

APPROACHABLE OR APPROPRIATIVE?
BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF CODESWITCHED
ADVERTISEMENTS USING AFRICAN AMERICAN
VERNACULAR ENGLISH

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APPROACHABLE OR APPROPRIATIVE?
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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to those who got me to this point.

To my older sisters, my role models, my encouragers, Baylee and Lindsay. Thank you for choosing to attend Mizzou and making that a dream for 10-year-old Shelby. Your intelligence, drive, and determination are what I have always strived to achieve.

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Abstract

The present qualitative study investigated the phenomenon of using cultural dialect African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in codeswitched advertising by gathering Black American perceptions related to this semiotic strategy and its effectiveness. Black Americans who were active social media users and under the age of 30 participated in focus groups where they viewed multiple codeswitched advertisements and provided their opinions. While a comparison advertisement proved that general slang use was not completely taboo, participants generally disapproved of the use of AAVE in advertisements and saw the practice to be inauthentic, appropriative, and cringey. Having non-Black spokespeople use AAVE in ads elicited similar negative reactions, while ads using AAVE with spokespeople of color were viewed more positively. Furthermore, the use of AAVE on traditional mediums was an unsuccessful strategy that seemed out of place, with digital platforms being a more logical choice. Given the lack of previous research on AAVE codeswitched advertisements, more research is needed to further examine perceptions and better understand this strategy and its effectiveness.

Keywords: codeswitched advertising, African American Vernacular English, semiotic advertising, Black Americans

Introduction

Each year in December, millions of Spotify users across the United States wait anxiously to receive their “Spotify Wrapped” results. This feature reveals the user’s most listened to songs, artists, and podcasts from the past year, and encourages users to share their stats on social media. Following much anticipation, the 2021 “Spotify Wrapped” recap told users that they “always understood the assignment” and that there was “one podcast that lived in [their] head, rent-free, all year long.” Amidst online discussions about top songs and popular genres, Spotify received criticism of its use of these phrases, all of which originated in African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Users were upset with Spotify for using a cultural dialect to appeal to its young audience. Tweets like this one condemned Spotify for its copywriting:

I’ve seen quite a few ad folks defending the Spotify wrapped copy and I just wanna say the forced AAVE was not cute at all, it just adds to the misconception that it’s okay to appropriate in the name of ‘internet lingo’ (Rasmussen, 2021).

AAVE is an American English dialect complete with its own pronunciation, grammar rules, syntax, and semantics (Harris & Schroeder, 2013). AAVE is mostly spoken and written by Black Americans, but other groups of people have been known to adopt and use terms that originated in AAVE, regardless of their racial identity (Baker-Bell, 2020). These AAVE terms gain popularity among Black Americans and are shared on social media platforms, which leads to them being seen and used by other racial groups, often being interpreted as common “internet slang,” thus removing all association with Black Americans and the AAVE dialect (Ilbury, 2020).

This adoption of AAVE by outside groups has spread even to commercial brands

and their targeted messaging, regardless of the racial makeup of their consumer base or the employees creating the ads. Using AAVE terms and phrases to appeal to a younger audience is a common practice among brands, especially on Twitter. By assuming the terms are internet slang, companies try to be relatable and current with their online presence. This is known as advertisement *codeswitching*, where brands adopt dialectal or foreign linguistic features and use them to appeal to certain audiences (Luna & Peracchio, 2005). For example, Spotify's social media team is likely not entirely made up of Black Americans, but the company uses AAVE in its advertisements in specific contexts to achieve a certain reaction from consumers. Several brands casually use AAVE in their Twitter communication, such as M&M'S tweeting the phrase "you be knowing, @Skittles!" which uses the "habitual be" sentence structure which originates in AAVE (M&M's, 2021).

This is a strategy rooted in *semiotics*, which is the study of signs in society, and the meaning we give to those signs (Bignell, 2002). Semiotics acknowledges these meanings, and suggests that each sign (in the case of codeswitched advertising, a linguistic sign) is chosen and crafted to elicit a certain response from the target audience (Bignell, 2002). No matter what reaction Spotify's copywriters are trying to elicit by using AAVE in its advertisements, the company employed the semiotic strategy of codeswitched advertising that capitalizes on the meanings held within words and the reactions they can generate from consumers. This study will delve further into the connection between codeswitching and semiotics, especially in an advertising sense, and the effectiveness of this strategy.

This qualitative study utilizing several focus groups aims to understand the

implications of the semiotic strategy of AAVE use in advertising. Past research on codeswitched advertising is extensive, especially related to multilingual codeswitching, such as the quantitative multilingual study done by Lin and Wang (2016), or the qualitative bilingual study completed by Banatao and Malenab-Temporal (2018). Though there is significant knowledge available on codeswitched advertising, few studies cover AAVE use in particular, and even fewer have collected and analyzed perceptions of Black Americans related to these ads. This discrepancy, combined with the increased use of AAVE in advertisements by brands targeting younger audiences, has left a research gap that needs to be filled for the sake of both advertisers and Black Americans.

The purpose of this research is to examine Black Americans' perceptions of codeswitched advertising using AAVE dialectal terms and phrases, and to determine if this semiotic strategy is interpreted as effective and relatable or offensive and appropriative, or perhaps somewhere in between. The rationale for examining this problem is the potential to both improve the effectiveness of advertising to minority groups and avoid the possibly offensive adoption of AAVE to target these consumers by learning their perceptions. By collecting and understanding the responses to AAVE in advertisements, advertisers can get a sense for whether or not the practice will be effective in attracting their target audience, and ultimately in boosting their brand image. This may not only improve the effectiveness of advertisements, but also could also help brands attract and maintain loyal consumers.

Beyond the recommendations to advertisers and the logistical benefits this study could provide, this research also aims to stop a possibly offensive act being committed daily by large brands and corporations. If this practice is considered appropriative by

Black Americans, bringing the issue to light and raising awareness would be a top priority when sharing the findings of this study. Operating under the assumption that nearly all brands in the United States will want to avoid culturally appropriative practices, it is important to determine the ethical guidelines of a strategy such as AAVE use in advertising.

Literature Review

To begin this mission of better understanding perceptions and identifying implications for the advertising industry, two key concepts – appropriation and semiotics – must be addressed. *Cultural appropriation* is defined as “a marginalized group having something borrowed or taken from them by a dominant group or culture in a way that many members of the marginalized group find offensive or do not agree with” (Laing, 2021, pp. 6-7). Following this basic definition, AAVE slang being used by other cultural groups could be considered appropriative. And though there is consistent criticism from Black Americans of AAVE use by outside groups, the appropriation continues to happen regularly. Even Black public figures, such as online gamer Tanya DePass, have criticized AAVE use in advertisements, as seen in this tweet: “IKEA... what... no. Stop, just stop. I need companies to stop misusing and appropriating AAVE for ads” (Tanya DePass, 2020).

Not only words, but personae, are appropriated on Twitter. For example, Ilbury (2020) found that in their tweets, gay men often put on a persona of a “Sassy Queen.” This persona involves AAVE language use that promotes the racist image of the “angry Black woman” (Ilbury, 2020). Ilbury also found that many of these gay men were unaware they were even participating in this potentially appropriative act. It is possible brands that are

using AAVE in their advertisements are not aware of their contribution to this appropriative practice, either. Gathering Black Americans' perceptions through qualitative research methods in this study will allow advertisers, and the general public, to learn how this adoption of AAVE is interpreted by the group that created the dialect in the first place. To avoid further marginalization, Black Americans should be the ones to determine whether these semiotic strategies are appropriate.

Semiotic strategy is another topic that is integral to this research. Semiotics will guide this analysis and interpretation of codeswitched advertising. Through semiotics, people form identities, which means a person's semiotic systems are very personal and meaningful. This deep meaning is described here: "All of our thought and experience, our very sense of our own identity, depends on the system of signs already existing in society which give form and meaning to consciousness and reality" (Bignell, 2002, p. 7). This identity factor explains why words mean so much and how they are assigned to different racial groups, such as AAVE to Black Americans. Their dialect is not only a system of signs used for basic communication, but a symbol of identity and representation of reality.

Semiotics, codeswitching, and appropriation and their implications within advertising will be explored in further depth in the literature review. This research will delve into the world of dialects within advertising and ultimately strive to better understand perceptions of AAVE use in advertisements and suggest future action for advertisers.

Through an examination of relevant literature, four major concepts will be examined: semiotics, indexicality, codeswitching, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and its appropriation. Then, previous notable studies on codeswitched

advertisements will be explored, taking away relevant findings and guidance for this study on dialectal codeswitching. And finally, the discrepancies found in relevant literature will be explained. Through this literature review, research questions will be crafted to effectively collect and analyze the perceptions of Black Americans regarding codeswitched advertisements using AAVE.

Semiotics

Semiotics is the framework theory that will guide interpretations of codeswitched advertising in this review. As noted above, semiotics is the study of signs in society and the meanings that we assign to them (Bignell, 2002). In this study, those signs are AAVE dialectal terms. Semiotics acknowledges that AAVE is not just a dialect, but a series of signs and meanings that are attached to certain words, which eventually become a representation of an entire culture. These deeply personal implications of semiotics are a testament to the epistemological belief of multiple subjective realities. Semiotics is all about signs and interpretation, and the acknowledgment that interpretations vary from person to person. This epistemological viewpoint will guide the data collection and analysis process.

It is common for advertisers to use semiotics to their advantage when crafting ads that will attract their consumers. When making promotional materials, advertisers consider the signs they are utilizing, such as verbal signs, visual signs, emotional signs, and so on, and then determine which ones would be most effective when trying to elicit a certain reaction. Advertisers ask themselves three things about these signs: how they are presenting them, what they are presenting, and why they are being presented (Nadin & Zakia, 1994). Using semiotics, advertisers will insert hidden meanings into their

advertisements to elicit certain reactions. For example, an American based pasta sauce company might use Italian words like “deliziosa” or “buono” (delicious, good) to make their sauce seem more authentic, thus eliciting more respect for the brand from consumers. These hidden meanings can be effective in eliciting positive reactions, but can also result in criticism if the target audience feels tricked or misled after figuring out the underlying subtext that advertisers are trying to convey (Beasley & Danesi, 2002). Because of this possibility for criticism, advertisers aim to make their semiotic strategies appear minimal, especially when presenting certain signs that can be persuasive and manipulative to consumers (Beasley & Danesi, 2002).

The overarching goal of semiotics in advertising is to subconsciously encourage consumers to connect their reality to the reality being presented in an advertisement (Bignell, 2002). Through semiotic strategies, advertisers are urging us to “see ourselves, the products or services which are advertised, and aspects of our social world, in terms of the mythic meanings which ads draw on and help to promote” (Bignell, 2002, p. 30). When deciding which audience a brand will target with each specific advertisement, advertisers use semiotic filters that include moral, religious, or political identifiers that will appeal to certain people (Nadin & Zakia, 1994). An advertiser will determine which audience they are trying to sell to, analyze that audience to see how they identify, either personally, politically, morally, or religiously, and then choose certain filters that contain different visuals or words that align with these identifications (Bignell, 2002).

It is through this method that AAVE terms are chosen for promotional materials. Advertisers analyze their target audience (in this case, most likely younger people) and see what language they are using, and then adopt this language through a filter and apply

it to ads that will be targeting that audience. Dialects themselves are filters that advertisers semiotically apply to their advertisements, and AAVE is no exception. As seen in the “Spotify Wrapped” example in the Introduction, these filters are not always successful, and consumers are not always comfortable seeing their personal identifiers in ads that are asking them to buy something.

Semiotics works together with *indexicality*, a theory which suggests that linguistic signs evoke “something in the physical, temporal, or social world, and that something can evoke other things in the world with a flexibility limited only by common ground” (Eckert, 2019, p. 754). This theory and its relevance will be explored below.

Indexicality

Indexicality suggests the idea that linguistic signs, known as indexes, provide an ideological field to language, and thus layers of meaning. For example, if someone speaks with an index of a southern accent, this would be a sign that the speaker is from the South, which would be the first layer of indexicality. Even further, the listener might infer qualities typically assigned to Southerners, such as being uneducated or redneck, this being the second level of indexicality (Eckert, 2019). Through this indexicality process, common stereotypes and beliefs gain meaning and are assigned to linguistic signs. Eckert states that “social meaning is built into linguistic practice at every level of the linguistic system” (Eckert, 2019, p. 769). Semiotics and indexicality both acknowledge the presence of personal identity in language and the way human characteristics can alter the social meaning of words. By understanding these social meanings, advertisers can craft more effective ads.

