

Gambling and the Illusion of Control: A Linguistic Analysis of Agency in Nigerian Skits

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Abstract

Drama skit is a popular medium in contemporary Nigerian digital entertainment that often presents betting as a pathway to success by utilizing linguistic strategies that captivate participants to make outcomes seem controllable despite inherent risks. There seems to be an overestimation of the gambler's ability to control certain outcomes despite gambling being an activity inherently rooted in chance. This study therefore, explores the linguistic strategies employed in drama skits that promote gambling and their role in perpetuating the illusion of control among audiences. Hence this paper, within qualitative research method, purposively explores one skit each of the following drama skit makers: Sabinus, Dino Suregod, Viper the Wiper, and Brain Jotter because they boasted higher viewership; how they frame gambling as an activity where skill and personal agency can influence outcomes, despite its inherently random nature; the linguistic strategies employed in the skits as portrayal of agency, decision making, and success in gambling related narratives within the theoretical frameworks of Ellen Langer's Illusion of Control Theory and Erving Goffman's Framing Theory. The findings reveal that these skits linguistically reframe gambling as a strategic act, downplaying randomness and risk while foregrounding personal choice and effort. They also reveal that skits frequently employ emotionally charged narratives to build the construct in gamblers as empowered agents, strategically navigating their way to success. The study contributes to discussions on the socio-ethical implications of media content and societal impact of gambling promotions, offering insights into the complex relationship between language, agency, and audience manipulation.

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Introduction

In the last few years, the Nigerian digital landscape has witnessed a significant transformation in entertainment consumption and production, particularly with the proliferation of comedy skits on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (Ojomo and Sodeinde, 2021). Among the dominant themes emerging from these digital contents is the narrative of gambling as a viable, and sometimes, glorified means of achieving financial breakthrough. Betting companies like Bet9ja, NairaBet, and SportyBet have not only entrenched themselves in the Nigerian socio-economic ecosystem but have also found cultural reinforcement through comedy skits that project gambling as a legitimate hustle. These skits, often infused with humour and relatable day-to-day struggles, subtly or overtly frame gambling as a rational decision, a necessary strategy, and an empowering act of agency rather than a game of chance. This cultural shift has enormous implications for how ordinary Nigerians, especially youths, perceive risk, agency, and economic success.

According to Collins and Barr (2001) in Bulwer (2003), Gambling is “an activity where two or more parties place at risk something of value (Stakes) in hope of winning something of greater value (the prize), where the outcome depends on the outcome of the events which are unknown to the participants at the time of the bet (result)” (p. 26). In other words, gambling is a game of probability and uncertainty, and hence, traditionally, Nigerian societies, being rooted in religious, moral, and communal values, have not embraced it as a normative path to wealth. In times past, success was tied to hard work, education, entrepreneurship, and divine providence. However, contemporary economic hardships, rising unemployment, and the lure of instant gratification have paved the way for the normalization of gambling, particularly sports betting, among young people (Olaore & Adejare, & Udofia, 2021). While numerous factors influence individuals' preferences for certain types of gambling, such as personality traits, motivations (Balodis et al., 2014; Binde, 2013), cultural or societal influences (Raylu & Oei, 2004;

Tanioka, 2000), and developmental stage (Griffiths, 2002), certain gambling forms are more strongly linked to problem gambling than others (Abbott & Volberg, 1999; Binde, 2011). According to Griffiths et al. (2009), the likelihood of addiction in a specific gambling activity is shaped by two main components: (1) contextual factors, like its availability (Storer et al. 2009; Welte et al., 2007) or ease of access (Hing & Haw, 2009; Thomas et al. 2008), and (2) structural elements, including how quickly rewards are given (Chóliz, 2010) and the pace and repetition rate of play (Parke & Griffiths, 2007). What is striking in the current trend is not just the rising numbers of gamblers but the manner in which digital media, especially skit-making, has come to play a pivotal role in constructing gambling as a domain of personal agency.

Oloruntoba-Oju & Osuolale-Ajayi, (2022) observe that skits now permeate the global digital landscape, particularly across social media platforms, and Africa is actively participating in this surge of digital content creation and engagement. Nigerian skit makers such as De General, Dezny FC, Viper the Wiper, and Brain Jotter have become household names, wielding considerable influence on digital platforms. Their contents often dramatize economic hardship, street-smart survival, and the desire to "make it" in an unforgiving society. Within this narrative arc, gambling is often introduced as a plot device that leads to resolution or comic relief. While this may appear harmless or merely entertaining, the underlying linguistic structures, character portrayal, and discourse cues suggest something more: a reframing of gambling as an intelligent choice made by competent agents, not as an irrational risk or addiction.

