Jotter (10%) avoids local language tags, favouring a more universal, pidgin-centric or urban delivery.

In cultural modalities such as Praises & Chants, Mr Macaroni stands completely isolated in his high usage of Praises (90%) and Crowd Chants (75%) - integral elements of his signature character style. The next closest creator in these categories is Sabinus at a distant 30% for Praises and Taaooma at 20% for Crowd Chants.

Instagram Reels score higher in Standard English (65%) and Proverbs (30%), matching its slightly more middle-class, institutional demographics. Furthermore, the deployment of Silence (33.8% overall) shows how creators adapt to platform design. TikTok features a lower rate of silence (30%) compared to Instagram (37.5%), because the TikTok algorithm rewards continuous sound loops and fast-paced audio tracks. When silence is deployed, it is rarely empty; it functions as a dramatic pause. This sudden drop in audio quality forces mobile users to focus completely on the screen, highlighting moments of institutional betrayal, financial shock, or physical extortion.

This tactical use of sound demonstrates that the technical requirements of the algorithmic feed have fundamentally reshaped the grammar of civic protest and citizen journalism. The statistical consistency of these linguistic frequencies points to deep changes in how socio-political information is shared and consumed in Nigeria. By looking closely at these findings, we can unpack several major implications for the country's broader media and political landscape. For decades, legacy journalism in Nigeria has treated the vernacular as a secondary, non-serious mode of communication, reserving serious policy analysis for formal English.

The fact that Nigerian Pidgin (91.3%) and Slang (97.5%) dominate a sample that heavily covers politics, economic survival, and human rights abuses shows a significant shift in media legitimacy. Micro-skits have effectively validated the language of the street as a legitimate vehicle for serious socio-political critique. When Taaooma pairs Indigenous Languages (80%) with Code-Switching (90%), she is not just entertaining; she is documenting how macroeconomic failures such as rolling blackouts or soaring fuel costs filter down into the everyday arguments and emotional stress of the Nigerian family unit.

The cross-checked empirical frequencies across the platforms and producers reveal a highly specialized, systematic orchestration of linguistic and verbal codes. These structural patterns cannot be reduced to arbitrary comedic styling; rather, they form the core

aesthetic and communicative engine of the micro-skit functioning as alternative micro-journalism.

When these frequencies are evaluated through the interlocking lenses of Social Semiotics and Multimodality, Participatory Culture, and Media Ecology, they map out how decentralized digital spaces are weaponised to dismantle dominant state hegemony and document Nigeria's complex socio-political ecosystems

These linguistic choices strip state actors of their monopoly on truth, proving that complex national crises can be accurately analysed, unpacked, and archived using the everyday language of ordinary citizens. In an era marked by growing crackdown on conventional journalism and street protests, the micro-skit serves as an indispensable tool for safe political critique (Nwonwu & Igwe, 2024; Mark, 2024).

The data show a highly tactical deployment of traditional linguistic codes: Proverbs appear in 27.5% of the sample (45% for Mr. Macaroni and 40% for Taaooma), while Praises feature in 40% of the videos. These traditional rhetorical devices function as creative shields against state censorship. By wrapping fierce criticisms of government corruption in classical proverbs, ironic praise-singing, and absurdist humour, creators build satirical enclosures to protect them against legal indictments.

These hidden layers of meaning are instantly understood by the local audience but remain incredibly difficult for rigid state censors to prosecute or ban. This unique setup allows micro-skits to act as a vital safety valve for public anger, keeping the spirit of civic oversight alive even when formal democratic spaces are heavily restricted.

While these micro-skits play an undeniable counter-hegemonic role, their high reliance on platform algorithms introduces a complicated paradox. Because these creators operate within commercial attention economies, their citizen journalism is always at risk of being diluted by the need for monetization.

The high frequency of Slang (97.5%) and popular catchphrases makes this content highly attractive to corporate brands looking to reach young consumers. This dynamic creates a visible tension: creators must constantly balance their roles as raw, independent watchdogs of the state with their commercial ambitions as corporate influencers. If a creator becomes too dependent on corporate sponsorships or state-aligned brand deals, the sharp, investigative edge of their political critique can easily be softened. This commercial reality remains the core vulnerability for the micro-skit format, highlighting the ongoing struggle to maintain a truly independent, radical public square within corporate-controlled digital spaces.

However, despite its positive contributions to TikTok and Instagram short videos, choices of linguistic-verbal strategies can

cause language errors. Although they are critical semiotic devices used by creators to stimulate engagement and construct journalistic meaning, their application within fast-paced digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels can trigger significant communication dysfunctions.

To fit within strict time constraints, micro-skit creators rely heavily on hyper-compressed verbal framing, single-word graphic text overlays, and dense colloquial terms. This extreme compression triggers a structural dysfunction characterized by semantic oversimplification, where complex macro-economic policies, institutional processes, or civic realities are completely stripped of their necessary nuance.

Empirical evaluations within the Nigerian digital media landscape indicate that such fragmented verbal styles force an unorganized presentation of data that imposes a severe decoding burden on audiences (Falope, 2026). Instead of fostering genuine civic comprehension, this linguistic minimization exhausts users' cognitive resources, lowering their analytical processing capacity and leaving them poorly equipped to understand the systemic root causes of the sociopolitical issues being depicted (Falope, 2026).

Beyond causing immediate cognitive fatigue, this verbal interface facilitates more malicious dysfunctions through the weaponization of language and the creation of severe satiric dissonance. In Nigeria's fragile digital ecosystem, bad actors frequently exploit intimate, highly relatable grassroots linguistic registers such as Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous expressions alongside sophisticated generative tools to embed inflammatory, unverified, or exclusionary rhetoric within highly engaging micro-skits [Fagbayimu et al., 2025].

Because these deceptive narratives are cloaked in culturally comforting slangs and humorous hyperbolic expressions, they effortlessly bypass viewers' standard cognitive defenses, transforming digital satire into a potent vector for political and ethnic polarization (Fagbayimu et al., 2025; Onyebuchi, 2025; Umar, 2026).

Finally, consistently enveloping grave national hardships like inflation, economic insecurity, or systemic corruption in trivializing, upbeat comedic rhetoric constructs a media atmosphere that is inherently unserious (Fagbayimu et al., 2025; Umar, 2026). This persistent juxtaposition desensitizes the digital public sphere, pacifying audiences and replacing active civic outrage with passive amusement and the cultural normalization of public injustice (Fagbayimu et al., 2025).

Research Objective 5: To examine the choice of literary aesthetics as communicative tools for grassroots meaning construction in the short videos.

12 literary codes emerged from the 80 short videos.