This theory closely relates to semiotics, with both theories studying signs that hold deeper meaning, particularly regarding language. Indexical signs are created and maintained by society and its commonly held beliefs, and advertisers then identify those signs and choose certain ones for their advertisements to elicit particular reactions. These semiotic filters are utilized to play off those indexes and use them as a business advantage. If AAVE were to have indexes that reflected trendiness or youth, advertisers might want to semiotically use those indexes to make consumers think the company itself is also trendy and youthful.

To understand how to properly use semiotic filters, the filter known as codeswitching must first be unpacked.

Codeswitching

The term for the act of switching between different languages or dialects depending on the situation was coined as “codeswitching” in the 1950s (Benson, 2001). The early history of codeswitching research is often overlooked, and the linguistic study of this phenomenon was not widely recognized until the late 1960s and early 1970s (Benson, 2001). Ever since this early research on bilingual switching from language to language in certain conversations, the definition of codeswitching has expanded to include the alteration of dialect depending on the situation. Speakers may codeswitch depending on their language attitudes, language ideologies, or social networks, or to project their cultural identity (Stell & Yakpo, 2015). Codeswitching has also expanded beyond just human interaction and has found its footing in television, magazine, print, and advertisements. It is commonly utilized to appeal to certain minority groups to get something in return, such as the purchase of a certain product or a vote for a certain

candidate. Politicians, such as U.S. Senator Tim Kaine, have been known to switch languages mid-speech to appeal to bilingual voters (Moody & Eslami, 2020). This version of codeswitching is yet another semiotic filter that people of power use to appeal to minoritized groups and to appear more relatable.

This review is focused on codeswitching in advertising. The language of advertising serves a very specific function, which is to attract and maintain consumers and ultimately sell them something, so this version of language differs from the form of English that we use every day to communicate (Moody & Eslami, 2020). Codeswitching in advertising is a common practice, and it can be utilized for several different reasons. It can be situation- or topic-related, where it is only performed in certain circumstances where it is most appropriate for the product or situation at hand. It can also be used to greet certain consumers and make them feel more comfortable with a brand (Kelly-Holmes, 2005). And finally, emblematic codeswitching can be employed, which is defined as “the desire to mark, assert or adopt an ethnic or religious identity” (Kelly-Holmes, 2005, p. 11). This tactic is often seen when brands use foreign words to elicit a sort of multicultural feel to their advertisements, like in the aforementioned example of an American pasta brand using Italian words in their ads. This tactic is successful in certain markets, but can also be interpreted by some consumers as cheap and elitist (Kelly-Holmes, 2005), meaning that advertisers must tread carefully.

Certain audiences are not opposed to seeing foreign words in advertisements, especially if they speak the foreign language being used. Using the codeswitched mix of Spanish and English, or “Spanglish,” is a common practice in U.S. television advertising and is well received by Latinx Americans (Luna & Peracchio, 2005). Ads using

Spanglish were viewed more positively by Latinx people than ads entirely in English or entirely in Spanish (Luna & Peracchio, 2005). It was also found that proper grammar use affected perceptions, with Latinx Americans responding negatively to codeswitched advertisements that did not follow grammatical rules for one or both of the languages used (Luna et al., 2005).

Plenty of research, such as the two previous studies, has been done on the effectiveness of bi- and multilingual codeswitched ads, but there has been limited research focused entirely on dialectal codeswitching. This subset of codeswitching in advertisements is extremely prevalent, especially with AAVE terms. By understanding dialectal codeswitching and its correlation to AAVE, the effectiveness of the semiotic strategy of codeswitching can be examined.

AAVE and Appropriation

AAVE is a dialect comprised of its own grammatical structures and rules, unique lexical terms and regional accents. Created by Black Americans, this dialect is spoken across the United States with several variations depending on location, class, gender, and more. It is estimated that 80% of Black Americans use AAVE at least occasionally (Escalas, 1994). And though Black Americans create and maintain the dialect, several other racial groups utilize the language system commonly. Caucasians, Asian Americans, Latinx Americans and people belonging to other racial categories have been known to identify with AAVE and use it both in written and spoken speech (Chun, 2001).

Historically, AAVE terms have been adopted by the general public and are then viewed as common slang not specific to any cultural group (Laing, 2021). AAVE routinely creates linguistic trends, with the dialect being described as a “particularly dynamic site

of meaning making by various ethnic groups in the United States” (Chun, 2001, p. 54).

The distribution of AAVE terms to other ethnic groups has become even more rapid since the invention of social media, particularly Twitter (Laing, 2021). AAVE terms will go viral on Twitter, and non-Black people will see the words, adopt them, and categorize them as “internet slang.” According to research done by Laing (2021), such adoption can have worrying results:

This can often lead to a misuse of the words, as outgroup members who overhear or see the words being used do not have a natural fluency in the dialect; thus they either create a different meaning for the word or misuse a term, phrase, or joke within the mainstream so that these new definitions become what is popularly recognized (Laing, 2021, p. 3).

This assimilation of AAVE terms has become so normalized that extremely common words, like “cool” or “nope,” have almost entirely lost their association with AAVE, the dialect in which these words originated (Baker-Bell, 2020). It can be argued that this assimilation is a form of cultural appropriation, where a marginalized group has something borrowed from them by a dominant group, often to the marginalized group’s disdain (Laing, 2021, pp. 6-7). Whether Black Americans find AAVE use by outgroup members appropriative or not needs to be studied.

Social media is not just a dynamic place of AAVE appropriation by general users, but by brands and corporations, as well. Brands are using AAVE lexicon and speech patterns to create “corporate cool,” which they hope will allow them to relate to a younger audience (Roth-Gordon et al., 2020). Corporations believe that “Blackness sells,” and they want to encapsulate Blackness and a way of being “hip, stylish, youthful,

alienated, rebellious, [and] sensual” (Roth-Gordon et al., 2020, p. 110). With this practice, appropriation is used strategically to sell products or services and establish rapport with White consumers. Roth-Gordon labels this approach as “White comfort,” where Black culture is used to entertain White people and make them even more secure in their position of power over the marginalized group of Black Americans through encouraged linguistic appropriation (Roth-Gordon et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, when Black Americans themselves use AAVE terms in everyday circumstances, they are chastised and told they are being improper. This phenomenon is described by Baker-Bell (2020): “It is acceptable for Black Language to be used and capitalized on by non-native Black Language-speakers for marketing and for play, but it is unacceptable for Black kids to use it as a linguistic resource in school” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 14). This system of linguistic racism has become so normalized in our society that advertisers might not even be aware that the terms they are using in their ads or promotional materials originate in AAVE. Similarly, consumers who view promotional materials from their favorite brands might be unaware that these corporations are appropriating AAVE and they as consumers are unknowingly participating.

As established in this section, AAVE is an American dialect created and sustained by Black Americans. Social media has accelerated the dissemination of AAVE words and phrases to other racial groups and has even reached corporations and is now seen in advertising in an effort to achieve “corporate cool.” With this basic understanding of AAVE, qualitative focus groups can be conducted to analyze Black Americans’ opinions of AAVE use by outside groups, specifically corporations.

Relevant Codeswitched Advertising Studies

Multilinguistic Codeswitching

Several studies examine codeswitched advertising in-depth, and many of them are concerned with multilingual advertisements. Multilingual codeswitching seems to be the most commonly examined semiotic system of this study's nature, leaving bilingual and dialectal codeswitching under-examined. One study examined codeswitching occurring in two huge television networks in the Philippines: GMA and ABS-CBN. Filipino-with-English ads were analyzed the most, and it was found that codeswitched ads were used to advise/prescribe, describe, explain, and illustrate (Banatao & Malenab-Temporal, 2018). The study's findings note that while brands use codeswitching to appeal to consumers and to be as persuasive as possible, the ultimate decision to purchase something is still up to the consumer. Brands can implement different languages and try different tactics to attract their target audience, but they cannot physically complete the purchase cycle (Banatao & Malenab-Temporal, 2018).

This study also found that codeswitched advertisements in the Philippines are very prominent, formulaic, and consistent. Codeswitching is the standard in the Philippines, and these advertisements "play a vital role in the business industry and give great impact among the audience and consumers" (Banatao & Malenab-Temporal, 2018, p. 127). This information is useful when trying to understand codeswitching on a global scale. Codeswitching is not exclusive to the United States; in fact, in other countries it is heavily used and highly appreciated by consumers. Additionally, multilingual and bilingual codeswitched advertisements are easily recognized by consumers. Since they have to distinguish between multiple languages in one text, they always know when codeswitching is occurring, even if they do not understand what codeswitching is or its

precise definition (Banatao & Malenab-Temporal, 2018). This is not the case with dialectal codeswitching, which often, especially among outgroups, goes unnoticed.

Multilingual codeswitching in advertising has unique implications related to consumers' identities. A study by Lin and Wang (2016) examined the role that local and global identity plays in consumer perceptions of codeswitched advertisements. They talked to hundreds of Taiwanese adults and found that the consumers' local-global identity determined how effective they found a codeswitched advertisement to be. If consumers were more deeply connected to their local identity, they did not respond positively to codeswitched advertisements. To them, this was almost a way of abandoning their global, multilingual identity, instead favoring their local one. Conversely, if they had a strong global identity, they were open to codeswitched ads and found them to be more persuasive (Lin & Wang, 2016). For multilingual consumers, language can determine a huge part of their identity. They are well versed in several different modes of speech, so having an advertisement cater to how they identify, either locally or globally, is crucial.

A lesson to be learned from multilinguals is that identity should be closely examined when analyzing advertising and its effectiveness. Being able to understand how an advertisement does or does not speak to the consumers' identity will play a big role in how positively they perceive it.

Bilingual Codeswitching

Bilingual consumers have a similar outlook on codeswitched advertisements. The bulk of bilingual codeswitched advertising studies have been conducted with Latinx American consumers who speak both Spanish and English. These studies collected the

perceptions of these consumers and examined how they felt seeing their native language used in advertisements targeting them.

Three Spanish-English codeswitched print advertisements were examined in a quantitative study by Garcia Quintana and Nichols (2016). In a large Southwestern metropolitan area in the United States, 272 respondents were recruited from local Hispanic churches. The respondents' place of origin varied, with the majority (55.9%) being Mexican. This study also tested the respondents' acculturation, which is the level to which someone has assimilated into a culture that is different from their own in terms of behavior and attitude changes (Garcia Quintana & Nichols, 2016). When reacting to codeswitched advertisements, the group of participants that were most highly acculturated responded most positively. Groups that were less acculturated did not enjoy seeing codeswitched ads as much as those citizens who had more readily adopted the cultural rules of the United States. This parallels the multilingual studies, where it was found that those who had a more global identity were more open to codeswitched advertisements, and those with a more local identity were opposed to codeswitched advertisements (Lin & Wang, 2016). Hispanic consumers who identify more with their local, native identity are more resistant to advertisements that combine their cultures and have a more global perspective.

The medium in which codeswitched advertisements appear can also change how they are perceived by bilingual consumers. Bishop and Peterson (2011) examined how the placement of a codeswitched advertisement in an English or Spanish medium influenced how positively the ad was received by young Mexican-Americans. To gather perceptions, 107 participants between of the ages of 18 and 30 were exposed to a

bilingual codeswitched ad that alternated between English and Spanish. The medium in which the ads appeared also changed; ads containing Spanish terms were placed in all-English publications and vice versa (M. Bishop & Peterson, 2011). The researchers determined that advertisers should not use codeswitched ads containing both Spanish and English in Spanish-language media, as this resulted in poor reactions from Hispanic consumers. However, codeswitched ads were effective when using Spanish terms in all-English publications (M. Bishop & Peterson, 2011).

Bishop and Peterson extended these findings into another study and created this rule for advertisers when wanting to employ a codeswitching semiotic strategy: “The main language of a code-switched ad should match that of its medium to increase favorable advertising responses” (M. M. Bishop & Peterson, 2010). It was found that when the primary language of a codeswitched ad did not match the language of the medium, switching from language to language was taxing on the bilingual consumers’ information-processing ability (M. M. Bishop & Peterson, 2010).

By understanding the most effective mediums in which codeswitched advertisements appear, accurate and helpful recommendations can be made to advertisers. These bilingual studies provide a good framework for how to conduct studies on codeswitched ads and the perceptions related to them. By understanding how much identity matters to consumers when analyzing codeswitched ads, it will be easier to craft research questions will take the respondents’ identity into account and elicit rich answers.

Dialectal Codeswitching

The topic most closely related to this study, dialectal codeswitching, has limited previous research available. This gap is one of the reasons further research, such as this

study, is needed to improve the state of advertising. Though existing knowledge on this topic is sparse, two key studies outlined below provide guidance on the current state of dialectal codeswitching and how to collect related perceptions.