The manipulation of language in these skits is critical to this reframing. Words, phrases, tone, and context combine to construct gamblers as individuals in control of outcomes, capable of predicting, calculating, and even influencing results. Phrases like "this one sure," "na my turn to win," or "God no go shame us" are common linguistic markers in these skits, emphasizing certainty, destiny, and personal empowerment. Such expressions reinforce Ellen Langer's concept of the illusion of control, where individuals overestimate their ability to control events that are fundamentally random. The skits do not just entertain; they also function as sites of ideological production where linguistic strategies are deployed to shape and direct audience beliefs and attitudes.

This study draws attention to the subtle but potent ways language is used to construct agency in gambling narratives within Nigerian skits. Agency, in linguistic terms, refers to the capacity of subjects to act and effect change within discourse. In these skits, the gambler is not portrayed as a passive victim of chance but as an active player, often heroic, clever, or at least hopeful, who navigates the odds with wit, prayers, or street-smart tactics. This construction has implications for how audiences interpret their own agency in socio-economic pursuits, including gambling. It also raises

questions about ethical media practices, the commercialization of hope, and the role of humour in normalizing behaviours that carry significant risk.

Furthermore, the framing of gambling as a strategic act, rather than a stochastic one, aligns with broader discourses in neoliberal economies where individuals are seen as autonomous, rational actors responsible for their own success or failure (Dixon, 2000). The language in these skits often downplays systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and structural inequality, and instead focuses on personal decisions and actions. This ideological underpinning suggests that anyone can win if they try hard enough, think smartly, or believe strongly. This is an idea that resonates deeply in a society where upward mobility is both highly desired and rarely achieved through conventional means.

The popularity of these skits also highlights the evolving function of language in digital media spaces. No longer confined to traditional forms of storytelling, language in digital skits is dynamic, multimodal, and interactive. It incorporates elements of Nigerian Pidgin, English, code-switching, and culturally specific idioms to reach a broad and diverse audience. These linguistic features do more than entertain; they also serve as rhetorical tools that construct specific identities, realities, and possibilities. In the case of gambling-related skits, they construct a world where luck is skill, and risk is minimized through cleverness or faith. Additionally, the socio-economic context within which these skits are consumed cannot be ignored. Nigeria's youth unemployment rate remains staggeringly high, with limited access to opportunities for meaningful employment or wealth creation. In this context, skits that depict betting as a shortcut to success resonate powerfully. The linguistic choices within the skits, therefore, do not occur in a vacuum—they reflect and reinforce prevailing anxieties, hopes, and coping strategies among viewers. The illusion of control becomes not just a psychological phenomenon but a linguistic and cultural artifact reproduced in everyday discourse.

Moreover, there is a performative element to how these narratives unfold in skits. Characters are often exaggerated caricatures of everyday Nigerians, such as job seekers, okada riders, street traders, et cetera, who turn to gambling not just out of desperation but with a sense of strategic flair or divine assurance. The gambler's journey is dramatized as a form of resistance against societal limitations, and language is the primary vehicle through which this resistance is expressed. Irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, and dramatic monologues are used to blur the line between fiction and reality, creating a space where the audience is both entertained and ideologically positioned.

In light of these complexities, this study seeks to interrogate the linguistic strategies deployed in Nigerian skits that construct gambling as a space of agency and control. It aims to uncover how such constructions perpetuate the illusion of control and what implications they hold for broader societal understandings of risk, responsibility, and reward. Also, this

research engages with critical questions: How is agency linguistically encoded in gambling-related skits? What discourse strategies are employed to reframe gambling as a rational or heroic act? How do humour, irony, and cultural referencing contribute to this reframing? And what are the broader implications of these linguistic choices on audience perception and societal attitudes toward gambling? By answering these questions, the study hopes to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on language and media ethics in Nigeria's digital age, while foregrounding the subtle yet powerful role of language in constructing social reality.