Table 8: Simple Frequency & Percentage Distribution Across Producers (N = 20)

LITERARY CODES	SABINUS	TAAOOMA	BRAIN JOTTER	MACARONI
Metaphor	12 (60%)	8 (40%)	6 (30%)	15 (75%)
Onomatopoeia	18 (90%)	13 (65%)	14 (70%)	8 (40%)
Humour	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)
Satire	16 (80%)	15 (75%)	17 (85%)	19 (95%)

Parody	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	8 (40%)	18 (90%)
Dramatic irony	17 (85%)	12 (60%)	11 (55%)	14 (70%)
Rhetorical devices	5 (25%)	14 (70%)	8 (40%)	17 (85%)
Dramatic performance	15 (75%)	19 (95%)	13 (65%)	18 (90%)
Hyperbole	19 (95%)	15 (75%)	16 (80%)	18 (90%)
Juxtaposition	14 (70%)	12 (60%)	11 (55%)	17 (85%)
Allusion	11 (55%)	13 (65%)	12 (60%)	18 (90%)
Farce	15 (75%)	18 (90%)	17 (85%)	10 (50%)

Table 9: Simple Frequency and Percentage Distribution Across Platforms (N = 40)

LITERARY CODES	TIKTOK (F)	TIKTOK (%)	INSTAGRAM (F)	INSTAGRAM (%)
Metaphor	18	45.0	23	57.5
Onomatopoeia	31	77.5	22	55.0
Humour	40	100.0	40	100
Satire	33	82.5	34	85.0
Parody	21	52.5	25	62.5
Dramatic Irony	26	65.0	29	72.5
Rhetorical Devices	20	50.0	24	60.0
Dramatic Performance	34	85.0	31	77.5
Hyperbole	36	90.0	32	80.0
Juxtaposition	26	65.0	28	70.0
Allusion	25	62.5	29	72.5
Farce	33	82.5	27	67.5

Table 10: Combined Master Matrix of Simple Presence Frequencies (N=80)

COMBINED LITERARY CODES	SABINUS (TikTok & Instagram)	TAAOOMA (TikTok & Instagram)	BRAIN JOTTER (TikTok & Instagram)	MACARON (TikTok & Instagram)
Metaphor	5 [50%] 7 [70%]	3 [30%] 5 [50%]	4 [40%] 2 [20%]	6 [60%] 9 [90%]
Onomatopoeia	9 [90%] 9 [90%]	7 [70%] 6 [60%]	8 [80%] 6 [60%]	7 [70%] 1 [10%]
Humour	10 [100%] 10 [100%]	10 [100%] 10 [100%]	10 [100%] 10 [100%]	10 [100%] 10 [100%]
Satire	8 [80%] 8 [80%]	7 [70%] 8 [80%]	9 [90%] 8 [80%]	9 [90%] 10 [100%]
Parody	4 [40%] 5 [50%]	5 [50%] 6 [60%]	5 [50%] 3 [30%]	7 [70%] 10 [100%]
Dramatic Irony	9 [90%] 8 [80%]	6 [60%] 6 [60%]	5 [50%] 6 [60%]	6 [60%] 8 [80%]
Rhetorical Devices	2 [20%] 3 [30%]	7 [70%] 7 [70%]	5 [50%] 3 [30%]	6 [60%] 10 [100%]

Dramatic Performance	7 [70%] 8 [80%]	10 [100%] 9 [90%]	7 [70%] 6 [60%]	10 [100%] 8 [80%]
Hyperbole	10 [100%] 9 [90%]	8 [80%] 7 [70%]	9 [90%] 7 [70%]	9 [90%] 9 [90%]
Juxtaposition	7 [70%] 7 [70%]	6 [60%] 6 [60%]	5 [50%] 6 [60%]	8 [80%] 9 [90%]
Allusion	5 [50%] 6 [60%]	6 [60%] 7 [70%]	6 [60%] 6 [60%]	8 [80%] 10 [100%]
Farce	8 [80%] 7 [70%]	9 [90%] 9 [90%]	9 [90%] 8 [80%]	7 [70%] 3 [30%]

NOTE: TikTok frequencies and percentages are on top while Instagram is below in each cell. Due to multi-character overlapping scenes coded via multi-response item rules, certain complex interactive profiles reflect separate validation flags within the 10-video sub-pool grid cells.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

An analysis of the Combined Master Matrix of Simple Presence Frequencies (N=80) reveals that Humour serves as the universal absolute baseline (100%), appearing in every single analyzed video across all creators and platforms. The dataset is divided into two column frequencies under each creator's name (presumably corresponding to TikTok and Instagram, respectively, with a base of (N=10) per column to equal the (N=20) total per creator).

The simple presence distribution across creators (Table 8) and platforms (Table 9) proves that literary codes are highly structured tools for grassroots meaning construction. Rather than serving as neutral comedic items, these twelve literary aesthetics operate across three major intersecting theoretical frameworks.

When viewed through a Media Ecology framework, the technological structure of the platform acts as an environmental filter that reshapes the pacing of literary arguments. TikTok requires accelerated, high-impact literary codes. It features significant peaks in Onomatopoeic structures 31(77.5%), Hyperbole 36(90%) and physical Farce 33(82.5%). On TikTok, creators use extreme exaggerations (Hyperbole) and cartoonish speed changes (Farce) to deliver quick hooks. Onomatopoeic sound punctuations function as editing cuts, matching audio drops directly with rapid visual transitions to capture user attention instantly within fast feeds.

Conversely, Instagram Reels offer a more stabilized digital stage. It accommodates a higher presence of Metaphors 23(57.5%), Parody 25(62.5%), and Dramatic Irony 29(72.5%). The extended running times provide the space needed for extended character developments and complex plot layers, allowing for a deeper, more detailed breakdown of state institutional corruption.

Social Semiotic Multimodality: The Co-processing of Meaning Social Semiotic Multimodality establishes that meaning is built by coordinating multiple sensory and literary tracks at the same time. The high presence of Satire (82.5%–85%) across both platforms is constructed through a multi-layered integration. Mr. Macaroni, for instance, commands high scores across Satire (95%), Parody

(90.0%), and Rhetorical Devices (85%). He uses a luxurious traditional Agbada to parody political elites. Visually, his sketches rely on Juxtaposition (85%), placing wealthy administrative characters directly next to underprivileged street hustlers. When these elite characters use formal language and traditional metaphors to embellish an over extortion, his high rate of rhetorical delivery drops into an act of exposure, using parody to strip official state actors of their formal authority.

Sabinus frames the psychological weight of Economic Survival by matching up Onomatopoeia cues (90%) with extreme Hyperbole (95%) and Dramatic Irony (85%). His sketches rely on dramatic irony because the audience instantly recognizes a fraudulent financial trap long before his desperate "Investor" character does. When the scam hits, his technical codes synchronize: matching a close-up with hyper-exaggerated facial freezes (Hyperbole) and nonverbal hissing sounds (Onomatopoeic punctuation) to capture the shared economic paralysis of ordinary citizens under intense financial pressure.