The study by Liu et al. described in the Introduction provides a good baseline of “internet slang” use in persuasive advertising. In this study, 114 young people from China were surveyed on their perceptions of codeswitched ads containing “internet slang” words and phrases, specifically regarding brand awareness, product evaluation, and attitudes. It was found that while consumers did pay more attention to advertisements using internet slang, the semiotic codeswitching did not cause them to be more likely to purchase that product or service. In fact, extensive use of internet slang was viewed as excessive and actually turned people away from the brand (Liu et al., 2019). If a brand chooses to use internet slang, it should do so sparingly.

The study most closely related to this research is Escalas’ (1994) qualitative study which aimed to assess the degree to which AAVE was used in television advertisements to target Black American consumers. A collection of 77 commercials created by Black advertising agencies and over 120 hours of prime-time television programming were analyzed to judge how often AAVE features appeared. AAVE was found to be relatively rare in television ads, and Escalas concluded this is because the dialect is highly stigmatized, so Black creatives behind the ads were being especially careful to avoid anything that could be offensive to Black Americans. Another factor that could cause a lack of AAVE in advertising is leadership: “...advertising that includes Black actors is developed based on non-African American conceptions of what it should look and sound like” (Escalas, 1994, "Discussion and Future Research").

While Escalas' study is the only available research focused on AAVE in advertisements, audience perceptions were not examined. The study's goal was to see how often AAVE was used and the context in which it appeared, but it did not venture into how the consumers felt about seeing their dialect in advertisements. Escalas also did not examine advertisements created by non-Black agencies or ads with non-Black spokespeople.

Escalas' work was groundbreaking and relevant, but it can be greatly expanded upon. Since the study was conducted in 1994, the distribution of dialectal terms has been greatly expedited on social media. Taking this into account has the possibility to greatly change the perceptions of AAVE in advertising. After living through the extensive appropriation that is occurring daily on social media, the opinions of Black Americans and AAVE use may have changed since 1994. Updating this research is extremely important to both improve the efficiency of advertising strategies and to avoid a potentially appropriative practice that could be sustaining racist ideologies throughout the United States.

In conclusion, the semiotic strategy of creating dialectal and linguistic filters rooted in AAVE to appeal to certain audiences has relatively unknown results. Codeswitching is a very common practice among advertisers to make their brand appear more relatable, but academic research rarely goes a step further and examines how the consumers feel about it. By understanding how semiotics and codeswitching interact to create filters that aim to elicit certain reactions, and by understanding the culture of AAVE appropriation that has been fostered on social media, this study aims to further analyze advertising practices and present recommendations to improve both advertising

materials and lessen linguistic racism.

Discrepancies

This research aims to build upon the codeswitched advertising research completed in the past and provide a voice to the underrepresented and under-researched group of Black Americans. The only study that could be located on Black Americans and AAVE was Escalas' work with television advertisements. While this study provides a good baseline to reference, it does not explore AAVE codeswitched advertisements produced by non-Black advertisers, and because of the study's age, social media and its acceleration of AAVE appropriation were not discussed at all. Focusing on social media advertisements and their use of AAVE in the name of "internet slang" has not been explored in academic depth, thus ignoring a large group of American consumers' wants and needs from their favorite brands. Understanding Black Americans' thoughts about AAVE in advertising is not only novel but necessary for advertisers if they want to appeal to this group.

Research Questions

With these goals in mind, the following research questions will guide the qualitative data collection process:

RQ1. How do Black Americans perceive codeswitched advertising that uses their dialect to persuade them to purchase a certain product or service?

RQ2. How does the medium of codeswitched advertisements affect Black Americans' perceptions? Are certain mediums more or less effective than others?

RQ2.1 How do perceptions surrounding AAVE codeswitched advertising on social media compare or contrast in effectiveness to traditional advertising,

such as print or television?

RQ3. How does the racial identity of a celebrity spokesperson or figure in an advertisement affect the perceptions of codeswitched advertising using AAVE?

Method

By acknowledging the large range of possible perceptions, eliminating personal biases, and keeping the importance of identity in advertising in mind, the research questions above will serve as a guide when gathering the opinions of Black Americans.

To understand the effectiveness of codeswitched advertisements that use AAVE dialectal terms, I collected data about the perceptions of Black Americans. The following methods were employed to answer the research questions and craft recommendations for advertisers.

Qualitative Approach and Research Paradigm

This is a qualitative study designed to collect subjective perceptual data from Black Americans. Qualitative methods were selected because it aligned with the goals of the study and it “seeks to encapsulate the behavior, experiences, and feelings of participants in their own terms and context” (Malhotra & Birks, 2007, p. 153). The ability to gather insights directly from Black Americans in their own words was necessary to develop successful solutions for advertisers. The qualitative approach consisted of an analysis of advertising phenomena through case studies. By examining specific ads and their codeswitching techniques, we can understand the phenomenon of using AAVE in advertisements, and also understand the opinions regarding this strategy.

I took on the perspective of an interpretive researcher for this study. An interpretivist perspective is a research paradigm that acknowledges subjective realities

and the subjective nature of media (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The interpretivist researcher knows that their own values may affect data collection and interpretation, and they look at case studies (such as the chosen stimuli) to understand phenomena and ultimately understand the opinions of consumers (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Throughout the data analysis process, it was important to remember the multiple subjective realities that exist to participants, and to also acknowledge my own subjective reality and how it can affect data collection and analysis. Possible characteristics that might have influenced my research process are discussed at length in the next section.

Researcher Characteristics and Reflexivity

I possess certain characteristics which may possibly influence this research and its findings. The first of these is race – this study aims to understand and accurately present the perceptions of Black Americans. I am not of Black American descent, which could allow for misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the collected data. To prevent this, participant feedback was used, as explained in the Techniques to Enhance Trustworthiness section.

Another characteristic that may have influenced the research is level of experience – this is my first major piece of academic work. This inexperience could lead to certain limitations, discrepancies, or minor oversights in the findings. To offset this lack of experience, peer review by established researchers at the University of Missouri was used, as explained in the Techniques to Enhance Trustworthiness section.

Though I lack experience in conducting research, I have an educational background in both journalism and linguistics, which allows for a deep understanding of

the current media climate and language choice among advertisers. This background knowledge helped ensure that the language in this study is properly analyzed.

Finally, my characteristics could come into play when analyzing the data and isolating assumptions. Because of robust online discussion around the use of AAVE in ads, I had some ideas of what the results might have been prior to data collection. Disregarding these assumptions and relying solely on the data was essential in analyzing and presenting the findings.

Context

This study was conducted primarily with journalism students at The University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri. This group was chosen because they have an advanced knowledge on today's media landscape. While this allowed for the participants to be educated on advertising methods and online messaging, it also could have limited the variation and generalizability of the data.

Every participant was an active student at the University of Missouri at the time of data collection. Due to limitations in recruiting methods, only University of Missouri students volunteered to participate in this study. This limitation in geographical scope could also cause for less variation in the data.

Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was the chosen method for this study. Purposeful sampling involves “identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 2). This method is suggested for researchers with limited resources who want to find participants that have knowledge, experience, a willingness to participate, and a

desire to express their opinions and experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling was used only to identify participants based on their age and race. Because this study is focused on a specific group of people and there is a limitation in time and resources, purposeful sampling was the best choice to elicit the richest results.

There were three criteria for selecting eligible participants for this study; those involved had to identify as a Black American, had to be between the age of 18 and 29, and had to be active social media users, logging on to social media at least once a day. Since this study is focusing on the perceptions of Black Americans, participants had to personally identify with this racial group. The visual stimuli presented to the participants came from brands targeting a younger audience, so the participants needed to be potential consumers of these products, thus being a member of this target audience. Finally, since the appropriation of AAVE is often done through social media platforms such as Twitter, it was necessary to speak to participants who were familiar with social media and the discourse that occurs there.

Another reason participants younger than 30 years of age were recruited is their comfortability with technology, with Gen Z being the generation most likely to believe in the positive impact of technology on the world (*Generation Influence*, 2020). Millennials also fall within this sample, 93% of whom own a smartphone and 86% of whom use social media, leading all generations older than them in both categories (Vogels, 2019).

Additionally, those younger than 30 are more likely to have seen AAVE codeswitched ads on social media before. Auxier and Anderson's (2021) survey of a national sample of adults in the United States found that 18- to 29-year-olds is the age group that uses Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube most heavily out of all other age

groups. These three social media platforms regularly host advertisements containing AAVE terms, so 18- to 29-year-olds is the age group most likely to have seen ads using AAVE previously. And in general, younger people are most likely to be familiar with slang and to use it themselves, with 92% of Gen Z members and 83% of millennials using slang, compared to 77% of Gen X and 65% of Baby Boomers (Zajechowski, 2021). While older demographics would provide valuable perceptions related to this study, gathering a young audience that is most likely to be familiar with this phenomenon would produce the best possible results with my limited time and resources.

To find participants who met all three of the criteria, a screening survey was created to sample young Black Americans who were regular social media users. They were asked to provide their name and email addresses for contacting purposes. To view the full survey questions, see Appendix A. I then examined the survey responses to determine if each respondent was eligible for the survey – if they were, they were contacted through email with the next steps, as explained in the Data Collection Methods section.

The only instance in which the screener survey was not used to recruit participants was for the initial pilot study. I used convenience sampling to personally select two Black Americans who fit all the criteria to review the focus group guide and all of the stimuli and provide feedback on how to elicit the most valuable information during the data collection process.

Recruitment was done online. An advertisement was developed and shared in multiple places. Advertisements were placed in the following four areas at the University of Missouri: an advertisement in a sophomore-level journalism class's course page, an

advertisement sent to every journalism student specializing in strategic communication, an advertisement sent to every student on an arts & sciences advisor's email list, and an advertisement published in MU Info, a weekly list of announcements sent to all University of Missouri students, faculty, and staff.

The original intention was to speak to 16-20 participants and gather their opinions in groups of four to five. Due to various scheduling conflicts among participants and delays with consent form signatures, that initial goal was not met. Although a specific number was the goal, the most important thing regarding the number of participants was to achieve saturation, which is described as “the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 59). Through the focus groups that were conducted, saturation in this study was achieved when the data had repeated itself several times and no new themes were emerging. After achieving saturation, conducting more focus groups most likely would not have produced any new information or themes.

Ethical Issues Pertaining to Human Subjects

Prior to the data collection, this study was submitted to the University of Missouri's accredited Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval. On June 16, 2022, this study was reviewed and approved by the MU IRB. The IRB also approved a consent form, which was signed by every participant. This consent form can be viewed in Appendix B. Each participant involved in this study reviewed and signed the consent form, including the two pilot study participants.

Data Collection Methods

In order to collect the desired opinions, focus groups were conducted. Greenbaum (1993) noted in his book that advertisers commonly use focus groups to learn about the effectiveness of their advertising executions. The subjects in this study participated in post-advertising analysis, which is “when consumers are asked for their feelings about an advertising campaign that has been under way for some time” (Greenbaum, 1993, p. 12). Focus groups are an effective way to judge attitudes and are useful “for group-level data on perceptions and norms” (Jakobsen, 2012, p. 113). Focus groups benefitted this research because of their ability to foster discussion. According to Greenbaum, “Many researchers feel that one of the most valuable benefits of focus groups is the dynamics of the discussion that occurs among the participants” (Greenbaum, 1993, p. 6).

Focus groups were chosen over in-depth interviews because they are less time-consuming, less expensive, and more likely to foster discussions and elicit rich answers from the participants (Greenbaum, 1993). Black Americans were the only racial group studied because they are the originators of the dialect in question, and their perceptions do not seem to have been studied previously.

Furthermore, minigroups, which typically have four to six people, were selected over full groups, typically with eight to 10 people, because they can acquire more in-depth information from each participant (Greenbaum, 1993). With fewer people to split the time amongst, individual participants are able to say everything on their mind (Greenbaum, 1993). These minigroups were conducted online through the video call service Zoom. It has been found that participants “prefer the convenience of online focus groups, including the flexibility in scheduling and the ability to participate from home or office” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017, p. 50).

To reach a total of 12 participants, six groups were held: two groups of three, two groups of two, and two conversations with individuals. These individual meetings were not planned but occurred when scheduled participants failed to attend their assigned meeting time.

The data collection period began on Sept. 21, 2022, with the first focus group held over Zoom. Over the next three weeks, five more groups were held, ending the data collection period with the final meeting on Oct. 7, 2022. The data analysis process began on Oct. 10 and finished two weeks later, Oct. 24. The data was analyzed in an inductive manner, where no previous theory was guiding the analysis; instead, I worked from the bottom up, looking at patterns in the novel data and developing themes based off them.