The Socio-Cultural Frame of Gambling in Nigeria

In Nigeria, gambling has evolved from a marginal practice often associated with suspicion and moral disdain into a mainstream socio-economic activity (Temitope 2019; Omanchi and Okpamen 2018). Aguocha and George (2021) note that in the late 1990s, in chapter 22, section 236 of the Criminal Code Act, the Nigerian government legalized certain forms of gambling in an attempt to generate tax revenue. They opine that this has made gambling "more acceptable to the public, especially to the underaged" (p. 30). However, this evolution is also intricately tied to changing cultural values, the economic precarity of the masses, and the increasing penetration of digital technologies. Once viewed as a vice reserved for the morally irresponsible or financially reckless, gambling has been rebranded in many circles as a tool for economic survival and social advancement. This rebranding is not merely an economic phenomenon; rather, it is a cultural and linguistic transformation that reflects deeper shifts in how Nigerians understand agency, risk, and opportunity in a rapidly changing society.

In traditional Nigerian societies, wealth was primarily acquired through communal labor, trade, agriculture, craftsmanship, and later through formal education and civil service. These pathways were culturally sanctioned and reinforced through religious teachings and communal expectations. Gambling, by contrast, was often seen as deviant behavior, associated with laziness, theft, or spiritual corruption. Religious institutions, both Christian and Islamic, frequently condemned gambling as morally and spiritually destructive (Aguocha and George, 2021). However, as Nigeria's economic reality deteriorated, especially with the collapse of industrial productivity, the informalization of the labor sector, and the rise of structural unemployment, new narratives of economic empowerment began to emerge, narratives in which gambling played a central role.

Today, the image of the gambler is no longer solely that of the reckless individual courting ruin, but of the ordinary man or woman desperately trying to navigate a rigged system. In a country where more than 60% of the population is under 30 and youth unemployment hovers around 35%, gambling, particularly sports betting, has come to be seen as a relatively accessible, low-barrier means of achieving financial independence (Fajana, 2023). This perception is especially strong among urban youth, many of whom lack access to

stable income, quality education, or functional social support systems. For these young people, the betting shop becomes a site of hope, resilience, and imagined upward mobility.

The socio-cultural framing of gambling in Nigeria is also deeply influenced by religious fatalism and cultural ideas of destiny (Adebisi and Bunn, 2023). Many bettors believe that luck is a form of divine favour and that winning is a result of spiritual alignment rather than mathematical probability (Egbujo, 2025; Botfu, 2023). In this context, gambling is not entirely viewed as a game of chance but as a kind of spiritual contest, where faith, prophecy, or ritual can influence outcomes. This belief is often reflected in the language of everyday bettors who speak of "receiving grace," "tapping into favor," or "claiming victory" as though they were invoking a religious miracle. This spiritual framing of gambling has filtered into popular media and comedy skits, where prayers, religious icons, and divine invocations are frequently embedded into the gambling narrative.

Moreover, the societal normalization of gambling is aided by its visibility and accessibility. Betting centers are often more ubiquitous than banks or schools in some neighborhoods, and mobile apps allow for 24/7 participation in gambling activities (Gbadegesin and Akintunde, 2024). With celebrity endorsements, billboard advertisements, social media promotions, and digital skits portraying gambling in humorous or heroic light, the practice is increasingly woven into the cultural fabric. Gambling is no longer something done in secrecy or shame; it is flaunted, shared, and celebrated, often with exaggerated tales of success that obscure the overwhelming statistical reality of loss.

The linguistic construction of gambling as a positive or heroic act cannot be divorced from the cultural pressure to perform successfully. In a society where respect and influence are tied to material wealth, there is constant pressure on young men and women to "make it," to project the image of achievement even when the reality is far from it (Aondowase et al, 2023). Gambling provides not only the illusion of control but also the illusion of imminent transformation (Urien, 2025). This dual illusion of agency and reward resonates with the public imagination, particularly through media content that dramatizes and affirms these beliefs. Skits, in particular, have become instrumental in narrating and popularizing this imagined trajectory from poverty to prosperity ("Social Media's Role").

The socio-cultural frame is further reinforced by language. In everyday conversations, phrases like "na hustle," "e fit pay," and "sharp sharp money" denote gambling as part of a legitimate economic practice. These expressions not only normalize gambling, but they also valorize it (Owonikoko, 2020). By equating betting with hustling, the practice becomes embedded in the Nigerian ethos of survivalism. It ceases to be a taboo and becomes just another strategy in a society that rewards ingenuity and perseverance; however risky or ethically ambiguous that strategy may be.