Participatory Culture: The widespread deployment of Humour (100%), Dramatic Performance (65% – 95%), and Allusion (62.5% – 72.5%) reflects a vibrant Participatory Culture. In this framework, digital platforms lower the barriers to civic expression, turning passive media consumers into active creators who use shared cultural shorthand to critique power.

The high density of Allusion across creators (Macaroni: 90%; Taaooma: 65%) tracks their use of shared, real-world socio-political indicators. By embedding subtle references to real-world fuel queues, grid failures, or currency fluctuations directly into their skits, creators tap into an existing grassroots lexicon.

Taaooma drives her commentary on family and social issues through Farce (90%) and Dramatic Performance (95%). Playing multiple characters across distinct generations across split-screens, her physical comedy, like her timed parental slaps, serves as a familiar cultural hook.

Bypassing traditional media gatekeepers, these literary choices turn short entertainment clips into an interactive public square where structural state failures can be safely processed, mocked, and evaluated by society.

Research Objective 6: To evaluate the typographic and textual codes (on-screen text overlays) used in anchoring the micro-skit narrative and guiding audience interpretation.

Table 11: Evaluation of Typographic & Textual Codes (N=80)

TypoTextual Code	TikTok	Instag	Brain Jotter	Taaooma	Sabinus	Macaroni	Total
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	N=40	N=40	N=20	N=20	N=20	N= 20	Sample N = 80
Dialectal/Pidgin Orthography	34 (85.0)	32 (89.0)	18 (90.0)	13 (65.0)	19 (95.0)	16 (80.0)	66 (82.5)
Emphatic Kinetic Typography	28 (70.0)	19 (47.5)	15 (75.0)	16 (80.0)	8 (40.0)	8 (40.0)	47 (58.8)
Explanatory Narrative Captions	38 (95.0)	35 (87.5)	19 (95.0)	18 (90.0)	18 (90.0)	18 (90.0)	73 (91.3)
Emoji-Text Integration	36 (90.0)	30 (75.0)	17 (85.0)	14 (70.0)	18 (90.0)	17 (85.0)	66 (82.5)
Subtitling & Transcription	31 (77.5)	26 (65.0)	14 (70.0)	15 (75.0)	12 (60.0)	16 (80.0)	57 (71.3)
Sponsor/Branding Watermarks	22 (55.0)	29 (72.5)	11 (55.0)	12 (60.0)	15 (75.0)	13 (65.0)	51 (63.8)

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

Convergence Points:

- Explanatory Captions (The "Hook" Baseline) = 91.3%
- Dialectal Orthography & Emoji Integration = 82.5%

Divergence Points

- Kinetic Typography:
TikTok (70.0%) vs. Instagram (47.5%)
- Branding/Watermarks:
TikTok (55%) vs. Instagram. (72.5%)

The primary area of structural convergence across platforms lies in the near-universal deployment of Explanatory Narrative Captions 73(91.3%). This typographic code shows high saturation on both TikTok (95.0%) and Instagram (87.5%), with remarkably uniform occurrence across individual creators: Brain Jotter (95%), Taaoma (90%), Sabinus (90%), and Mr Macaroni (90%). This consistency proves that setting up an immediate context or narrative premise is a standard requirement across short-form digital media.

Co-equally, Dialectal and Pidgin Orthography 66(82.5%) and Emoji-Text Integration 66(82.5%) share identical overall sample frequencies. Sabinus demonstrates the highest individual reliance on localized pidgin orthography 19(95%), while TikTok shows slightly higher overall emoji-text usage (90%) compared to Instagram (75%). These combined elements establish a baseline visual vocabulary for contemporary Nigerian digital content creators.

In contrast, Emphatic Kinetic Typography represents a major point of platform divergence. This text style appears in 28(70%) of TikTok but drops sharply to 19(47.5%) on Instagram. At the creator level, this creates a clear divide: fast-paced, high-energy editing styles like Taaoma (80%) and Brain Jotter (75%) rely heavily on animated text overlays, while physical comedy styles like Sabinus (40%) and performance-driven formats like Mr Macaroni (40%) use them far less frequently.

A reverse trend appears in Sponsor and Branding Watermarks. Here, Instagram records a significantly higher deployment rate 29(72.5%) than TikTok 22(55%). This divergence is driven by

Sabinus (75%) and Mr. Macaroni (65%) whose Instagram feeds are heavily integrated with direct corporate sponsorships, sports betting endorsements, and long-term brand partnerships. This stands in contrast to TikTok, where clips are more frequently uploaded without commercial branding elements.

For the qualitative semiotic analysis of the typographic codes, evaluating these findings through a digital media lens reveals that on-screen text overlays function as an active interpretive anchor. They restrict alternative readings and guide how the audience understands the content (Kress, 2010). Applying Barthes' concept of anchorage for textual anchoring and contextual framing, Explanatory Narrative Captions (91.3%) serve to limit multiple interpretations of a scene. In micro-skits where the opening frame lacks context, a line of text like "POV: You owe a Yoruba mother money" instantly establishes the power dynamics and narrative boundaries.

This typographic guide ensures the viewer decodes the subsequent actions through the intended comedic lens within the first few crucial seconds of scrolling. For Graphic Representation of Speech, the high rate of Dialectal and Pidgin Orthography (82.5%) marks a deliberate shift from standard written English to a style that visually reflects oral speech patterns. Spelling words as "Idan", "Walahi", or "Chineke" does more than just transcribe audio; it creates a shared cultural bond with the viewer.

This graphic style captures the distinct rhythms, pitch, and emotional tone of local speech, making the digital text feel familiar and authentic to a Nigerian audience (Nwonwu & Igwe, 2024). There is also Visual Punctuation and Emotional Shorthand. For instance, Emoji-Text Integration (82.5%) functions as a graphic substitute for audience laughter or social commentary. Placing emojis directly into the video frame acts as a visual guide that tells the viewer how to feel about a specific moment and manage affective responses in real time. This technique works alongside kinetic typography to create a layered, multi-sensory viewing experience. It provides clear emotional cues that keep the audience engaged, even when watching with the sound turned off (Olowu & Bello, 2024).

On the contrary, while typo-textual codes (eg. on-screen subtitles, emojis, dynamic kinetic typography, and narrative text hooks) are frequently celebrated for their capacity to anchor meaning and

arrest audience attention, their over-deployment within the fast-paced ecosystem of short-form digital content introduces critical aesthetic and cognitive disruptions.

When evaluated within contemporary media landscapes, excessive or poorly executed textual overlays often lead to visual degradation, spectator fatigue, and a systematic erosion of

cinematic performance (Asanya & Uwilawho, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025)

Research Objective 7: Analyse the editing and platform-specific aesthetics through which Nigerian micro-skits attract attention and send a message.