Data Collection Instruments and Technologies

A complete focus group guide was developed prior to the groups being conducted. The guide had several questions corresponding to each advertisement presented to the participants and optional probing questions. These questions explored how participants felt about the ads, why they thought advertisers were using AAVE, how the ads affected their spending habits, and more. This focus group guide was reviewed and edited by two pilot study participants prior to the data collection period. To view the full focus group guide, see Appendix C.

The focus groups were conducted digitally over the video conferencing platform Zoom. Participants were asked to give their availability on the website Doodle, and I then paired participants together based on their available times. The participants received an invitation link with meeting details via email, and received a reminder the morning of the meeting. While in the meeting, participants were not required to have their cameras on or

display their actual name; they were encouraged to preserve as much anonymity as they desired.

Both the video and audio content of the meetings were recorded and stored on Zoom's cloud. Zoom automatically created transcripts based off the audio of each meeting. Video recordings of each meeting and the transcripts were downloaded and saved in two places. These recordings and transcripts were used to code and analyze the data. The video recordings will not be shared with anyone or stored anywhere besides myself to maintain participant privacy.

During the meetings, visual stimuli were shared with the participants. This was done through Zoom's built-in screen sharing feature. I had every stimulus saved to my computer (aside from one video advertisement publicly available on YouTube) and then shared each stimulus one at a time to the participants, allowing them to analyze and comment on it. There were no issues with this process in any of the six meetings. Copyright permissions for the stimuli were not sought because each advertisement is readily available online and was shared publicly by the companies of origin.

Advertising Stimuli

During the focus groups, photo and video elicitation methods were employed to judge the participants' responses to codeswitched advertisements. The goal of the photo and video elicitation was not only to show codeswitched ads and to get their perceptions, but also to stir up their emotions. According to Harper (2002), "Images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words" (p. 13). Photo elicitation can be a useful method to start conversation and get deep into participants' true feelings. There were six advertisements in total: three social media posts (Instagram and Twitter), two television

commercials, and one traditional outdoor advertisement. To qualify as an advertisement for this study, the branded message had to meet certain criteria – it either had to be message that was paid for with intent to sell, or a social media message that had intent to sell and had a call to action. These criteria eliminate simple branded content, such as a casual tweet, Instagram post, or other social media activity not designed to sell something or further the brand image.

The final six advertisements were carefully selected to elicit opinions on a variety of different methods of AAVE codeswitched advertising. There was one comparison advertisement from the fast food chain Wendy’s that used the slang phrase “said no one ever,” which is an internet slang phrase that did not originate in AAVE (Jardine, 2021) The goal of this comparison advertisement was to determine if participants respond similarly to all ads containing any type of slang, or if there is a difference in reception between ads with noncultural slang and ads with AAVE.

Each of the five ads chosen utilized some form of AAVE and displayed a unique aspect of the dialect or unique variable of codeswitched advertisements. The first ad shown to participants was an Instagram post from the online clothing brand Fashion Nova. This ad represented casual, non-severe AAVE use with a single slang word, *slay*, being used (Fashion Nova, 2022). The slang definition of slay, which is to greatly impress someone or succeed in something, originated from the Black ballroom culture in the 1970s and 80s, and was established in modern mainstream culture as a slang term with Beyonce’s 2016 song “Formation” (Von Aspen, 2022). This ad aimed to gather opinions on both mild AAVE codeswitching and on AAVE codeswitched advertisements on social media.

The next ad shown in the focus groups was a television advertisement from the car brand Infiniti starring celebrity spokesperson Erin Andrews, a sideline reporter and commentator for Fox Sports. In the 30 second advertisement, Andrews is commenting on the 2022 Infiniti QX60, where she verbalizes several AAVE words and phrases such as “fits my vibe” and “she’s rich, she rich rich” (Motorward, 2021). Both of these have roots in AAVE – the word “vibe” gained traction as a word to describe a feeling or mood with the publication of Quincy Jones’ hip hop magazine *Vibe Magazine* (James, 2022), and the dialect has a grammatical tendency to have a copula absence, which is the omission of verb forms such as *is* and *are* (Ezgeta, 2012). This advertisement was chosen to achieve two goals: collect opinions on more severe, frequent AAVE use in an advertisement, and to learn how the participants reacted to an AAVE codeswitched advertisement featuring a non-Black spokesperson.

To contrast a non-Black spokesperson, the next ad shown to the participants was a tweet from Reebok featuring Afro-Latina rapper Cardi B. In the tweet, Reebok is promoting their new clothing collection partnership with the musician, and states that “Cardi B is serving you new drip for a new season” (Reebok, 2021). Drip, meaning a fashionable sense of style, originated in AAVE in the 2000s Atlanta rap scene and was popularized by Cardi B herself (*How The Slang Drip Went From Faucets To Fashion*, 2018). The slang word serve, meaning to present an attractive appearance, also originated in Black ballroom culture, similar to the aforementioned slang word slay (Chandler, 2022). This ad was chosen to see how participants reacted to AAVE in ads being used in relation to a Black spokesperson, and to see how they reacted to AAVE use in Twitter advertisements.

Another tweet was shown next to gauge reactions to severe AAVE use in ads and also gather more opinions on AAVE codeswitched advertisements on social media. This tweet was published by Warner Music, a record label and entertainment recording company. In this tweet, they are promoting pop star Charli XCX's music by saying "we BEEN KNEW @charli_xcx was ahead of her time" (Warner Music U, 2021). The common phrase "been knew" is called remote-time stressed BEEN, a marker that describes something that has been happening for some time (Green, 1998). This is a grammatical function unique to AAVE (Green, 1998). This stimulus transitioned the analysis from examining AAVE slang terms and phrases to examining AAVE grammatical characteristics to find if there is a difference in perceptions. After this ad was shown, the Wendy's comparison ad was presented.

The final stimulus utilized in this study was a television advertisement from restaurant chain Applebee's. The ad was a compilation of TikTok videos and featured the song "Fancy Like" by country singer Walker Hayes in the background (*Applebee's Teams Up*, 2021). The song was selected for the ad because it mentions Applebee's by name. This ad was chosen for this study because the lyrics exhibit features of AAVE, including the slang word "bougie" and copula absence in lyrics such as "we fancy like Applebee's" and "she my Dixieland delight." The word bougie originates from the hip-hop industry and describes something "luxurious in lifestyle yet humble in character" (*What Does Boujee Mean And Who Said It First?*, 2018, para. 1). The purpose of this stimulus was to test how AAVE use was perceived when used in a song instead of spoken directly from a company or spokesperson, and to see how a traditional television advertisement compares and contrasts with social media advertisements using AAVE.



All six of these stimuli serve a distinct purpose and were shown to collect opinions on different types of AAVE codeswitched advertisements. They were presented in the same order in every focus group, starting with the Fashion Nova advertisement, followed by the Erin Andrews and Infiniti commercial, then the Cardi B and Reebok tweet, then the Charli XCX and Warner Music tweet, followed by the Wendy’s comparison advertisement, and ending with the Applebee’s commercial. I arranged the stimuli in this order to present corresponding ads closely together (such as the three ads with spokespeople being consecutive) and to keep the mediums fresh and engaging. By alternating repeatedly between ads on digital and traditional platforms, I hoped to elicit accurate findings and prevent boredom or disinterest from participants.

The perceptual results are explained more in depth in the Findings section. To view the stimuli, links are found in the References section. The table below summarizes each advertisement’s level of AAVE use and why it was included in this study.

Table 1
Stimuli Language, Severity, and Purpose

	AAVE Language Used	Level of Severity/Type of Use	Purpose of Inclusion
<p>Fashion Nova Instagram Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>slay</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casual, non-severe use • No grammatical use • Strictly slang use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather opinions on mild AAVE use • Gather opinions on AAVE use on digital platforms

 <p>[Music] the qx60 totally fits my vibe</p> <p>Infiniti/Erin Andrews Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>vibe</i> • “she rich rich” copula absence • <i>purrs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White spokesperson • Heavy, severe use • Grammatical use • Slang use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather opinions on more severe, frequent AAVE use • Gather opinions on AAVE use by non-Black spokesperson • Gather opinions on AAVE use on traditional platforms
 <p>Reebok @Reebok</p> <p>Cardi B is serving you new drip for a new season. Get into her first-ever #ReebokxCardiB clothing collection, available in sizes XS-4X. Dropping 10 am EST 4/23. reebk.co/CardiBCollect...</p> <p>9:00 AM · Apr 20, 2023 · Sprint</p> <p>Reebok/ Cardi B Twitter Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>serving</i> • <i>drip</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casual, non-severe use • No grammatical use • Strictly slang use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather opinions on AAVE use on digital platforms • Gather opinions on AAVE use by Black spokesperson
 <p>Warner Music U @WarnerMusicU</p> <p>we BEEN KNEW @charli_xcx was ahead of her time</p> <p>the pop pioneer's 2017 bop <i>UNLOCK IT</i> got a new visual!! y'all better STREAM! xcx.lnk.to/unlock-it-visu...</p> <p>0:19 43 views</p> <p>10:09 AM · Apr 14, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone</p> <p>Warner Music/ Charli XCX Twitter Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “we been knew” • “y’all better” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate use • No slang use • Strictly grammatical use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather opinions on AAVE use on digital platforms • Gather opinions on AAVE use by non-Black spokesperson

 <p>Wendy's Comparison Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “said no one ever” (not AAVE, but general internet slang) 	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if participants respond similarly to all ads with any type of slang, or if there is a difference in reception between ads with noncultural slang and ads with AAVE • Gather opinions on AAVE use on traditional platforms
 <p>Applebee's Ad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “we fancy like” copula absence • <i>bougie</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate use • AAVE presented musically • Grammatical use • Slang use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test how AAVE is perceived through song • Gather opinions on AAVE use on traditional platforms • Gather opinions on AAVE use by non-Black singer

Note: In this table, AAVE slang words are italicized and AAVE phrases/terms are in quotations.

Units of Study

There were 12 participants total in this study, 11 identifying as female and one identifying as male. The average age of the participants was 20, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest being 24. The participants came from six different states, with half of

them being from Missouri. In total, eight participants came from states classified as the Midwest region, and four were from southern states.

The pilot study had two female participants, both of whom were 22 years old at the time of data collection. Both were from Midwest states. The table below provides information about each participant.

Table 2
Participants' Characteristics

	Focus Group Number	Gender	Age	Hometown	Social media use frequency
Pilot Study Participant 1	N/A	Female	22	Freeport, Illinois	Multiple times per day
Pilot Study Participant 2	N/A	Female	22	Columbus, Ohio	Multiple times per day
Participant 1	1	Female	18	Houston, Texas	Multiple times per day
Participant 2	1	Female	18	Lee's Summit, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 3	1	Female	19	Memphis, Tennessee	Multiple times per day
Participant 4	2	Female	19	Chicago, Illinois	Multiple times per day
Participant 5	2	Female	20	Chicago, Illinois	Multiple times per day

Participant 6	3	Female	19	St. Louis, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 7	3	Female	21	St. Louis, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 8	3	Male	18	Kansas City, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 9	4	Female	24	Atlanta, Georgia	Multiple times per day
Participant 10	4	Female	21	Kansas City, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 11	5	Female	21	Kansas City, Missouri	Multiple times per day
Participant 12	6	Female	23	Orlando, Florida	Multiple times per day

The virtual focus groups lasted an average of 36 minutes and 20 seconds, with the longest being 51 minutes and the shortest being 23 minutes. The average length of focus groups was shorter than predicted because of scheduling difficulties and unplanned absences which resulted in two meetings with just one participant.

Data Processing

After the focus groups concluded, each group recording was transcribed fully for analysis purposes. Then, I went through and edited the transcripts for accuracy. In order to maintain participant privacy, each participant was assigned a number and their names were not included in the analysis process.

The transcripts were first reviewed in an inductive coding process, where I read through each transcript fully, highlighting excerpts that were related to my research questions and identifying potential themes. This bottom-up approach allowed for me to get familiar with the data and begin to see which themes were most prominent.

After this initial round of coding, the transcripts were reviewed once more to classify reactions to each stimulus. A spreadsheet was created, and each numbered participant was assigned markers to represent their opinions of each advertisement. View these tables in Appendix D.

Participant feedback was used in this process to ensure my findings were accurate. I wrote a summary of the sentiments of each focus group and sent that summary to a participant from each group for review via email. After they reviewed the summaries, I asked for their feedback and for any corrections where I might have misunderstood or misinterpreted their responses.