It is also crucial to recognize the communal dynamics around gambling. While the act may be individual, its framing is communal. Friends share bet slips, celebrate winnings together, and console each other in losses. In urban slums and university hostels, betting syndicates and tip-sharing groups function almost like social clubs. The collective discourse surrounding gambling, often marked by shared language and shared dreams, deepens its cultural entrenchment. The illusion of control is not just personal; it is collectively reinforced through storytelling, peer validation, and community affirmation.

Furthermore, Nigerian society is experiencing a rapid shift in its cultural values under the influence of globalization, digital capitalism, and social media culture. The concept of “overnight success” has become glamorized, often with little concern for the means by which it is attained. In this context, gambling fits neatly into a new moral framework where ends justify means, and where success is judged by visibility, consumption, and social validation rather than by the ethics of labor. Skit creators tap into this ethos, constructing characters who win big and are immediately transformed, financially, socially, and even romantically, into figures of admiration.

In summary, the socio-cultural frame of gambling in Nigeria is complex and ingrained in the nation’s economic, religious, and cultural psyche. It is a frame that has evolved, shaped by systemic failures, digital proliferation, and linguistic redefinition. Through skits and other popular media, this frame is not only maintained but celebrated, creating a powerful discourse in which gambling is seen as a viable and even noble path to success. It is within this complex matrix of culture, language, and media that this study locates its analysis, aiming to uncover how linguistic strategies sustain and magnify the illusion of control in gambling narratives across Nigerian skits.

Langer’s Illusion of Control & Goffman’s Framing Theory

This study is anchored on two interrelated theoretical lenses: Ellen Langer’s Illusion of Control Theory and Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory. Together, these frameworks offer a stout analytical foundation for understanding how language within Nigerian comedy skits constructs and manipulates perceptions of gambling, agency, and outcome predictability.

Ellen Langer’s Illusion of Control Theory

In her seminal 1975 article “The Illusion of Control,” Ellen J. Langer investigates a cognitive bias wherein individuals believe they have control over outcomes that are, in reality, determined by chance. Langer defines the illusion of control as the “expectancy of a personal success probability inappropriately higher than the objective probability would warrant.” Through six experiments conducted in both lab and field settings, she systematically explores how people exhibit skill-like behavior even in purely chance-based scenarios:

- **Competition** (Study 1): Participants bet more when facing an awkward opponent, interpreting the chance-based card game as a skill contest.
- **Choice** (Studies 2 & 3): Merely choosing a lottery ticket increases its subjective value, suggesting participants believe their involvement enhances their chances of winning.
- **Familiarity** (Study 3): When symbols on lottery tickets were familiar, participants were more likely to retain them, indicating heightened perceived control.
- **Involvement** (Studies 4–6): Both active (making the move oneself) and passive (being exposed to ticket information over time) involvement increased participants' confidence in winning.

Importantly, Langer proposes that these skill-related factors trigger “a schema of competence and agency”, leading individuals to behave as though they are engaging in tasks requiring ability, even when the situation is purely probabilistic. The theory is underpinned by the psychological need for mastery and control. Langer argues that this misattribution of control arises not merely from irrationality, but from a deeper psychological need for agency. People are motivated to feel in control of their environment as a way to mitigate anxiety and uncertainty. This motivation, combined with the structural similarity between skill and chance situations, causes individuals to transfer their expectations and behaviors from the former to the latter, even when inappropriate.

In the context of gambling, Langer’s theory becomes especially relevant. Gamblers often believe they can predict outcomes, employ strategies, or influence results, despite the fundamentally random nature of the games they participate in. This belief is not just psychological but is often reinforced by social and cultural narratives that valorize risk-taking and reward intuition or intelligence. Nigerian skits, which frequently portray gamblers as clever or spiritually guided individuals who beat the odds, serve as discursive platforms for perpetuating this illusion. Through humor, dramatization, and linguistic framing, these skits create scenarios where gamblers appear to succeed based on wit, effort, or divine favor, thus encouraging viewers to adopt similar perceptions. Langer’s theory allows for the examination of how specific linguistic strategies serve to construct a sense of control in the viewer’s mind. These expressions not only reinforce the gambler’s perceived competence but also suggest that success is attainable with the right mindset or actions. Thus, the illusion of control is not merely a mental construct but a communicative outcome shaped by language and performance.

Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory

Complementing Langer’s theory is Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory, which provides a socio-discursive lens for

understanding how events and experiences are organized and interpreted through particular perspectives or “frames.” In “Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience” (1974), Erving Goffman introduces framing theory as a way to understand how individuals structure their experience and interpret events. He defines a “frame” as a set of interpretive schemata that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their lived reality. Frames help organize social experience and guide action by establishing what is considered real, appropriate, or meaningful within a particular context. One of Goffman’s major concerns is how individuals come to apply the “correct” frame to a situation and how easily this framing can be disrupted. He observes:

From an individual’s particular point of view, while one thing may momentarily appear to be what is really going on, in fact, what is actually happening is plainly a joke, or a dream, or an accident, or a mistake, or a misunderstanding, or a deception.... (p. 10)

This suggests that our grasp of reality is contingent, unstable, and often vulnerable to reinterpretation. Goffman uses the term “strip” to refer to a segment of experience, whether real or fictive, that becomes the object of framing. The richness of this theory lies in its attention to how everyday experiences are layered and refracted through multiple potential readings, some immediate and habitual, others strategic or subversive. He also incorporates ‘metacommunication’, drawing on Gregory Bateson’s insight that communication often contains implicit messages about how to interpret itself. Goffman submits that what people do is shaped not just by what is being communicated, but by how it is framed as meaningful or real.

In the realm of comedy skits, framing operates as a compelling framework that influences how viewers interpret gambling behaviors and outcomes. Skit makers use narrative structure, visual metaphors, humor, and especially language to frame gambling not as a reckless gamble but as a calculated risk or a form of economic resistance. The skits may portray gambling as an everyday hustle, an act of intelligence, or even a moral victory, depending on how the scene is structured and the dialogue delivered.

Goffman’s theory helps unpack how these skits function as performative texts that mediate the audience’s perception of reality. The gambler character is often framed not as a victim of randomness but as an active agent capable of influencing outcomes. Even in situations where loss is depicted, it is often framed humorously or philosophically, thus softening the impact and maintaining the frame of gambling as acceptable and potentially rewarding. When applied together, Langer’s and Goffman’s theories provide a multidimensional approach to the analysis of gambling skits. While Langer explains the internalized cognitive bias that makes individuals believe in their control over uncertain outcomes, Goffman elucidates

the external communicative strategies that construct and reinforce such beliefs. By grounding this study in these frameworks, the research is equipped to interrogate the complex interplay between cognition, language, and media in constructing the illusion of control in contemporary Nigerian digital entertainment.

Profiles of Selected Skit Creators

To critically engage with the linguistic construction of agency in gambling-themed digital narratives, this study purposively selects four Nigerian skit creators whose content consistently garners high viewership and reflects relevant socio-economic themes. These creators: Viper the Wiper, Brain Jotter, Dino Suregod, and Sabinus represent a cross-section of contemporary Nigerian digital comedy, characterized by streetwise humor, relatable hardship, and moral ambiguity. Each skit maker is briefly profiled below to contextualize their influence and relevance to the study.

1. Viper the Wiper

Viper the Wiper is a Nigerian skit maker known for his chaotic, absurdist humor and streetwise narratives. His content often blends superstition, risk-taking, and economic desperation, reflecting the hustler ethos of urban Nigerian youth.

2. Brain Jotter (Chukwuebuka Emmanuel Amuzie)

Brain Jotter is a popular Nigerian comedian and skit creator recognized for his slapstick humor, exaggerated mannerisms, and catchphrases. His skits often parody everyday life and social expectations, with a focus on survival in a dysfunctional society.

3. Dino Suregod

Dino Suregod is a rising Nigerian content creator whose skits revolve around relationship drama, moral dilemmas, and comedic deception. His performances typically feature fast-paced storytelling and spontaneous character improvisation.

4. Sabinus (Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Ejekwu)

Sabinus, also known as Mr. Funny, is an award-winning Nigerian comedian and skit maker known for his bumbling character, distinctive blue shirt, and exaggerated reactions. His skits explore themes of greed, bad luck, and societal satire, earning him wide acclaim both online and offline.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative research approach. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select and analyze four skits from the official social media platforms of De General, Dezny FC, Viper the Wiper, and Brain Jotter. The data is drawn from the transcribed texts of the skits, with analysis guided by Ellen Langer’s Illusion of Control Theory and Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory.