Table 12: Platform-Producer Micro Skits Editing Codes

Technical Editing Code	TikTok N= 40	Instag N=40	Brain Jotter N=20	Taaooma N=20	Sabinus N=20	Macaroni N=20	Total Sample (N = 80)
Jump Cuts	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Rapid Cuts	38 (95.0)	35 (87.5)	19 (95.0)	18 (90.0)	18 (90.0)	18 (90.0)	73 (91.3)
Transition	29 (72.5)	21 (52.5)	11 (55.0)	15 (75.0)	10 (50.0)	14 (70.0)	50 (62.5)
Reaction Shot	39 (97.5)	40 (100.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	79 (98.8)
Montage	14 (35.0)	11 (27.5)	6 (30.0)	8 (40.0)	5 (25.0)	6 (30.0)	25 (31.3)
Slow Motion	11 (27.5)	16 (40.0)	4 (20.0)	7 (35.0)	9 (45.0)	7 (35.0)	27 (33.8)
Speed Changes	18 (45.0)	13 (32.5)	8 (40.0)	9 (45.0)	7 (35.0)	7 (35.0)	31 (38.8)
Repetition	15 (37.5)	10 (25.5)	8 (40.0)	6 (30.0)	7 (35.0)	4 (25.0)	25 (31.3)
Split Screen	6 (15.0)	2 (5.0)	1 (5.0)	4 (20.0)	1 (5.0)	2 (10.0)	8 (10.0)
Visual Overlays	36 (90.0)	33 (80.0)	16 (80.0)	18 (90.0)	17 (85.0)	18 (90.0)	69 (86.3)
Freeze Frames	22 (55.0)	26 (65.0)	10 (50.0)	12 (60.0)	14 (70.0)	12 (60.0)	48 (60.0)
Sequencing	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The quantitative data shows clear operational patterns in how technical editing choices structure the presentation of Nigerian micro-skits across TikTok and Instagram platforms. This reveals specific points where production styles match up or differ.

Convergence and divergence Metrics

Areas of Convergence:

- Jump Cuts and Sequencing (Universal Baseline) = 100%
- Reaction Shots (Audience Punctuation) = 98.8%

Areas of Divergence:

- Split Screen =
(TikTok [15%] vs. Instagram [5.0%])

- Slow Motion = TikTok (27.5%) Vs. Instagram (40%)

Adebayo and Sanusi (2024) support the foregoing 100% baseline evidence. In their comprehensive study on the emergence of "Neo-Nollywood", they observe that non-linear, seamless editing tools are no longer optional creative choices but serve as the basic structural framework of digital content production in Nigeria. They note that because short-form platforms heavily penalise long pauses, creators are forced to use jump cuts to keep pacing uniform across every clip.

In addition, Nwonwu and Igwe (2024), in their analysis of comedic timing in Nigerian digital skits demonstrate that the "facial expression close-up" is the most vital asset for cross-cultural humour. This technique acts as a non-verbal comedic marker that bridges language barriers by converting local inside jokes into widely understandable visual content.

The data reveals absolute uniformity in basic editing structures across platforms and content creators. Jump Cuts 80(100%) and Sequencing 80(100%) achieve complete saturation across TikTok, Instagram, and all sampled comedians (Brain Jotter, Taaoma, Sabinus, and Mr Macaroni). This uniformity indicates that seamless continuous narrative structures and pacing choices form the foundational framework of contemporary short-form video creation in Nigeria.

A similar structural consistency appears in the use of Reaction Shots 79(98.8%). This code shows almost universal adoption, appearing in (100%) of Instagram skits and across all individual creators except Brain Jotter 19(95%). This widespread use demonstrates that capturing immediate emotional responses is essential for building comedic timing. Furthermore, Rapid Cuts 73(91.3%) and Visual Overlays 69(86.3%) maintain high deployment rates across the board. This indicates a shared reliance on dense, fast-paced presentation styles designed to secure viewer participatory engagement within the first few seconds of playback.

Clear differences emerge when analyzing platform-specific features, particularly in how structural tools are used. Transitions reveal a notable gap between platforms: TikTok skits use them at a high rate at 29(72.5%), whereas Instagram skits show a drop to 21(52.5%). At the individual creator level, this divergence becomes more distinct; Taaoma uses transitions heavily 15(75%), while Sabinus drops significantly to 10(50%).

The use of Slow Motion also highlights platform-driven differences. Instagram content displays a higher reliance on slow-motion effects at 16(40.0%) in comparison to TikTok 11(27.5%). This preference is mirrored by Sabinus 9(45%), who frequently uses slowed frames to emphasize his character's iconic expressions of suspended interest, disappointment, confusion, or regret.

Split Screens represent the most significant point of divergence and show the lowest overall use 8(10%). TikTok clips employ split screens three times more often at 6(15%) than Instagram 2(5%). This variation is driven almost entirely by Taaoma's specific editing style 4(20%), where she routinely uses split screens to play multiple characters interacting within the same frame. This stands in sharp contrast to Brain Jotter and Sabinus, who minimize the feature 1(5%) each.

In their study on emerging satirical structures, Okon and Edet (2025) warn against assuming absolute structural uniformity (100%) across all formats. They point out that conversational and politically focused skits often use longer, unedited takes to maintain dramatic tension. This indicates that while jump cuts dominate purely comedic skits, narrative-heavy socio-political commentaries sometimes avoid them.

Qualitative evaluation using digital media frameworks shows that these technical codes function as a specialized visual language. They translate everyday Nigerian social experiences into highly engaging, platform-optimized cultural texts. The Grammar of Pacing (Jump Cuts, Rapid Cuts, and Sequencing) do not only serve merely as time-saving tools, the universal reliance on jump cuts and quick editing sequences functions as an artistic choice. It mirrors the high-energy, fast-paced nature of urban Nigerian life (Onyebadi, 2023).

By removing natural pauses, creators build an artificial sense of urgency. This structural choice matches the algorithmic demands of platforms designed to capture short attention spans.

Reaction Shots and Freeze Frames serve as Punctuation of Humour. Reaction shots and freeze frames 48(60%) serve as visual markers for jokes. When Sabinus (10%) reaction shots or Brain Jotter (95%) uses an abrupt close-up on a face, the edit signals the punch-line to the audience. This visual punctuation builds a shared cultural connection, drawing on recognisable non-verbal cues that resonate with the viewer's real-world social experiences (Nwonwu & Igwe, 2024).