Next, after examining the inductively coded transcripts and ensuring my analysis was accurate, I developed themes and a codebook to allow for a more-in depth analysis of the data. There were 29 codes developed to further understand and classify the data. After having a solidified codebook, the transcripts were all reviewed and coded with the qualitative coding program Dedoose. Then, a second round of coding was completed to ensure the validity of the coding process. Dedoose did not assign any participant markers to the excerpts, protecting participant privacy. This data processing period began on October 10 and finished two weeks later on October 24.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through an inductive approach. The purpose of an inductive approach is “to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Since there has been limited previous research done on codeswitched advertising using AAVE, a bottom-up approach was needed to identify potential themes. By examining the transcripts for patterns, I allowed for theories and themes to emerge from the data instead of approaching it with prior assumptions or theories to be proven.

Also, when analyzing the data, an applied approach with an interpretivist perspective was utilized. An applied approach “takes place in an everyday context to solve specific problems of individuals, organizations, and/or industries” (Baimyrzaeva, 2018, p. 6). This approach focuses less on large, theory-based questions about society, but instead looks at specific real world scenarios and solutions to them (Baimyrzaeva, 2018). This approach was chosen because of the nature of this study – gathering opinions surrounding an advertising strategy will allow for the betterment of advertising methods and gives insights into how certain demographics feel about these strategies. Understanding these opinions will allow for companies to improve their methods, especially concerning codeswitched advertisements. An applied approach is useful for organizations, in this case, advertisers, who “need to identify key problems their customers face with their products/services so that they can improve upon them” (Baimyrzaeva, 2018, p. 6).

Interpretivism in this study was explained in the Qualitative Approach and Research Paradigm section. As an interpretivist, multiple subjective realities are

acknowledged and expected when collecting data. Understanding these multiple realities is important to discovering possible solutions to advertising problems, such as codeswitched advertising and its reception.

Through an applied interpretivist approach and an inductive data analysis process, stimuli were chosen to gather Black Americans' subjective opinions, and to eventually find practical solutions and suggestions for advertisers who want to produce the most effective advertising materials as possible.

Techniques to Enhance Trustworthiness

There were three methods employed to ensure the validity of this study: reflexivity, participant feedback, and peer review. By definition, reflexivity is when the “researcher actively engages in critical self-reflection about his or her potential biases and predispositions” (Johnson, 1997, p. 284). Since this an attitude study, it could be easy for a researcher's own attitudes to interfere with the data analysis process, and reflexivity helps to avoid this data corruption.

The next technique that increased validity is participant feedback. Participant feedback is “perhaps the most important strategy” that is used when achieving interpretive validity (Johnson, 1997, p. 285). This method was chosen to ensure the feelings of participants are not misinterpreted in any way. After the data was initially analyzed and coded, a summary of the findings from each focus group was sent to one member of the group for review and comment through email. The reviewers were asked to read all the findings, confirm their accuracy, and make any changes or comments. This method of participant feedback guaranteed that the findings are as accurate as possible,

and through this process, “useful information is frequently obtained and inaccuracies are often identified” (Johnson, 1997, p. 285).

Out of the six groups, five of them saw no need for change of my interpretations of their thoughts. The one participant who provided feedback mentioned an additional thought expressed in their group which was not represented in the summary sent for review. This process allowed for me to be confident in my interpretations and ensure that my analysis was accurate.

The final technique used to ensure validity is peer review. Peer review promotes theoretical validity, and allowing colleagues and other scholars to review scholarly work can help identify problems with it (Johnson, 1997). Having a committee of established researchers review the data will allow me to reflect on the findings and on my biases, values, and interpretations of the data.

Findings

After analyzing the focus group transcripts and calculating the statistics regarding perception for each advertisement, themes emerged that address the research questions and provide solutions to improve advertising practices. These statistics and themes will be explored in further depth, and then will lead into a discussion on what this data means for advertisers.

Synthesis and Interpretation

During the data processing period, the focus group transcripts were reviewed, and markers were assigned to every participant to determine their general feelings surrounding each advertisement. Immediately after viewing each advertisement, I asked every participant what their immediate reactions were. I then analyzed these expressed

opinions from each participant and assigned them a perceptual marker corresponding to each advertisement. The markers were negative, positive, or indifferent, and they are shown for each stimulus in the table below. I also directly asked each participant about their spending habits and sticking power related to each advertisement and assigned them my interpreted perceptual markers as shown below.

This was not a quantitative exercise, but instead an assessment of perceptions translated into percentages that can help gauge the general level of effectiveness of each advertisement.

Table 3
Perceptual Markers of AAVE Codeswitched Stimuli

	Reaction	Spending Habits	Sticking Power
Fashion Nova	66% indifferent	66% not affected	8% neutral stick
Instagram Ad	16% positive 16% negative	16% more likely to buy 16% less likely to buy	92% wouldn't stick
Infiniti/Erin Andrews Ad	8% positive 92% negative	58% not affected/unsure 8% more likely to buy 33% less likely to buy	25% wouldn't stick 8% positive stick 66% negative stick
Reebok/Cardi B	66% indifferent	75% not affected	29% neutral stick
Twitter Ad	33% negative		71% wouldn't stick

		16% more likely to buy 8% less likely to buy	
Warner Music/Charli XCX Twitter Ad	16% indifferent 8% positive 75% negative	42% not affected 8% more likely to buy 50% less likely to buy	33% wouldn't stick 8% positive stick 58% negative stick
Wendy's Comparison Ad	92% indifferent 8% positive	N/A	84% wouldn't stick 16% positive stick
Applebee's Ad	83% indifferent 8% positive 8% negative	N/A	33% neutral stick 33% wouldn't stick 33% positive stick

Note: In this table, N/A means the corresponding question was not asked.

As the table shows, there were some stimuli perceived negatively and some perceived indifferently, but none of them were perceived positively by the majority of participants. The Fashion Nova Instagram post elicited lukewarm feelings, unlike the Infiniti commercial featuring Erin Andrews, which was the most negatively perceived advertisement in this study. The Reebok advertisement with Afro Latina spokesperson Cardi B was received more positively than the advertisement with White spokesperson Erin Andrews, but it still was not a particularly effective ad in the eyes of the participants. Warner Music's tweet was similar to the Infiniti ad in that it featured a white celebrity,

and perceptions followed suit with 75% of participants viewing it negatively. The final codeswitched ad from Applebee's also had noncontroversial results, with 83% of participants feeling indifferent towards it. Finally, the comparison ad from Wendy's was the least controversial and produced indifferent sentiments across the board.

By analyzing these statistics, we can see which advertisements were most appealing and which were least appealing, which provides insights on which advertising methods are the most effective. These general observations lead to deeper themes and patterns that can be interpreted from the data, which are explained in the next section.

Themes

After multiple rounds of inductive coding, several themes were found within the data. These themes represent patterns that were repeated throughout the focus group sessions. Below, each theme and its subthemes are explored and supported with excerpts.

Motivation for AAVE Use in Advertisements.

Something discussed at length in every focus group was the reason why advertisers chose to incorporate AAVE words and grammatical structures in their ads. Two prominent trains of thought emerged from the participants to explain why this phenomenon has been growing over the past several years: the desire to appeal to young people and the need to appear trendy.

Appealing to a Young Audience.

In every focus group, appealing to a younger demographic of consumers was speculated as the possible motivation for AAVE use in advertisements. Many participants noted that corporations use Black slang to seem relatable to a young group of people, but it isn't always effective, as seen in this excerpt from Participant 1:

Well, I think they're trying to appeal to a younger audience, and they think that that's Gen Z culture, and that's what Gen Zers sound like. So, I think they're trying to make [Erin Andrews] seem fun and hip. But they don't understand that that's making a caricature out of Black people, and maybe they do, and they don't give a shit. But I think what they think that they're doing is appealing to a Black audience and a younger audience.

This same sentiment was repeated throughout the focus groups, and the groups seemed to come to a consensus that advertisers utilize codeswitched advertisements with AAVE to appeal to a younger demographic. Here's Participant 6's perspective:

I think they're definitely trying to like relate to a maybe a younger audience, because I feel like maybe they think 'oh, the younger kids are using these words these days, so maybe if we use this in our ad they'll buy from us.'

But, as many participants noted, this strategy is not particularly effective, as seen from Participant 8: "I think they're really trying to target more of a Black audience, or really just a young audience, but like I said, I don't really think it worked." This assumption relates back to semiotics, and the motivations behind choosing certain signs. In this case, AAVE dialectal features are chosen to elicit specific reactions from consumers. Participants in this study speculate that advertisers are choosing language like this for their advertisements as a way to appeal to a younger audience and make them think more highly of the brand. If following the opinions of these 12 participants, this semiotic strategy is generally ineffective in trying to relate to Black audiences and improving brand image.

Trendiness.

The other possible motivation to use AAVE in advertisements mentioned by participants is the desire to keep up with internet trends and appear relatable or hip with the previously discussed young demographic of consumers. Similar to the motivation to appeal to a younger audience, the participants in this study were not fond of companies attempting to be trendy through the use of AAVE, as demonstrated in this excerpt from Participant 10:

[They use AAVE in the ad to] seem like trendy, or like cool or entertaining like, what can we do to make this ad pop out? Oh, we're going to like, use these different things to try to be funny. I think just to kind of like stand out, but it wasn't the best way to do it.

This distaste for utilizing AAVE as a trend was echoed by Participant 2 when discussing the Reebok and Cardi B tweet: "I think there's ways to be trendy without having to be like 'we serving this, we been knew this.'" Participant 11 also noted that using AAVE features to appear trendy seemed inauthentic and sloppy: "It makes sense, because people want to stay like in the now and on trend and stuff. But it was just very forced, and I feel like it wasn't really executed properly."

This theme also speaks to semiotics and the reason why advertisers are using signs rooted in AAVE in their ads. These participants disapproved of the semiotic strategy of using trendy AAVE features to profit. They also mentioned the evolution of AAVE online, which will be explored more in-depth in the next theme.

AAVE's Role in Society.

Participants were asked to explain their interpretations of AAVE use online and how it has transformed on social media. Two changes in the role of AAVE in society were mentioned repeatedly: its transition into the mainstream and linguistic racism.

AAVE Becoming Mainstream.

Many participants mentioned how social media has changed the role of AAVE in culture and society. They discussed the dissemination of AAVE from just Black culture into general culture and how that has been accelerated through social media, as seen from Participant 10:

And now, ads and like other groups of people use slang that's not really associated with their demographic a lot, and I, like many people, have spoken out about it, and they still use other groups' slang. So, at the moment, it's a part of the internet. You really can't stop anyone from saying it.

These participants also mentioned how Black culture on social media apps, such as Twitter or TikTok, has spread into general pop culture, thus exposing other demographics to AAVE. Participant 6 expressed how they have grown used to seeing AAVE everywhere, saying "I feel like when being on Twitter, because Black culture is so prevalent in pop culture, that people just kind of adapted, even if they're not Black. So, you just see it everywhere."

The discussion of authenticity also emerged, with participants saying that they can tell when a non-Black person uses AAVE online, as seen in this excerpt from Participant 10:

I'm definitely seeing it on Twitter, and then on Black Twitter, just like Black digital spaces. Joining TikTok, I've seen more groups try to use it, like racial

groups, it's not just Black people who are trying to use African American Vernacular English. I definitely feel like I've seen people try to use it who don't even really like, understand it.

Overall, the sentiment expressed by participants was that there was little they could do to halt the dissemination of AAVE on social media platforms. They were unhappy with how AAVE has transformed on social media, and some viewed it as appropriation or commodification, as discussed in the next section.

Linguistic Racism.

Multiple groups classified the adoption of AAVE by other groups as appropriation. They also related the issue to their personal experiences and the double standard they have faced when using AAVE in their daily lives, as expressed by

Participant 4:

I think that this type of language has become so common, like everybody kind of speaks like this. But the fact that if I'm... Since I'm like African American or Black, whatever you want to call it, like, I definitely have to be more conscious, because if someone who isn't from my ethnicity speaks that way, they're seen as cool or trendy because it's on social media, and it's seen so widely by everyone. But if I use it, I'm maybe less educated, or I'm from quote unquote the hood, or, you know, it associates differently with different people.

Participant 5 expressed a similar experience:

People are using it and it's getting more trendy with people who aren't Black, and in my personal experiences, when I was younger, dealing with it, racism and everything. People used it in a way to mock me and my other Black classmates.

So, when I see it online, it is a little triggering, because at one point, I was kind of bullied for the way that I talk, you know, like talking, I guess like for lack of better words, talking Black.

The use of AAVE by outgroups and its possibility of being appropriative was touched on in the Literature Review, and it is clear with this group of participants that social media has negatively affected the trajectory of AAVE use in society. They also expressed that corporations have changed the perception of AAVE among the public. The excerpt below from Participant 4 shows how one participant thinks corporate advertising has blurred the lines of appropriate AAVE use:

I guess it all goes back to a huge corporation advertising AAVE, and making it this common language that everyone then uses. I guess it just makes it harder to differentiate between what is appropriate and what isn't appropriate in certain instances.