Analysis and Discussions

Content one – Viper the Wiper

During a narration to a therapist about the absurd and unceasing demands of his pregnant wife, the skit maker highlights a major incident that was the most painful to him:

E get one wey pain me, e pain me well well. Somebody tell me about 1xbet and said 1xbet is the most reliable betting platform. He said that if I bet with 1xbet with the promocode "VIPERS" in capital letters, they will give me 300% bonus, na so I come go bet register use promocode and everything, I too confident because if I lose, they will give me 20% back so I no shake.

However, when he was watching the football match, he placed a bet on it, but his wife interrupted him, telling him that the baby in her womb wants to play with the football being used on the football field. The skit ends a few minutes later with his wife entering labour during their session with the therapist.

In this skit, Viper the Wiper recounts an incident involving his pregnant wife's absurd behavior as the *emotional setup* for a 1xbet promotion. Though the complaint is ostensibly about spousal stress, it pivots to an advertisement where the skit-maker declares: "somebody tell me about 1xbet and said 1xbet is the most reliable betting platform... I too confident because if I lose, they will give me 20% back so I no shake." This transition is abrupt and logically fragmented. There is no functional link between the wife's interruption and the actual outcome of the bet. Yet, this lack of causality is linguistically masked by emotive narration, particularly the phrase: "E pain me, e pain me well well."

This emotional marker reframes the bet loss as a result of external emotional trauma, not random chance, thereby activating Langer's Illusion of Control. The skit-maker positions himself as someone who had a rational plan- he used a promo code, was aware of cashback benefits, and was confident. All markers of calculated, strategic action. Through this, we observe the core mechanism of the illusion: he constructs a false schema of agency, suggesting he did everything right and was sabotaged by his wife's demands, not probability.

From a Goffmanian lens, the therapy setting is a framing device. Therapy implies emotional damage, stress, and a desire for closure. This frame justifies the dramatization of the gambling loss as a life-altering experience. The viewer is invited to empathize with a man broken by "misfortune," not by his own gambling choices. His use of code-switching and street-speak ("I no shake," "e pain me well well") helps lower the cognitive barrier, inviting informal agreement from an audience familiar with similar frustrations. Moreover, the wife's bizarre claim: "the baby wants to play with the football", is absurd, almost surreal. This heightens the comic tone, yet beneath it lies a subtle blame-shifting rhetoric. The skit manipulates humor to conceal the randomness of

gambling, and reinforce the fantasy that had the wife not intervened, he would have won.

Content Two: Brain Jotter

The narrative in this skit follows Brain Jotter's humorous and surreal encounter with a seductive woman who turns out to be a snake—literally. Despite clear supernatural red flags, he willingly brings her home, and when she transforms, instead of fleeing or reacting in fear, he nonchalantly engages her, undresses, and proceeds as if nothing is unusual. The climax shows a disheveled post-transformation moment, followed abruptly by Brain Jotter turning to the camera and pitching 1xbet, urging viewers to bet on UEFA Champions League matches.

The jarring transition from a comical-paranormal sexual encounter to a sports betting promo is absurd and entirely illogical. The story contains no football, no actual bet placement, and no consequence of betting, yet the skit uses the comedic momentum to insert a well-rehearsed gambling advert. There is no narrative causality or thematic bridge between the skit's events and the betting promotion. This lack of coherence, however, is precisely what makes the advertising effective; it hijacks the viewer's emotional investment and injects a commercial message under the guise of comedic continuity.

Bet on UEFA champion's League matches on 1xbet and get a share of the 350,000 dollars prize, register on 1xbet with my promo code JOTTERS, and you get 300% bonus on your first time deposit. Place bets on UEFA Champions League matches and get promo tickets. Unlock Club Achievements and take part in the prize draw.

Here, Brain Jotter's skit showcases a narrative hijack, where a surreal and humorous event is interrupted by a direct-to-camera gambling pitch. The comedic climax - a woman-snake hybrid accusing Brain Jotter of indecency- is immediately followed by a confident monologue promoting 1xbet. Despite the total disconnect, Brain Jotter's tone, body language, and verbal certainty carry over into the betting promo, allowing the illusion of control to piggyback on the comedic authority just established. This continuity in tone subconsciously validates the message, even if logically, nothing connects.