The quantitative significance of split screens prominently dominates in Taaoma's sampled micro-skits (20%). The split screen mechanism allows a single performer to multitask, portraying an entire family, illustrating internal household dynamics in real time (Mark, 2024; see also Egbejule, 2021). Combined with visual overlays (86.3%), such as text on screen, emojis, and artificial lighting changes, creators build a layered visual environment. This setup allows them to deliver physical comedy alongside real-time commentary, creating multiple layers of meaning simultaneously (Adetunji, 2021; Mark, 2024).

Theoretically, Social Semiotic Multimodality (SSM) offers an opportunity for a universal presence of Jump Cuts and Sequencing at 100% alongside the widespread use of Visual Overlays (86.3%). Illustrating how text is layered to build meaning, SSM ensures that content creators do not depend on only dialogue. Instead, they assemble a synergy of a mix of signs where an audio effect, an emoji overlay, and an abrupt camera cut happen simultaneously to deliver a single joke.

Under this framework, Reaction Shots (98.8%) act as essential cultural signs. For instance, when Sabinus or Mr Macaroni cuts to an exaggerated facial close-up, that shot operates as a visual signifier that the audience decodes instantly based on shared Nigerian social experiences. This structural layering supports the arguments of Adebayo and Sanusi (2024) that modern skit-making relies heavily on combining these visual channels to maximize narrative impact within seconds.

According to Participatory Culture Theory, Taaoma's high usage of split screens (20%) highlights this participatory style. She uses the layout to talk to different versions of herself within the same frame, mimicking the multi-screen, collaborative aesthetic that defines the platform. As Ibrahim et al. (2025) point out, these technical editing codes are heavily shaped by a culture of remixing. Independent creators use accessible editing software to adopt, replicate, and modify popular visual formats, transforming production from a professional industry into a highly interactive, collaborative, and participatory youth-driven digital space.

While the empirical evidence in the current study points to a highly structured, fast-paced, and platform-optimized editing model, several recent empirical studies in Nigeria offer alternative or opposing views. For instance, that local bandwidth limitations and data costs shape consumption habits far more than platform-specific editing features (Ibrahim et al., 2022); that focusing heavily on technical editing codes overlooks the primary role of oral performance traditions (Oluwatola, 2023); that several emerging creators intentionally reject fast cuts and audio effects, opting instead for long takes and natural lighting to mimic prestige cinema (Eze & Gbenga, 2024); and, finally, that excessive jump cuts and visual overlays often create visual fatigue and alienate older demographics (Asanya & Uwilawho, 2025).

Research Objective 8: Evaluate the nonverbal, bodily movements, and performance aesthetics in the selected micro skits that convey communicative meaning.

Table 13: Distribution of Emergent Nonverbal, Bodily Movement and Performance Codes by Platform and Producer

Nonverbal, Bodily Movement & Performance Code	TikTok N=40	Instg N=40	Brain Jotter N=20	Taaooma N=20	Sabinus N=20	Macaroni N=20	Total Sample (N = 80)
Facial Expression	39 (97.5)	39 (97.5)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	78 (97.5)
Gestures	38 (95.0)	38 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	18 (90.0)	18 (90.0)	20 (100.0)	76 (95.0)
Acting Style	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)
Dance	13 (32.5)	9 (22.5)	4 (20.0)	3 (15.0)	7 (35.0)	8 (40.0)	22 (27.5)
Mimicry	20 (50.0)	18 (45.0)	11 (55.0)	15 (75.0)	6 (30.0)	6 (30.0)	38 (47.5)
Impersonation	22 (55.0)	23 (57.5)	8 (50.0)	17 (85.0)	5 (25.0)	15 (75.0)	45 (56.2)
Body Language	37 (92.5)	37 (92.5)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	17 (85.0)	74 (92.5)
Role Switching	12 (30.0)	12 (30.0)	1 (5.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (5.0)	2 (10.0)	24 (30.0)
Comic Timing	38 (95.0)	39 (97.5)	19 (95.0)	19 (95.0)	20 (100.0)	19 (95.0)	77 (96.2)
Dramatic pause	28 (70.0)	30 (75.0)	12 (60.0)	14 (70.0)	18 (90.0)	14 (70.0)	58 (72.5)
Characterisation	40 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	80 (100.0)

Note: The percentages inside the columns show the occurrence rate within that specific platform (e.g. N=40 each) or producer subset (e.g. N=20 each). The final Total percentage represents the entire N=80 data pool.

Before examining the qualitative and theoretical implications of the above results, a rigorous comparative quantitative analysis of the frequencies and percentages is required across the platforms (TikTok: N=40; Instagram: N=40) and the individual producers (Brain Jotter, Taaooma, Sabinus, and Macaroni (N=20 each).

Quantitative Peak Segments

1). Absolute Saturation (100%)

= Acting Style, Characterisation

2). Primary Cluster (92.5% - 97.5%)

= Facial Expressions, Gestures, Body Language

3). Volatile Cluster (27.5% - 72.5%)

= Role Switching, Mimicry, Dance

At the macro level, Acting style and Characterisation achieved an absolute saturation rate of 80(100.0%) across all 80 sampled skits, showing zero statistical variance across platforms or creators. Immediately below this baseline sits a high-density cluster comprising Facial expressions 78(97.5%), Comic Timing 77(96.2%), Gestures 76(95.0%), and Body language 74(92.5%).

When filtered by platform, Facial Expressions and Body Language demonstrated absolute numerical stability, returning identical frequencies on both TikTok 39(97.5%) and Instagram 37(92.5%), respectively. This statistical equilibrium indicates that these four core kinetic modes form the non-negotiable structural grammar of short-form digital performance, remaining uniform regardless of the hosting platform architecture

The sharpest quantitative differences between the platforms emerged in the temporal and rhythmic variables:

Dance: This variable exhibited the widest statistical platform gap, appearing in 13(32.5%) of TikTok skits compared to only 9(22.5%) on Instagram—representing a 10.0% percentage-point variance.

Dramatic Pause: Conversely, Instagram recorded a higher reliance on this element at 30(75%), whereas TikTok dropped to 38(70%).

Mimicry: TikTok also pulled ahead in somatic prop creation, appearing in 20(50%) of its skits, outperforming Instagram's 18(45.0%). These numerical shifts revealed an operational drift. That is, while TikTok's distribution rewards faster, rhythmic, and audio-synchronised body movements (Dance and Mimicry), Instagram's feed distribution allows for a slightly slower narrative pacing that accommodates prolonged visual tension (Dramatic pause).

When the data is broken down by producer (N=20), the variables display high volatility, exposing distinct creative signatures. For example, Role-Switching Polarization showed the most severe statistical separation in the entire dataset. Taaooma recorded an absolute frequency of 20(100%), whereas Mr Macaroni dropped to 2(10%), and both Brain Jotter and Sabinus hit a statistical floor of 1(5%).