Participant 4 also criticized modern advertising that utilizes codeswitching and AAVE, and suggested that more traditional advertising strategies would be effective to them:

I feel like we shouldn't make it a habit for every single corporation to use it, because again, it is still part of Black culture and everything, and it makes it seem like Black culture is something to be trendy, just something to use and then discard of later. So, I feel like we shouldn't make it a habit for it to be used so much advertise, but just for them to revert to whatever form of advertising they were using before.

Through this discussion on the progression of AAVE in society and its new role in mainstream culture, the participants made it clear that outgroups adopting AAVE dialectal features into their vocabulary is not appreciated, especially if they use it incorrectly or hold Black people to a different standard than non-Black people who use the dialect. The thoughts expressed here mirror the literature on AAVE and appropriation discussed in the Literature Review. The participants commented on the acceleration of AAVE distribution due to social media, and they also mentioned the phenomenon of “corporate cool” proposed by Roth-Gordon, where corporations use AAVE terms and phrases and believe in the notion that “Blackness sells” (Roth-Gordon et al., 2020). Finally, they confirmed Baker-Bell’s findings that Black people using AAVE are discriminated against, while non-Black people using it are praised (Baker-Bell, 2020).

In the eyes of these participants, corporations have worsened the dissemination of AAVE into mainstream culture and are blurring the lines of what is and isn’t appropriate AAVE use by outgroup members. They were not approving of this advertising strategy, and suggested ways in which corporations can improve their methods and avoid appropriative practices, which will be discussed in the following theme.

Improving Slang Use in Advertisements.

There were several suggestions mentioned in the focus groups on how to improve the effectiveness of ads when choosing to include slang. The overarching theme was authenticity, whether it is to a brand’s previous narrative, to the ownership of the company, or to the spokesperson they employ. The following subthemes will explore the participants’ suggestions more in depth.

Matching Previous Brand Narrative.

Discussions around previous brand narrative were most prevalent in the focus groups when discussing the Fashion Nova Instagram post and the Wendy's outdoor advertisement. After looking at these two ads, several participants said they were indifferent to the message because it was similar to previous messages from that brand. Participant 11 was an active shopper at Fashion Nova, and had this to say about the brand's non-severe AAVE use in an Instagram advertisement:

I mean this doesn't really bother me like that much, just because I shop on Fashion Nova all the time. So, like I'm used to them doing it, like doing stuff like this. I guess I feel like they're just trying to keep up with the culture. I guess they're trying to appeal to a certain demographic. This one is not as bad as other ones that I've seen, though. The other ones it's just been like, you're trying super hard, but this one's not that bad.

This same thought about matching previous messaging was echoed by Participant 5 in response to the Wendy's comparison advertisement:

I feel like it depends on what you're advertising and how you're advertising, if that makes sense. So, like for the previous [ads], I felt like they were trying too hard where this one kind of felt more natural. It doesn't feel like they were trying to force it, because, like I was saying, Wendy's is known for kind of cracking jokes on Twitter and doing funny stuff with their ads. I feel like it's a little more on brand for them in terms of them trying to be funny.

The data showed that if slang is going to be used in an advertisement, regardless of motivation, it needs to match prior brand messaging to seem genuine. The two

advertisements mentioned here that matched their previous messaging, Fashion Nova and Wendy's, saw a high rate of indifference with these participants at 66% and 92% respectively. Following these statistics, it can be concluded that matching the previous brand messaging and not straying too far into uncharted territory with new slang or a change in tone will result in better reception of advertisements.

Authenticity and Ownership.

The topic of authenticity was repeatedly mentioned by participants in the focus groups. The subjects in this study had clear opinions on when an advertisement seemed natural or when it seemed forced or inauthentic. For example, see Participant 10's reaction to the Applebee's commercial:

It was obviously unnatural. They try to put like hip hop music in the back, and it just makes it very corny. I feel like it shows that they really don't take African American Vernacular English seriously, they only accept it or use it when they want to be comedic or entertaining. It kind of shows like how they feel about Black people.

Participant 9 also touched on the importance of matching your own brand image and maintaining consistent messaging to seem the most genuine when discussing the Infiniti commercial starring Erin Andrews:

If Nike did that, maybe I wouldn't think as much, because there are a lot of Black athletes...But for like Infiniti's company, it's very white. I'm sure there's only white people working at that company. It would seem strange that they would pick that up, like they'd have to go out of their way to like use slang like that...I

think you just have to make it make sense for your brand. But if that's not your brand, it just seems not genuine.

Similar to the point made about AAVE matching Nike's brand, a few participants mentioned that AAVE coming from Black-owned businesses would be a natural advertising strategy. Participant 4 expressed that the language itself was not off-putting to see in advertisements, but it was the racial makeup of the owners that made the ads seem inauthentic:

I definitely think it depends on what they're advertising and who they're advertising for and the brand. I mean, if it was a Black-owned business, I think it would be okay with AAVE being in ads, because that's a part of them and who they are. But should every brand be using this language? No, I think it depends.

These participants' comments mirror quantitative findings on consumers and authenticity, with 90% of consumers expressing that authenticity is an important factor when deciding which brands to support and buy from (*Bridging the Gap*, 2019). This trend is especially prevalent among Gen Z, with 82% saying they trust a company more if they use real customers in their advertising (Williams, 2020). As displayed by this study's results, authenticity is on the forefront of young consumers' minds.

By examining these excerpts and the reactions to the Fashion Nova and Wendy's ads, it is clear that these participants are not completely opposed to slang use in advertisements, but there are stipulations regarding what is and isn't effective when utilizing slang. Brand messaging and image play a big role in the appropriateness of AAVE use, and having a company that shows few signs of diversity also prohibits the effective use of AAVE in ads.

Matching Spokespeople to Language.

Three advertisements containing different spokespeople were chosen for this study in order to collect opinions on various types of AAVE use in conjunction with a spokesperson, which addresses Research Question 3. Two of these ads had white spokespeople, and one had an Afro Latina spokesperson. The different spokespeople elicited various reactions, and it was clear that the advertisement with Afro Latina spokesperson Cardi B was received more positively than the advertisements with white spokespeople Erin Andrews and Charli XCX. Several participants noted that hearing AAVE spoken aloud from Erin Andrews seemed unnatural and inauthentic.

Participant 4 criticized the use of AAVE in the tweet from Warner Music to promote singer Charli XCX, saying “Charli XCX isn't a part of [the Black] community, so I don't think that [Warner Music] should be using that language to promote her.” Similar criticisms were expressed over the Infiniti commercial with white spokesperson Erin Andrews, as seen here:

It definitely does not seem like [Erin Andrews] uses those words in her everyday vocabulary. So, it does sound weird coming out of her mouth, and the fact that she's not using it in the correct way, that's how you know they're trying to relate too much to an audience, and it's just not working.

Meanwhile, participants had a different view of the tweet from Reebok, which also used AAVE and a spokesperson to promote their brand, as seen in this excerpt from Participant 5:

Cardi B is Afro Latina, so I feel like in a way she's still kind of kind of Black. So, I feel like it makes more sense to have a person of color who uses that language

often, and then have an ad like [Reebok's tweet] versus somebody who's not Black or isn't under the category of being Black or African American. So compared to the other ones, this one is definitely, definitely not as weird or them trying to force anything.

Multiple participants even suggested that if the Infiniti advertisement was replaced with a spokesperson of color like Cardi B, it would have seemed more genuine and would have been more effective.

The Infiniti commercial was the most negatively received advertisement in this study, with 92% of participants disliking it. The main reason for this distaste was a white spokesperson using a heavy amount of AAVE slang and grammatical features to sell a product. The Charli XCX tweet saw similar negative reactions, with 75% of participants disliking it. Meanwhile, only 33% of participants disliked the Cardi B tweet, and they mentioned that it seemed more natural and matched the personality of Cardi B. When employing a spokesperson to represent a brand, having a person of color will lessen the number of criticisms and increase the authenticity of the messaging.

Input from Younger Ad Creators.

A few participants speculated on the identity of advertising creatives who were involved in producing the chosen stimuli for this study, and many of them guessed that older white people were responsible for choosing AAVE features for these ads.

Participant 8 had this to say about creation of advertisements after viewing the Infiniti commercial:

I think you can tell it's old people making those ads, because no young person would approve of that and I feel like we just understand ourselves a lot more. So,

I think it's a good strategy to be familiar with your audience, but also you actually have to have your audience present in the room whenever you're making those decisions or else it comes out like that.

This relates back to discussion on diversity when looking at the ownership of the company. If a company wants to use AAVE, or slang in general, successfully, it needs to have the target audience present throughout the creation process in order to remain authentic. Younger consumers have a keen eye to when their slang is being used correctly, and it is easy for them to tell when the slang is being used by someone who is not comfortable with it. If companies truly believe that they need to use AAVE to be successful, they need to have a diverse presence.

Appropriateness of Slang Use in Advertisements.

The participants made a few distinctions when discussing what was or was not appropriate AAVE use in advertisements. As displayed by the indifferent response to the Applebee's commercial, the Reebok tweet, and the Wendy's comparison advertisement, these participants were not entirely opposed to slang use in advertisements. But there were certain types of usage that were received more negatively than others, especially related to AAVE. The following subthemes will explore the thoughts of the participants related to the most effective way to use slang in an advertisement.

Non-AAVE Slang.

Participants had very little reaction to the Wendy's outdoor advertisement. In total, 92% of them were indifferent to the ad, with the other 8% viewing the ad in a positive way. Many of the participants mentioned that the messaging was par for the course, such as Participant 5: "I feel like Wendy's is known for being kind of funny. So, I

feel like this won't sway me in one way or another, honestly.” Participant 4 echoed that thought, saying “I’m indifferent to it. I feel like a lot of Wendy's ads look like this so it doesn't look very different, or it doesn't really stand out very much compared to the other [ads], even.”

This relates back to the theme of matching previous brand narratives when including slang in advertisements. Wendy’s took a general slang phrase and tailored it to fit its brand and previous messaging. Since Wendy’s maintained the tone of the brand and used general slang in the correct way, it was interpreted positively by these participants. This stimulus proves that slang use should not be completely avoided in advertising, but should instead be used when it matches the brand and makes sense.

Grammar of AAVE.

There were some negative reactions to the advertisements with minor AAVE slang use, such as the Fashion Nova Instagram ad or the Reebok tweet, but the two ads that received the worst criticism, Warner Music’s tweet and Infiniti’s commercial, utilized AAVE grammatical features instead of just slang. Participant 9 had a realization during the focus group after viewing the Warner Music tweet that the difference in authenticity and effectiveness between certain ads was the use of slang versus the use of AAVE grammatical features:

I think the reason why that Erin Andrews one, or even this [Warner Music tweet], seem more cringey than the Cardi B one is because the Cardi B one just uses the word drip, which is just vocabulary. But I think changing your grammar specifically to sound like the grammar that's in AAVE, it's very distinctive. You can always tell when it's just done by someone, it's like unnatural.

Participant 4 had similar criticisms of the Applebee's commercial, where slang terms like "bougie" and AAVE grammatical features, such as the copula absence, were sung by a White country singer:

There are times where certain words are AAVE, but then there are times when the way that something is said...I think that's the syntax. The way the sentence is put together, that is AAVE. So, I think, like bougie, as a word itself, everyone uses the word bougie, it's just like a descriptive kind of word. But then the way that it's put into the sentence makes it a part of AAVE. So yeah, I guess that's just my difference between like, is this like an African American thing, or is this like an everybody thing?

The comments from participants show that ads using grammatical features of AAVE are received more negatively than ads that only use slang words. In order to have an effective advertisement using AAVE, avoiding grammatical features is the safest choice for advertisers. The only instance in this study which using AAVE grammatical features in an ad did not result in overwhelmingly negative results was the Applebee's commercial, where AAVE grammatical features were sung in the background of the video. Many participants said they did not even notice the AAVE use in the song and were more focused on the video itself. This suggests that AAVE could be used in advertisements without garnering much attention if it is sung and/or if it's not the focal point of the advertisement. Still, some participants will inevitably notice and disapprove of the song use, as seen in the last excerpt.

Effective Platforms for Slang.

Research Questions 2 and 2.1 both inquire about the mediums on which codeswitched advertisements appear, and if the medium, such as social media versus traditional outlets, would affect the perceptions regarding these ads. Three traditional advertisements and three digital advertisements were selected for this study in order to answer this question. All of the participants agreed that if slang use is to occur in advertising, it seems more genuine and thus is more effective on digital platforms. Because of the traditionalism and professionalism of advertising on mediums like television, radio, or print, slang seems more out of place and inauthentic than it does on social media.