From Langer's Illusion of Control Theory, the illusion is not built through a storyline of strategic betting, but through the confidence of the speaker. Brain Jotter offers: "Register with my promo code JOTTERS and get 300% bonus..." The use of personalized promo code, combined with phrases like "get a share of 350,000 dollars," constructs a reward schema, where viewers feel that participation equals access. Despite the randomness of gambling, the promo suggests a linear path from action to reward—thus sustaining the illusion of control.

From Goffman's Framing Theory, Brain Jotter frames the advert as an extension of the joke. The comedic setting primes the viewer to lower cognitive resistance, making the

transition into the advertisement feel like part of the entertainment. This is metacommunication in action: the skit says, *this is a joke*, and then slyly says, *this is serious*, *register with my code*. The audience is caught in a frame shift without even realizing it.

Furthermore, modality markers like “get a share,” “register now,” and “unlock achievements” all imply certainty and agency, masking the stochastic nature of betting. Linguistically, these are directive and assertive speech acts, promoting the belief that taking action will yield definite outcomes.

Content 3: Dino Suregod

In this skit by Dino Suregod, the storyline builds tension around suspected infidelity, with the girlfriend catching Dino in compromising situations. Each time, his friends or circumstances help him escape trouble. Just when the third scenario (a sexually suggestive moment in an office) is about to hit its climax, which is his wife opening the door, the narrative is suspended, and Dino breaks the fourth wall with a lengthy and scripted betting advert for 1xbet.

This pivot is abrupt and completely unrelated to the infidelity narrative. The viewer is primed to see conflict, confrontation, or resolution, but instead gets a sales pitch. There’s no mention of football, gambling, or even financial stress that might justify inserting the betting content. Worse still, the skit resumes after the advert, creating an awkward narrative fracture. What this reveals is a commercial intrusion, masked as continuity. The storyline becomes a vehicle, not for plot development, but for commercial interruption. And yet, through language, tone, and framing, the skit sustains viewer engagement and smuggles in ideological reinforcement—that betting is smart, profitable, and exciting.

Yeah, what’s up guys, are you looking to take your betting game to the next level? You need to check out 1xbet. It is an ultimate platform for sport betting and casino games right here in Nigeria. And with it you can bet on all your favourite sports with the best odds in the market, plus the casino is packed with exciting games from slot to [...] and here is something you don’t want to miss, its bonus for active players on 1x free bet. And it is simple from Tuesdays to Mondays. You need to place a single bet of at least 2 dollars on a correct score of any sport event. For this, 1xbet will automatically reward you a free bet up to 7 dollars every Tuesday based on your previous week’s bet. The higher you bet, the bigger the free bet amount you will receive. So what are you waiting for? Click the link and register on my promo code 1xDINO24 and get 700,000 Naira and 150 for free spin and don’t forget to take part in the 1x free promo and win with 1xbet. So, let’s start betting.

Dino’s abrupt shift into advertising begins with the conversational hook: “Yeah, what’s up guys, are you looking

to take your betting game to the next level?” This line breaks the narrative and introduces Goffman’s reframing, from fiction to promotional reality. The speaker no longer plays Dino the boyfriend; he becomes Dino the influencer. The skit becomes meta-discursive: it comments on itself and shifts to a commercial truth frame.

From Langer’s Illusion of Control Theory, the illusion is fostered through structured reward language: “best odds in the market”, “free bet up to 7 dollars”, “the higher you bet, the bigger the free bet”, and “700,000 Naira and 150 free spins”. These phrases build a predictable reward schema, which is bet more, get more. This gives viewers the impression that outcomes are proportional to effort (or stake), a classic cognitive distortion of randomness. The skit’s linguistic structure downplays chance, replacing it with calculated strategy and gamified achievement (e.g., “correct score,” “1x free promo”). The constant use of imperative commands: “click the link,” “register,” “get,” “start betting” reinforces agency. These directives construct the viewer as someone in control, capable of winning, deciding, and mastering the system.

From Goffman’s perspective, the sudden break in narrative also functions as a frame shift, disrupting the fictional context to invoke a “real-life” opportunity. This technique is strategic: by breaking character, Dino implies authenticity, that this part is no longer acting but genuine advice. After the advert, the story resumes without explanation, heightening the surreal feel. The audience has now internalized the advert’s message, sandwiched between the comedy.