This marks a massive 95% percentage-point variance between Taaooma and her contemporaries, proving that this specific aesthetic is highly localized rather than industry-wide. For Pacing and Pausing Gap in the execution of Dramatic pauses, Sabinus achieves a peak rate of 18(90%), significantly outstripping Brain Jotter, who records the sample minimum of 12(60%). The 30% structural gap highlights a fundamental difference in performance pacing. Sabinus builds humour through prolonged periods of physical immobility, while Brain Jotter maintains continuous kinetic velocity.

Furthermore, in the Gestural and Impersonation Dynamics, Brain Jotter and Mr Macaroni achieve maximum saturation at 20(100%), whereas Taaooma and Sabinus maintain a lower rate of 18(90%). In Impersonation, Taaooma leads at 17(85%), closely followed by Mr. Macaroni at 15(75%), while Sabinus hits the lowest recorded frequency across the group at just 5(25%).

Theoretical Discussion of Findings

Social Semiotics Multimodality: The somatic realization of meaning from the perspective of Social Semiotics Multimodality holds that communication is structured through a coordinated arrangement of multiple sign-bearing channels (modes) including speech, text, audio, and kinesics (Kress, 2010). In short-form digital comedy, bodily movements are not merely background support for spoken dialogue; they function as primary semantic systems.

The high frequencies of Facial Expressions (97.5%), Gestures (95%), and Body Language (92.5%) prove that these creators treat the human body as an active semiotic part. This finding strongly aligns with recent empirical work by Mark (2024), who notes that contemporary Nigerian skit makers utilize concentrated physical iconography like specialized costuming and hyper-exaggerated facial expressions to establish immediate narrative context within postcolonial media spaces. For instance, when Sabinus combines an anxious shoulder slump with wide, unblinking eyes during a Dramatic Pause (90%), he creates a clear visual statement of failure that works independently of speech.

However, critical opposition emerges when these findings are contrasted with other contemporary Nigerian research perspectives. While the findings of this study argue that nonverbal bodily semantics are carefully engineered for humour and narrative

economy, recent mixed-methods research by specialized scholars argues that these bodily representations are frequently weaponized for harmful social impact. For instance, studies (e.g. Springer, 2024) examining female representations in mainstream skits reveal that somatic cues, costuming, and gaze vectors are routinely deployed to promote female sexual objectification rather than constructive narrative meaning.

Furthermore, content assessments by cultural critics (e.g. ResearchGate, 2023) indicates that the high reliance on raw kinetic energy and unscripted physical movements often crosses ethical boundaries, normalizing risky physical pranks and socially disruptive behaviours to capture attention. This reveals a dual semiotic reality: the body functions as an incredibly efficient narrative tool, but its reliance on extreme exaggeration can degrade into harmful socio-cultural stereotypes.

Participatory Culture: The high frequencies of Characterisation (100%), Impersonation (56.2%), and Mimicry (47.5%) connect directly to the dynamics of Participatory Culture, where media consumers and creators draw from a shared archive of cultural knowledge to produce immediate meaning (Jenkins, 2006).

Digital skits thrive because they operate within a shared cultural network where creators and consumers share the same social experiences. Recent field interviews and audience surveys across the Nigerian digital ecosystem confirm that the success of the "Neo-Nollywood" skit economy relies heavily on using local cultural templates, relatable domestic tropes, and typified physical behaviours that resonate deeply with the collective memory of the public (See Neo-Nollywood Research, 2024).

Mr. Macaroni's open-palm hand gestures and enthusiastic bows during Impersonations (75%) trigger a shared understanding of wealthy social types in Nigerian society. Taaooma's absolute reliance on Role Switching (100%) is supported by Mark (2024) as a defining single-actor structural framework depends entirely on the audience's ability to recognize immediate shifts in head height and posture as distinct family archetypes.

Conversely, some media studies raise concerns about this high level of typification. Researchers note that relying on pre-existing physical shorthand can lock creators into repetitive "joke circles," limiting creative growth and reducing complex socio-political issues into superficial slapstick humour (Filani & Williams, 2023). Nevertheless, the data suggest that these typified postures function as a crucial cultural currency, turning the performer's body into an open site of collective identification and social critique.

Media Ecology: Media Ecology states that the structure of a media technology actively shapes human interaction, perception, and content delivery (Postman, 1970). The distribution of performance aesthetics across TikTok and Instagram demonstrates how technical environments directly influence artistic choices.

The fast, swipeable layout of modern feeds demands immediate visual impact to prevent users from scrolling away, forcing an absolute adaptation in performance style. Recent digital media usage studies in Nigeria indicate that mobile-first audiences view short-form skits primarily as rapid stress relief, making a user-friendly interface and highly engaging content essential for viewer retention (The Conversation, 2024; IJSSAR, 2026).

This environment explains why Acting Style and Characterisation maintain a (100%) presence across the sample. Performed kinetics must bend to the platform's rules. The data shows that Dance is

noticeably higher on TikTok (32.5%) than Instagram (22.5%). This disparity highlights how TikTok's audio-driven discovery algorithms reward creators who use rhythmic movement.

Conversely, Instagram's higher use of Dramatic Pause (75%) points to a platform environment that accommodates dialogue pacing and longer micro-narratives. This supports the core rule of Media Ecology: performance styles are not developed in a vacuum; they are physically re-engineered to survive the attention constraints of their digital ecosystems.

These findings have methodological implications. This study proves that analyzing short-form content requires a structured, multimodal approach to coding. Traditional text-based or dialogue-heavy analysis fails to capture the true core of micro-skits. Because nonverbal elements like facial expressions and comic timing appear in over (95%) of the sample, future communication research in Nigeria must treat body movement as a standalone text.

Scholars cannot rely solely on written transcripts. As demonstrated in recent mediated performance frameworks, researchers must use systematic kinesic coding to accurately capture how meaning is built in short-form digital formats (ResearchGate, 2024).

Theoretically, the results challenge traditional media frameworks that view nonverbal cues as secondary aids to spoken words. When performance elements reach near-total occurrence rates (92.5% - 100%), it shows a clear shift in media literacy: short-form digital media operates on a highly compressed visual language (Jibrin & Raji, 2026).

On the contrary, the empirical findings of Okon (2026) and Eze et al. (2026) oppose this present theoretical proposition. Okon (2026) explicitly counters the narrative of positive compression. His empirical assessment of short-form media formats among Nigerian youths concluded that audio-visual segments under 60 seconds create severe "attention fragments," making it difficult for users to maintain cognitive stamina or engage with complex, long-form information.

Eze et al. (2026) note that the relentless pressure to maintain high visibility within these tightly compressed media spaces creates extreme digital precarity, algorithmic dependency, unnecessary suspense, and emotional exhaustion for Nigerian creators who must constantly over-exaggerate their physical self-presentation to appease platform algorithms.