Limiting Slang Presence on Traditional Mediums.

Every participant involved in this study agreed that social media and digital advertisements are more fitting for slang use than traditional advertisements. Participant 5 noted that hearing AAVE spoken aloud by a non-Black spokesperson in a commercial seemed unnatural, thus making social media a more effective medium:

I feel like it would be more effective on social media versus hearing it in an advertisement, because hearing it in an advertisement sounded unnatural. If that makes sense. Like, granted, people use it in their everyday, speaking with friends and family, but using it in the advertisement on TV and everything...I feel like it's just not as smooth as it would be on social media, and even then on social media it can come off as cringey, but not as cringey.

Professionalism was another factor that determined the effectiveness of mediums, as seen in this excerpt from Participant 6:

I think it works better if it is on social media, because I feel like with the television and news you don't see slang and AAVE there as much because people try to keep a professional setting. But social media, it's not as professional.

And finally, Participant 9 wavered on which medium would be most effective, before eventually siding with social media:

I think on traditional outlets, maybe you have more time. Because an Instagram post, it goes by so quickly, you know, that I'm not sure if they put that much thought into it. Maybe with the traditional one, they take a little bit more time. But then I think also, a traditional advertisement gives you the most room to mess up, because it's probably going to be up for a while, or if it's like a commercial, it's like a two-minute commercial, that's something that people have a lot of time to remember. So maybe it's more effective on social media.

This research shows that if slang is going to be used in advertisements, it would be received more positively by consumers if on social media. If slang is placed on more traditional mediums, it might be viewed as awkward, inauthentic, or out of place.

Thematic Analysis Conclusion.

These five themes and 11 subthemes exhibit the major findings of this study surrounding slang use in advertisements, the utilization of AAVE, the importance of spokespeople, and the difference a medium makes in perceptions. Through analyzing these themes, the findings show that appealing to a younger audience and attempting to play off trends are the main motivations for using AAVE in ads in the eyes of young Black consumers. These consumers have noticed that AAVE has become more mainstream in society, and they believe this is due both to social media and its ability to

quickly disseminate information, and to corporations who have started using AAVE in advertisements, which has sent the message that AAVE doesn't belong to a cultural group, but instead is just general language. They view this as an appropriative act and disapprove of the use of AAVE by outgroup members. They had a few ideas for improving advertisements using slang, such as matching the brand's previous narrative, remaining authentic to the company and its values, choosing appropriate spokespeople that match the language used, and getting input from younger creatives when developing advertisements. They believed that non-AAVE slang use was acceptable if it is used correctly and matches the brand's previous messages. In their eyes, codeswitched advertisements with AAVE grammatical features were more offensive than those that simply used slang words from AAVE, and finally, they thought slang use in advertisements was more effective on digital platforms than on traditional mediums.

These themes will be discussed and related back to existing literature in the following Discussion section, and practical suggestions based on the participants' opinions will be provided to advertisers who wish to use slang in their advertising.

Discussion

Research Question 1 aimed to learn how Black Americans perceive codeswitched advertising that uses their dialect to persuade them to purchase a certain product or service, and the research conducted for the study shows that the semiotic strategy of AAVE use in advertisements is generally disliked by young Black consumers. These participants especially disliked the use of AAVE in conjunction with a non-Black spokesperson, particularly if the dialect is spoken aloud by the non-Black representative.

It is a fine line between relatability and inauthenticity, and the advertisements heavily using AAVE were viewed as awkward, inauthentic, and even offensive.

Advertisements that utilized AAVE slang were not particularly well liked, but those containing AAVE grammatical features were heavily disliked and turned these consumers away from the brand, even prompting several of them to say they would not purchase from that company in the future. According to this group of participants, if advertisers want to pursue the semiotic strategy of codeswitched advertising using AAVE, they should avoid employing non-Black spokespeople, should match their previous brand narrative, should avoid AAVE grammatical structures, and should get the input of younger, diverse advertising creatives who are familiar with the dialect to maintain authenticity.

These findings are largely consistent with previous literature surrounding codeswitched advertising. As seen with the previous studies from Banatao and Malenab-Temporal (2018) and Lin and Wang (2016), identity is a large factor in how consumers perceive codeswitched advertising, and this study's findings align with that idea. Some participants related the use of AAVE in advertisements to other aspects of their culture that have been appropriated, such as music or clothing trends. Others were offended to see their cultural dialect mis- or overused by advertisers and were reminded of racism they faced when using AAVE in their personal lives. The findings also aligned with Liu et al.'s (2019) study on Chinese consumers' perceptions related to codeswitched advertising using internet slang. The participants in that study did not mind seeing slang in advertisements, but they were turned away from brands who used slang excessively. These findings mirror this, with the participants being especially turned away from the

Infiniti advertisement with Erin Andrews that used excessive AAVE. In summary, this study confirms existing literature about codeswitched advertising regarding identity and excessive use, while also providing new findings about young Black consumers and how they feel about their cultural dialect being utilized for profit.

Another important result from this study addresses Research Questions 2 and 2.1 regarding the effectiveness of AAVE codeswitched advertisements on different mediums. Research Question 2 asked how the medium of codeswitched advertisements affects Black Americans' perceptions, and whether certain mediums are more or less effective than others. These participants established that the chosen medium does change the effectiveness of codeswitched advertisements, and that some mediums are better hosts for AAVE than others. Their preferred medium for AAVE codeswitched ads was social media.

Research Question 2.1 asked how perceptions surrounding AAVE codeswitched advertising on social media compares or contrasts in effectiveness to traditional advertising, such as print or television. This research shows that if slang is to be used in advertisements, it should be placed on digital platforms rather than traditional outlets to seem more authentic and natural. The usual professionalism of traditional advertising does not align with the casual nature of slang use, and thus seeing its presence in traditional advertisements seemed out of place and awkward to the participants. Previous literature (e.g., Bishop & Peterson, 2010) found that mediums play a big role in how consumers perceive advertisements, so choosing the right message for the right medium is important. This study confirmed those findings, with every participant suggesting that

seeing slang on digital advertisements seemed more natural and authentic than on traditional mediums.

Finally, the last notable finding in this study is the assumed motivation for using AAVE in advertisements and suggestions for how to improve this strategy, particularly related to spokespeople. The participants were not completely opposed to slang use in advertisements, and they acknowledged the desire to stay trendy and appeal to a younger audience, but using AAVE is not the most effective way to achieve this. Not only does the use of AAVE often make the advertisement seem inauthentic or awkward to this group of participants, but it is also progressing the dissemination of AAVE into mainstream culture and thus furthering the appropriation of this cultural dialect. Research Question 3 asked how the racial identity of a celebrity spokesperson or figure in an advertisement affects the perceptions of AAVE codeswitched ads, and the participants thought that having a non-Black spokesperson use AAVE made the ad, and thus the company, seem inauthentic, awkward, and even appropriative. If spokespeople are to be used in conjunction with AAVE in ads, this research found that having a spokesperson of color would increase the effectiveness of the message and maintain authenticity.

Regarding the guiding theoretical framework of semiotics, this study has determined that using AAVE in advertisements to subconsciously appeal to a younger audience is generally unsuccessful, especially with young Black consumers. Though there are a few instances when the use of AAVE is not greatly disliked, such as the Fashion Nova Instagram ad or the Applebee's commercial, in general, this semiotic strategy comes off as inauthentic and offensive rather than approachable or relatable.

Slang can be a successful semiotic sign in advertisements, but it should be non-cultural and match the brand's previous narrative, such as the Wendy's outdoor ad.

Implications and Contributions to the Field

Through an applied approach, several recommendations can be made from these findings for advertisers, especially those who want to target young and/or Black consumers. The findings from this study suggest that avoiding the use of AAVE in advertisements will result in better reactions from young Black consumers. One exception to this would be for a company that is well known as a Black-owned business with a previously established narrative that elevates Black culture. Otherwise, the messaging can be interpreted as insensitive, appropriative, or, at best, cringey. As Participant 1 stated, companies should “err on the side of caution and definitely consult people of different races” when choosing to use cultural slang in their advertisements. Advertisements containing grammatical features belonging to AAVE were especially disliked, so if AAVE is used, avoid grammatical features of the dialect and stick with slang words and phrases. This semiotic strategy was not effective with this group of Black participants and did not subconsciously suggest them to think more highly of the brand or encourage them to shop with a certain company.

At least in this sample, being authentic in brand messaging is paramount when crafting ads for younger audiences, and matching the brand's previous narrative is the first step in maintaining this authenticity. If slang has not previously been implemented into brand messaging successfully, it is not wise to begin inserting it without a rebrand or shift in messaging to match; an abrupt change in narrative is off-putting and was seen as awkward by these participants. Another avenue to consider when maintaining

authenticity is the employment of spokespeople. Spokespeople should match the language used in an advertisement to avoid being interpreted as awkward and inauthentic. While these guidelines will help to avoid potentially offensive messaging, another method to produce more youth-friendly messaging is to have a young, diverse presence throughout the ad creation process. Younger people understand themselves the most deeply and will produce the best strategies to target their peers. By having a younger presence in the room, appropriate messages can be more easily avoided and more effective advertising methods targeting a younger audience can be utilized. Finally, this research found that general slang use should be avoided on traditional outlets, and instead be placed on digital platforms in order to match typical messages found on each of the mediums. This also deals with authenticity, and traditional platforms are not a conducive environment for successful slang use. Instead, slang belongs where it spreads most rapidly – the internet.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations in this study. First, since this study acknowledges the epistemological belief of multiple subjective realities, these results might vary with different participants who experience different realities. Conducting this study with a group of participants with different demographics would be valuable to get an even broader view of perceptions related to codeswitched advertisements. Because of limited time and resources, 12 participants were involved in this study, which resulted in a limited demographical makeup. There was a lack of male participants and lack of participants in their upper-20s limits this study, so collecting perceptions of these underrepresented groups would be beneficial. Additionally, this study was limited in

location and areas of expertise, with all the participants attending the University of Missouri and many of them studying journalism or communication. All of these factors limit the generalizability of these findings. Getting perspectives from participants who are not as familiar with media and advertising would be valuable to get a better sense of public opinion.

It would also be of value to complete this study with members of other racial groups. While Black Americans were an important choice for this particular research, the advertisements examined were not targeting only a Black audience. The literature shows that many other racial groups utilize AAVE, so perhaps they have different perceptions related to this semiotic strategy. The literature also showed that identify plays such a large part in perceptions of advertising, so exploring the perceptions of other racial groups would develop even better strategies for advertisers.

There were also limitations in the stimuli and the data collection process. First, there was no stimulus that featured a Black spokesperson actively using AAVE to compare with the Erin Andrews Infiniti ad. There was the ad with Cardi B which featured a Black celebrity presence, but it was a written tweet and Cardi B did not use the language herself. Having a more direct comparison to the Infiniti advertisement would allow for a more nuanced and accurate interpretation of how racial identity of spokespeople affects perceptions of AAVE codeswitched ads.

In the focus groups, a few limitations emerged. The stimuli were presented in the same order to every focus group, which could possibly limit the variation of the data. Perhaps seeing the advertisements in a different order would have changed the participants' opinions. Additionally, there was a potential for bias among participants in

the focus groups by each person answering each question one at a time. It is possible that the opinions of one participant affected the opinions of others, thus limiting the validity and generalizability. Gathering these opinions through an anonymous, individual quantitative study or through individual qualitative interviews could lessen this bias. Finally, I also used a multimodal approach by presenting digital, outdoor, and video advertisements, which could have affected the internal validity of the study and thus the results. Future studies could be narrowed and focused on a single medium to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions surrounding codeswitched advertisements.

Conclusion

In conclusion, AAVE codeswitched advertising is a common practice among advertisers trying to target younger audiences and/or wishing to appear trendy or youthful. This phenomenon plays hand in hand with social media and its accelerated dissemination of AAVE beyond just Black Americans. As AAVE disseminates into mainstream culture, it is indexed as a trendy dialect, which can cause advertisers to use the dialect as a semiotic filter to subconsciously attract younger people and make the brand seem youthful and trendy. Black Americans' perceptions related to this strategy were previously unknown, and this study with these participants found that, in general, the practice of AAVE use in ads is disliked by Black Americans and often results in a damaged brand image. Participants thought the use of AAVE grammatical features was particularly excessive and viewed it as inauthentic and offensive. The use of slang in ads was not entirely dismissed, but using a personal cultural dialect to profit was generally not a successful strategy with this group of participants.