Content Four: Sabinus

The fourth skit featuring Sabinus is perhaps the most rhetorically dense of the four because it wraps gambling into a backstory. The skit starts with an aged father, nearing death, calling a family meeting to distribute his wealth among his wives and children. This is an emotionally and culturally charged setting, invoking seriousness, tradition, and finality. Yet, instead of narrating a credible journey of hard work or resilience, the man reveals:

You see after my business started shaking and having issues a friend of mine introduce me to Betfuse. A sport prediction channel where they give sure prediction that hardly fails. All you need is just to click the link on the bio, it will take you to their telegram channel, you collect predictions that are very sure and accurate. You play and you win. I stake high and I win high and I used it to invest in my business empire, so that how I made my money.

This supposed financial testimony is bizarrely placed in what should be a moral or ancestral moment. The skit uses the solemnity of a deathbed confession to lend weight and legitimacy to a sports betting channel. Worse still, the narrative derails completely when it’s revealed Sabinus is not even the man’s biological child, but the offspring of his dwarf

gatekeeper. Thus, the testimonial about Betfuse serves no logical function in the plot. It doesn't affect inheritance, explain character relationships, or resolve the drama. It's inserted purely for commercial propaganda, thinly veiled as patriarchal advice.

The illusion of control here is constructed through testimonial authority. The aged father assumes the role of a *custodian of wisdom*, and within that frame, he inserts the Betfuse advert: "You collect predictions that are very sure and accurate. You play, and you win." Here, Langer's Illusion of Control is at play. The man claims that the predictions "hardly fail" because they are "very sure and accurate", and that high stakes guarantee high returns. These statements erase the role of probability, presenting gambling not as chance-based, but as a scientific system that rewards certainty. By embedding this in a backstory of business success, the skit linguistically constructs gambling as a *financial foundation*, not a vice. This is especially dangerous because it draws on cultural scripts of legacy and masculinity. The dying father rebrands luck-based profit as a wise investment, reinforcing a generational lie: that smart men play sports bets.

From Goffman's Framing Theory, the skit uses a setting where legacies are passed, children are guided, and final words matter. This frame primes the audience to accept whatever is being said as truth. When that "truth" is a Betfuse endorsement, the ideological manipulation becomes clear.

Linguistically, the skit uses assertive declaratives ("you collect predictions that are very sure") and causal links ("I used it to invest in my empire") to simulate a cause-and-effect relationship between betting and wealth. There is no room for failure or doubt in the narrative. The authority of the speaker compensates for the irrationality of the claim.

The skit ends with a twist—not by debunking the father's testimony about Betfuse, but by shifting the dramatic focus from wealth creation to paternity scandal. The revelation that Sabinus is not his biological son does not contradict the father's account of how he acquired his riches; instead, it redirects the audience's attention, creating a layered comedic climax. The credibility of the betting narrative remains intact within the skit's logic. In fact, the absurdity of the situation may further normalize the betting claim by burying it under emotional drama, allowing the promotional message to pass uncontested and unchallenged.

Conclusion

This study has examined how Nigerian digital comedy skits strategically deploy language to perpetuate the illusion of control in gambling narratives. Through the analysis of skits by Viper the Wiper, Brain Jotter, Dino Suregod, and Sabinus, the research demonstrates that the integration of sports betting promotions into unrelated comedic storylines is not merely a marketing gimmick, but a linguistic and ideological operation. These skits obscure the inherent randomness of gambling by embedding betting discourse within emotionally

charged, humorous, or morally framed narratives that present the gambler as an agent of control, not chance.

Anchored in Ellen Langer's Illusion of Control Theory and Erving Goffman's Framing Theory, the study shows that skit makers achieve this manipulation by reframing betting as calculable, strategic, and rewarding. The gamblers in these skits are not depicted as addicts or reckless individuals, but as smart, confident, and even visionary actors. Language features such as assertive declaratives, modality, personal testimony, and directive speech acts construct a distorted schema of agency and certainty. Humor and dramatic framing further conceal the probabilistic nature of gambling, making it appear like a viable hustle, even a noble pursuit.

This study reveals that these skits serve as discursive tools of normalization, promoting gambling not through reason, but through repetition, emotional alignment, and socio-cultural familiarity. This has significant implications for media ethics, youth perception, and public discourse in Nigeria. In a society already plagued by economic instability, high youth unemployment, and the search for shortcuts to success, such representations do not just entertain; they shape belief systems. The illusion of control, when linguistically crafted and culturally reinforced, becomes a powerful mechanism of audience manipulation, deserving of critical attention.

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