However, this study expands Media Ecology by showing that platform layouts do not just change distribution but actively alter human body movements. This suggests that as media delivery paths compress, the reliance on rapid somatic shorthand will grow. This supports recent assertions that technological mediation is fundamentally reconfiguring how the physical body and narrative time operate within contemporary African performance spaces (ResearchGate, 2026).

Furthermore, for content creators, digital marketers, and media producers, the data provides a clear blueprint for capturing attention in the attention economy. Relying on slow dialogue setups is ineffective on modern social feeds. Production styles must place heavy emphasis on hyper-exaggerated facial expressions, distinct character costumes, and precise physical timing right from the first second.

To maximize platform reach, creators must tailor their physical delivery using rhythmic movements and trend steps on TikTok,

and leaning into narrative pauses and character dynamics on Instagram. However, creators must balance this kinetic energy carefully because over-relying on shocking movements or reductive bodily tropes can draw regulatory pushback from oversight bodies like the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), which increasingly audit digital content for social responsibility (ResearchGate, 2023).

Research Objective 9: To what extent do these combined multimodal aesthetics allow micro-skits to subvert traditional institutional censorship and function as trusted complementary public archives of contemporary Nigerian history?

The intersection of decentralized communication technologies and civil discontent in Nigeria has birthed an alternative public sphere where the traditional boundary between entertainer and reporter is completely dissolved. This study frames the contemporary Nigerian micro-skit not merely as a site of digital comedy or "cruise," but as a highly sophisticated form of citizen journalism that executes digital counter-hegemony.

In a qualitative and critical textual investigation into the emergence of the "Neo-Nollywood" digital economy, Ilukwe (2026) establishes that social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have effectively democratized entertainment production in Nigeria. He argues that because traditional Nollywood films face institutional censorship or regulatory commercial constraints, these micro-skits have evolved into veritable tools for political satire and social critique. By embedding local languages and hyper-relatable local themes, creators foster rapid community participation and engagement, transforming short-form spaces into active sites of alternative public discourse.

According to Gramscian hegemony theory, dominant state apparatuses maintain control not only through physical coercion, but by engineering a cultural and ideological consensus through mainstream institutions. In Nigeria's contemporary media ecosystem, state censorship, corporate capture of legacy news channels, and regulatory chokeholds (e.g. the National Broadcasting Commission's restrictive codes and historical platform bans) have traditionally restricted the public's access to unfiltered reportage on systemic institutional failure.

Local communication scholars (e.g. Sani & Ibrahim, 2024; Usman & Chinedu, 2024) observe that the state actively leverages these centralized media frameworks to manufacture public consent and suppress alternative socio-political discourses. This institutional gagging creates what media unions and legal watchdogs classify as structural censorship designed to maintain the elite ruling class's narrative monopoly over national crises (National Nigeria Media Reports, 2026).

Consequently, Nigerian micro-skits on TikTok and Instagram Reels function as a vital form of digital counter-hegemony. By utilizing decentralized platform architectures, micro-skit creators act as contemporary "organic intellectuals" who bypass mainstream gatekeepers to wage a cultural "war of position" across social media spaces. Instead of relying on top-down broadcast networks, these creators leverage mobile-first multimodal aesthetics such as satirical characterisations, code-switching into Nigerian Pidgin, on-screen text overlays, and platform-native audio trends to dismantle the state's manufactured consensus (Asuquo, 2025; Uduak & Okon, 2026).

By wrapping hard-hitting civic journalism, economic agitation, and structural exposure in the protective guise of low-budget internet comedy, these micro-skits challenge mainstream "common sense" (Sani & Ibrahim, 2024). They transform everyday social media feeds into trusted alternative public archives of lived historical realities, effectively subverting state-sponsored censorship and providing grassroots communities with an open town-hall for democratic resistance (Osisanwo, 2025).

By operating within the temporal and architectural parameters of TikTok and Instagram Reels, creators utilize what Scott (1990, pp. xii, 14) refers to as "hidden transcripts" (i.e. subversive political discourse packaged within the innocuous, vernacular form of slapstick comedy) to evade state surveillance and legal prosecution. Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the backs of the dominant powers. Hidden transcripts show up in rumour, humour, folktales, songs, expressions and theatre (Scott, 1990, pp. xii, 14).

Legitimized by the decentralized structures of alternative media theory, these micro-skits perform vital journalistic operations such as setting public agendas, investigating state actors, documenting economic indicators at the grassroots level, and archiving human rights abuses. The micro-skit democratizes information dissemination by stripping the news of its elite, bourgeois, and anglicised formalisms.

Instead of treating socio-political events as detached and objective reports, micro skit creators reconstruct them as visceral and lived experiences. The presentation of empirical frequencies and percentages across the Presentation Tables uncovers a highly systemic, non-arbitrary deployment of semiotic resources. These patterns prove that digital counter-hegemony in Nigeria is structurally sustained through a specialised multimodal syntactic structure.

Despite the multimodal orchestration of micro-skits on TikTok and Instagram Reels that provides a powerful democratic counter-narrative, this digital infrastructure is not without structural vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

The architectural design of short-form video apps relies heavily on engagement-maximizing algorithms that reward immediate shock value, high emotional resonance, and high click-through rates. Because independent skit-makers are structurally dependent on digital ad payouts and monetization models, their priority often shifts away from journalistic accuracy, creating a dangerous information vacuum where speed and spectacle replace rigorous verification. For example, in a widely criticized incident, a prominent Nigerian content creator, Nasboi, mistakenly tagged the President in a deleted video clip depicting a violent terror attack, which was later discovered to have occurred outside the country entirely.

Recent research (e.g. Zakari et al., 2024) highlights that, the absence of strict editorial gatekeeping in social media spaces transforms citizen journalism into a form of "pseudo-journalism". This structural oversight regularly unleashes unfiltered, misleading rumours that can trigger national anxiety (Orakwe, 2024; National Nigeria Media Reports, 2026) or provoke real-world ethnic and political crises (Hassan, 2026).

Furthermore, as the local creator market continues to expand toward billions of dollars, the monetisation of internet traffic has

enhanced the deliberate fabrication of news. The democratisation of AI-driven voice cloning, deep-fakes, and automated video editing tools has fundamentally armed local actors, converting casual internet rumours into a highly profitable disinformation industry.

According to Orakwe (2024) and Hassan (2026), the Nigerian digital ecosystem is highly prone to synthetic manipulation. During critical national moments, such as election cycles or severe socioeconomic protests, AI-manipulated short-form videos are routinely deployed to mimic genuine journalism. These deep-fakes forge ethnocentric dialogues and link political figures or security agencies to criminal vices. This severely widens the trust gap between the state and the public, often muddying the waters for authentic historical archiving.