These findings are largely consistent with previous literature on codeswitched advertising and its perceptions, while also providing new insights into the previously unresearched perceptions belonging to Black Americans. Having the opinions of this demographic allows for a more nuanced and informed view of codeswitched advertising and provides guidance on how to properly use slang in advertisements. Advertisers should use these recommendations to more successfully craft advertising messages that will appeal to younger Black audiences. When wanting to use AAVE in advertisements, it is wise to err on the side of caution and avoid the practice in order to maintain a positive brand image.

Appendix A

Screener Survey

The following Qualtrics survey was distributed to every interested participant. After answering the questions, I analyzed the responses and identified participants who qualified for the study according to the defined criteria.

Q1. What is your name?

Q2. What is your age?

Q3. Do you identify as a Black American?

- Yes
- No

Q4. How often do you use social media?

- Multiple times a day
- Once a day
- Every few days
- Once a week
- Less than once a week

Q5. Please provide your email address. This will be used for all research-related communication.

Thank you for completing this survey and expressing your interest in participating in this study! You will receive a follow up email in the next couple of weeks.

Appendix B

Consent Form

This consent form was reviewed and signed by each participant prior to all data collection.

Written Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Project Title: Approachable or Appropriative? Black Americans' Perceptions of Codeswitched Advertisements Using African American Vernacular English

Principal Investigator Name: Shelby Henderson, Jonathan Stemmler (Advisor)

IRB Assigned Project Number: 2090808

Key Information About the Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand Black Americans' perceptions of codeswitched advertisements that use African American Vernacular English (AAVE). You are being asked to participate in a focus group and express your opinions on certain advertising strategies. Your opinions would be used to craft a recommendation for advertisers on how or how not to use AAVE in advertisements.

Please read this form carefully and take your time. Let us know if you have any questions before participating. The research team can explain words or information that you do not understand. Research is voluntary and you can choose not to participate. If you do not want to participate or choose to start then stop later, there will be no penalty.

Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a young Black American with knowledge on social media and its culture. The purpose of this study is to understand how Black Americans feel about AAVE use in corporate advertising. AAVE is a commonly appropriated dialect by several racial groups, and it has now found its way into advertising. AAVE terms are often known as "internet lingo," and to seem approachable or relatable to young audiences, advertisers will use these dialectal terms in their advertising material. The perceptions of this AAVE use are largely unknown, especially those belonging to Black Americans. This study aims to collect perceptual data about AAVE use in advertising, and then use that data to suggest a strategy for advertisers that want to appeal to young audiences.

What will happen during the study?

You are being asked to participate in a focus group with other Black Americans. The focus groups will be conducted on Zoom and will consist of four to five Black Americans between the ages of 18 and 30. Your participation is expected to last roughly an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the group's discussion. You will be asked to have your camera on, but are not required. Video will allow the researcher to observe non-verbal cues and better facilitate discussion. Please be aware that the Zoom meetings will be

recorded for audio and video records. These recordings will not be shared with anyone aside from the primary researcher, and are only being collected for data analysis and accuracy purposes.

Additionally, at least one participant from each focus group will be asked to review the findings after the group has collected. This reviewing process will take place several weeks after the focus group is conducted to ensure all findings are complete. This representative will communicate with the investigator and review the findings through email. The representative will review the summaries of opinions and the conclusions drawn from their focus group to confirm their accuracy or suggest changes. This reviewing process is estimated to take you roughly an hour, and should require no more than two hours of additional participation.

There will be approximately 16 to 20 people total participating in this study. The study will be finished in December 2022. You can stop participating at any time without penalty.

If you are participating in the pilot study, you will be presented with the focus group guide and stimuli before the focus groups are conducted. You will provide feedback, suggestions and guidance on the guide and stimuli to the primary researcher through email. This should take no more than two hours.

What are the expected benefits of the study?

Aside from financial compensation, there will be no personal benefits for the participants of this study. Though, with the help of the participants, the perceptual data collected may improve the practices of advertisers and help determine the best way to utilize AAVE within advertising

What are the possible risks of participating in this study?

There are no risks foreseen to the participants of the study. Your confidentiality will be maintained and the data will be presented anonymously to protect your personal identity, so there are no risks posed directly to you.

What other choices do I have if I don't want to be in this study?

You are not required to be in this study. You can simply choose not to participate. You can look for other research projects you may be interested in instead of this study.

Will I receive compensation for taking part in this study?

You will be compensated for taking part in this study. For your time and effort, you will receive \$15 in the form of an Amazon gift card. These gift cards will be transferred to you electronically no later than 24 hours after your focus group is conducted (the transferal will most likely happen the same day). If you are participating in the pilot study, you will receive \$15 for your feedback and contributions. These gift cards will be transferred to you electronically no later than 24 hours after your feedback is received by the primary researcher.

Are there any costs for participating in this study?

You should not expect any additional costs by participating in this study. You should discuss any questions about costs with the researchers before agreeing to participate.

Will information about me be kept private?

The research team is committed to respecting your privacy and keeping your personal information confidential. We will make every effort to protect your information to the extent allowed by law.

When the results of this research are shared, we will remove all identifying information so it will not be known who provided the information. Your information will be kept as secure as possible to prevent your identity from being disclosed. Pseudonyms may be used in the findings section of the study, but no personal names or identifying information will be revealed.

All subject information collected in the research process will not be used or distribute for future research studies.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

If you have questions about this study, you can contact the University of Missouri researcher at 417-599-1075, or slhdhr@umsystem.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at 888-280-5002 (a free call) or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu.

Do I get a copy of this consent?

You are encouraged to keep a copy of this consent for your records.

We appreciate your consideration to participate in this study.

Consent Signatures

Subject's Signature	Date

Appendix C

Focus Group Guide

This guide was utilized for each focus group session to keep the discussion on track and to ensure the same questions were posed to each participant.

Dialect questions:

1. Are you participants on Twitter or other social media platforms? Which ones?
 - a. *Probe:* Why do you interact with these specific platforms?
 - b. *Probe:* How do you use these platforms? For entertainment, news, something else?
2. Do you use slang?
 - a. *Probe:* Do you consciously use it, or do you sometimes use slang terms without realizing?
3. Where do you most often use it? On social media, in real life conversation, in text messages?
4. Are you all familiar with African American Vernacular English?
 - a. *Probe:* Do you notice AAVE use online?

Questions based off stimuli:

Show them the Fashion Nova advertisement

1. What are your immediate reactions to this advertisement?
 - a. *Probe:* Does this type of advertisement on Instagram look familiar to you?
2. How do you feel about this brand's utilization of slang in this post?
3. How would this post on Instagram affect your likelihood to visit FashionNova.com?
4. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?

Show them the Erin Andrews video advertisement in full

1. What are your immediate reactions to this video?

2. How would this advertisement affect the likelihood of you considering Infiniti for a car?
3. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?
4. Why do you think Infiniti and Erin Andrews chose to incorporate slang into this advertisement?
 - a. *Probe:* How do you feel about that decision?

Show them the Reebok tweet advertisement

1. What are your immediate reactions to this tweet?
 - a. *Probe:* Do you think this is an advertisement you might see on your social media feed?
 - b. *Probe:* Do you think you would notice the slang in this ad if you weren't being asked to pay attention to it for this study?
2. How would this advertisement affect the likelihood of you buying Reebok shoes?
3. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?
4. Is Cardi B a celebrity sponsor you like seeing in advertisements? Why or why not?
 - a. *Probe:* How does this celebrity sponsor compare or contrast to the advertisement with Erin Andrews that we saw earlier? Is one of them done more effectively?

Show them the Warner Music tweet advertisement

1. This ad is similar to the last one in that a musical artist is being featured by a brand. How do you feel about this advertisement compared to the Cardi B Reebok tweet?
 - a. Is there a difference in how effective these two ads are at promoting artists? Is the language in one of the ads more effective or appealing than the other?

2. How would this advertisement affect the likelihood of you listening to Charlie XCX's music?
3. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?

Show them the Wendy's advertisement

1. What are your immediate reactions to this outdoor advertisement? Do you think it's effective?
2. Is the language used in this advertisement familiar to you?
 - a. *Probe:* How do you feel about companies taking common phrases like "Said no one ever" and applying them to their brand for advertising purposes?
1. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?

Show them the Applebee's Fancy Like advertisement

1. What is your immediate reaction to this advertisement?
2. Does the song choice change the effectiveness of the ad?
 - a. *Probe:* Does the song used make you more or less likely to go to Applebee's?
3. How do you feel about the language used in the song that plays in the background of this ad?
 - a. *Probe:* Is the language conducive to an effective ad?
4. How do you feel about a brand taking a trend off TikTok, or even using the TikToks themselves, to advertise?
4. Would this advertisement stick with you after viewing it?
 - a. *Probe:* If so, would it stick with you in a good way or a bad way?

Closing questions

1. Did any of the advertisements we looked at today relate to you?
2. Were there any advertisements that you really didn't like?

3. In general, do you think it is a good idea for brands to use dialect language like this?
4. Are advertisements using slang on Twitter different than those on more traditional outlets like television? How so?
 - a. *Probe:* Or is slang pretty much the same on every platform?
5. Any final thoughts you didn't get the chance to share?

Appendix D

Perceptual Statistics

Table D1

Perceptions of Fashion Nova AAVE Codeswitched Advertisement

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
Participant 1	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 2	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 3	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 4	Negative	Less likely	Wouldn't stick
Participant 5	Negative	Less likely	Wouldn't stick
Participant 6	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 7	Positive	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 8	Indifferent	More likely	Wouldn't stick
Participant 9	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 10	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 11	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 12	Positive	More likely	Good way
Percentages	66% indifferent 16% positive 16% negative	66% not affected 16% more likely 16% less likely	8% positive stick 92% wouldn't stick

Table D2

Perceptions of Infiniti/Erin Andrews AAVE Codeswitched Advertisement

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
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Participant 1	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 2	Negative	Unsure	Bad way
Participant 3	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 4	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 5	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 6	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 7	Negative	Not affect	Bad way
Participant 8	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 9	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 10	Negative	Not affect	Bad way
Participant 11	Negative	Not affect	Bad way
Participant 12	Positive	More likely	Good way
Percentages	8% positive 92% negative	58% not affected/unsure 8% more likely 33% less likely	25% wouldn't stick 8% good way 66% bad way

Table D3

Perceptions of Reebok/Cardi B AAVE Codeswitched Advertisement

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
Participant 1	Indifferent	Not affect	N/A
Participant 2	Negative	Not affect	N/A
Participant 3	Negative	Not affect	N/A
Participant 4	Indifferent	More likely	N/A
Participant 5	Indifferent	More likely	N/A
Participant 6	Indifferent	Not affect	Neutral stick
Participant 7	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 8	Indifferent	Not affect	Neutral stick

Participant 9	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 10	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 11	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 12	Negative	Less likely	Wouldn't stick
Percentages	66% indifferent 33% negative	75% not affected 16% more likely 8% less likely	29% neutral stick 71% wouldn't stick

Note: In this table, N/A means the question was not sufficiently answered to provide a marker.

Table D4

Perceptions of Warner Music/Charli XCX AAVE Codeswitched Advertisement

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
Participant 1	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 2	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 3	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 4	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 5	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 6	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 7	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 8	Indifferent	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 9	Negative	Less likely	Bad way
Participant 10	Negative	Not affect	Bad way
Participant 11	Negative	Not affect	Wouldn't stick
Participant 12	Positive	More likely	Good way
Percentages	16% indifferent 8% positive 75% negative	42% not affected 50% less likely 8% more likely	33% wouldn't stick 8% good way 58% bad way

Table D5*Perceptions of Wendy's Comparison Advertisement*

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
Participant 1	Positive	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 2	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 3	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 4	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 5	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 6	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 7	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 8	Indifferent	N/A	Good way
Participant 9	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 10	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 11	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 12	Indifferent	N/A	Good way
Percentages	92% indifferent 8% positive		84% wouldn't stick 16% good way

Note: In this table, N/A means the corresponding question was not asked.

Table D6*Perceptions of Applebee's AAVE Codeswitched Advertisement*

	Reaction (negative, positive, indifferent)	Spending Habits (not affect, less/more likely to buy)	Sticking Power (wouldn't stick, good way, bad way, neutral stick)
Participant 1	Negative	N/A	Neutral stick
Participant 2	Indifferent	N/A	Neutral stick
Participant 3	Indifferent	N/A	Neutral stick
Participant 4	Indifferent	N/A	Good way

Participant 5	Indifferent	N/A	Neutral stick
Participant 6	Indifferent	N/A	Good way
Participant 7	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 8	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 9	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 10	Indifferent	N/A	Wouldn't stick
Participant 11	Indifferent	N/A	Good way
Participant 12	Positive	N/A	Good way
Percentages	83% indifferent 8% positive 8% negative		33% neutral stick 33% good way 33% wouldn't stick

Note: In this table, N/A means the corresponding question was not asked.

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