James C. Scott's conceptualization of "hidden transcripts" relies on the strategic use of double-entendres, metaphors, and allegories to protect subaltern groups from direct authoritarian retaliation. However, within Nigeria's communication landscape, this defensive camouflage presents a significant structural dysfunction: the total loss of communicative precision.

When socio-political critiques are heavily layered behind slapstick routines, hyperbolic characters, or cross-dressing caricatures, the text becomes deeply ambiguous. This excessive coding permits strategic deniability not only for the creator but also for the oppressive state apparatuses being critiqued. Because the political commentary is packaged as mere comedy, the ruling elite can easily dismiss hard investigative insights as harmless jokes, effectively insulating themselves from accountability and neutralizing the skit's power as a driver of policy change.

In addition to ambiguity, while hidden transcripts are designed to evade formal state surveillance, they cannot bypass the capitalist commercial structures of modern social platforms. The very elements that form these digital hidden transcripts (e.g. trending sounds, satirical hashtags, and fast jump cuts) are automatically ingested by platform algorithms to be tracked, categorized, and made a commodity for corporate advertisers.

This creates a paradox where subaltern expressions of political trauma are systemic inputs for platform capitalism. The revolutionary potential of the hidden discourse is neutralized; it is repackaged into a profitable trend that keeps users engaged, effectively transforming genuine resistance into a commercial product controlled by global tech firms.

The assumption that wrapping political dissent in slapstick comedy provides absolute legal protection is a dangerous oversimplification in the contemporary Nigerian polity (Sani & Ibrahim, 2024). When a hidden transcript crosses an invisible boundary and genuinely threatens elite narrative control, Orakwe (2024) and Uduak & Okon (2026) conclude that the state will routinely drop all pretenses of tracking nuance and enforce brute physical coercion.

There is no absolute citizen journalism and Scott's "Hidden Transcripts" cannot entirely circumvent state attention and legal protocols. For example, as documented by the Nigeria Police Force (2025), state security operatives actively monitor social media spaces to track down independent creators who cross into what the state defines as public incitement or defamation.

In such instances, creators like Destiny Ekhurutomuen have been paraded and detained for operating digital accounts that spread

polarizing materials. This demonstrates that whenever a hidden transcript successfully activates public consciousness, the protective shield of humour vanishes, exposing grassroots actors to direct legal persecution and physical state intimidation (National Nigeria Media Reports, 2026; Orakwe, 2024).

Summary

This research investigated the multimodal orchestration of digital satire as an alternative form of citizen journalism in Nigeria, evaluating an empirically bounded pool of 80 micro-skits harvested from TikTok (N=40) and Instagram Reels (N=40) between January 1 and June 30, 2026.

Through a rigorous, separate-before-comparative content analysis cross-tabulating 79 discrete variables, this project mapped the interactions across seven distinct aesthetic layers: visual resources, auditory punctuation, camera semiotics, linguistic hybridity, literary devices, post-production editing, and performance dynamics. The quantitative findings validated a Media Ecology framework, confirming that platform architecture acts as a structural filter for civic expressions.

TikTok forces a hyper-compressed, kinetic style characterized by a high frequency of Jump Cuts (M=19.80), Visual Overlays (M=6.85), and Comedic Zooms (82.5%) used for instant narrative delivery. Conversely, Instagram Reels function as an open digital stage, prioritizing stable narrative continuity through Medium Shots (55%), extended Dialogue Durations (M=64.15 seconds), and continuous Background Music Beds (70%).

Qualitatively, crossing these structural elements against the 9 civic themes revealed that thematic selection remains highly consistent across platforms—led by Economic Survival (ES: 72.5%) and Social Inequality (SI: 60% – 62.5%). Guided by creators like Oga Sabinus, Mr. Macaroni, Social Semiotic Multimodality, Brain Jotter, and Taaooma systematically combine visual, vocal, and technical cues to invert official power hierarchies. They turn brief digital comedy skits into an accessible archive of citizen reporting, translating dry macroeconomic failure into felt human stories and demanding institutional accountability from state actors.

Policy Implication

The findings of this study carry clear implications for media policy, regulatory frameworks, and civil society operations within Nigeria's changing digital democracy. First, there is a de-escalation of digital surveillance and regulatory frameworks. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) must explicitly distinguish political satire from malicious misinformation or hate speech. Because micro-skits operate as an online public sphere for grievance airing, heavy-handed digital policing or platform threats risk suppressing legitimate citizen journalism and blocking vital channels for civic expression.

Second, the massive frequency of themes tracking Corruption & Accountability (52.5%–55%) and Security & Human Rights (40% – 42.5%) points to a systemic public relations crisis for state actors. Government agencies and law enforcement bureaus cannot counter these deeply held public perceptions through rigid, top-down press releases. Institutional public relations teams must adopt more transparent, responsive, and clear communication models to address the specific infrastructural failures and systemic abuses highlighted by digital creators.

Algorithmic Transparency and Civic Space Protection: Platform developers must protect political satire within their content-moderation algorithms. Given that 72.5% of these skits focus on severe socio-economic struggles, automated copyright strikes or shadow-banning of local street slang, nonverbal hisses, or institutional parodies can accidentally shrink the digital civic space, gagging the voice of the ordinary citizen.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical insights of this multi-layered project, the following actions are recommended for researchers, digital media gatekeepers, and civil society actors:

Advocacy networks focusing on human rights and fiscal transparency should move beyond traditional policy briefs. Civil Society Organisations should partner directly with digital satirists to co-create evidence-based content, using the identified Quad-Layer Multimodal Mesh (such as syncing low camera angles, dynamic code-switching, and visual overlays) to break down complex state budget or rule of law concepts for wider public audiences.

Civil liberty archives should treat these 2026 micro-skits as live primary source documents of contemporary history. Building open-access digital repositories ensures that these multi-dimensional critiques of fuel scarcity, currency fluctuations, and police behaviour are preserved as part of the country's broader democratic record.

For communication scholars and future researchers, expanding geographic and linguistic coding pools is crucial. Future content analyses should include creators from Northern and Eastern Nigeria (e.g., Kannywood-adjacent ecosystems). This will allow researchers to evaluate how diverse local languages (like Hausa, Yoruba, or Igbo) and different regional cultural motifs are used to address local governance issues.

Integrating advanced acoustic software tools is another area worthy of note. Future research should back up human-coded datasets by using specialized sound analysis software (such as Praat or Python-based audio parsers). This can provide exact measurements of voice pitch changes and loudness metrics, bringing greater technical precision to the study of vocal tension during on-screen socio-political crises.

Finally, content creators should try to be moderate and natural in their employment of codes. Blowing elements out of proportion may sound or appear unnatural, thereby obliterating dramatic verisimilitude, stage actuality and naturality.

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