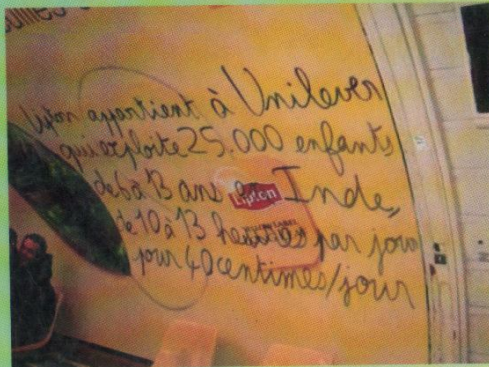


# STUDIES IN SLANG AND SLOGANS

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## 13

SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL  
CONTEXTS OF NUMBER PLATE  
SLOGANEERING IN NIGERIA*Mahfouz A. Adedimeji*

## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

Slogans are forms of a broader category of 'loaded language', the aim of which is "to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience" (Leech, 1966:25). They are distinctive phrases used in promoting or advertising distinctive phenomena (products, places, people/politicians and processes, and patterns). Slogans are at the borders of advertising and public relations as a typical slogan is intended to bring about "an alignment of public opinion with commercial interests" (Leech, *ibid*) and such may be political, commercial, religious or simply prestige. Based on the notions that 'perception is everything' and 'branding is the in-thing', individuals and organisations, institutions and nations often make recourse to sloganeering for the all important purpose of persuading an audience to respond in some way to do something or to believe something now or later (Rank, 1991:5). In Nigeria, prestige advertising emerged with the introduction of new number plates towards the end of the 20th century and the branding of each of the thirty-six states with slogans, emblazoned on the number plate of each state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Given the centrality of pragmatic presupposition and aspects of context foregrounding the coining of the slogans, this chapter examines the pragmatics of the number plate or state slogans using the two omnibus variables. Through presupposition and context, and the explication of their manifestation in the data, the chapter justifies the Yulean conception of pragmatics as "the study of how more gets communicated than is said" on one hand and as "the study of the contextual meaning" on the other (Yule, 1996a).

## 13.2 ADVERTISING AND SLOGANEERING: A CONCEPTUALIZATION

Advertising generally means any technique used for the promotion of goods, services and ideas through any medium of mass or public communication (Adedimeji, 2007:267). In other words, it is the structured and composed, non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive, in nature, about products (goods, services and ideas) (Afolabi, 2006:19). As a unit of persuasion, an advert is based on the premise that all people are benefit seekers, and it promises to grant them benefits in terms of protection, relief, acquisition and prevention or security (Rand, 1991: 7). To achieve its purpose, it must draw attention to itself, must sustain the interest it has attracted, must be remembered or at any rate recognised as familiar and must prompt the right kind of action (Leech, 1963: 27; Toolan, 1988:54). The five characteristics of the language that would make adverts achieve their purpose are attention value, catchiness, readerbility (or 'listenability'), memorability and selling power.

According to Odebunmi (2007:3), there are about six types of adverts. These are the consumer (adverts aimed at the public to purchase goods and services), retailer (those intended to attract consumers to buy products in shops), industrial (adverts meant for the promotion of machinery and technology products), financial (adverts that invite members of the public to patronise financial institutions), classified (specially published adverts in newspapers/magazines targeted at readers who are interested in certain products

and services) and public service adverts, which are made by "governments or its agencies giving information about issues affecting the welfare of the citizens" (Oyeleye, 1997:53).

Advertising dovetails to sloganeering, being one of the twenty-five forms of adverts (Alabi, 2007) and "slogans are very effective in the sense that they are memorable and easily identifiable with the brand name" (Adedimeji, 2007:268). A slogan is basically a short distinctive phrase used to identify an entity", a short catchy phrase used in advertising to promote something (*Encarta Dictionaries*, 2009). In other words, it is a striking memorable phrase used to advertise something or to make clear the aims of a group or organization. As "the greatest sin in advertising is not to be noticed" (Rank, 1991:29), slogans provide a platform upon which brands are noticeable and identifiable from the pack.

Slogans are attention getters, which trifurcate into: physical attention getters, emotional attention getters and cognitive attention getters. Physical attention getters are the simple perception of the incoming stimuli received by the senses, the orthography, font types, shapes, sizes and colours, as the case may be in slogans. The emotional attention getters are the category of words used which have strong emotional associations underpinning the emotive use of language. The cognitive attention getters are patterns that appeal to the intellect, which lead to the identification with the message and the curiosity to learn more. Most number plate slogans in Nigeria exploit emotional and cognitive attention getters.

### 13.3 PRESUPPOSITION AND CONTEXT IN PRAGMATICS

Most definitions of pragmatics equate it with speaker meaning (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983) and utterance interpretation (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Kempson, 1986). These two approaches are useful as they represent the social and cognitive perspectives of the subject of pragmatics, which Thomas (1993:2) construes as "meaning in interaction", a tripartite and dynamic process of negotiating meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance

(physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance. For any meaningful interaction to occur, assumptions are built on the common ground shared, known as presupposition, "something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance" (Yule, 1996a: 25), or what the speaker (or writer) assumes that the hearer (or reader) will see as part of the context in discourse (Odebunmi, 2001:16).

Two major types of presupposition are identifiable: semantic and pragmatic. Semantic presupposition refers to the logical relations that hold between sentences which are part of the sentence meaning (Adegbija, 1999; Osisanwo, 2003). It is concerned with the logical notion of the relation between the sentence and the world, which stipulates that in a given situation, the value of a sentence is either true or false (Mbisike, 2002: 224). To say that Abuja is the new capital of Nigeria semantically presupposes that Nigeria exists and that it has an old capital.

Pragmatic presupposition, on the other hand, refers to the conditions that the world must meet for an utterance to make literal sense (Adegbija, 1999). It is the totality of the assumptions and beliefs whose truth a speaker takes for granted. According to Stalnaker (1972), "to presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same".

To Yule (1996), presuppositions can also be existential (when a particular name or definite noun phrase is used), active (when active verbs like know, 'realise' and 'regret' are used to presuppose identified facts), lexical (when the choice of specific words presupposes unstated concepts), structural (when the form or structure of the sentence takes with itself its meaning potentials), non-factive when (the use of verbs associated with presuppositions are assumed to be unagreeable e.g. He dreamed he was a Governor, She imagined she would emerge the beauty queen; the Chairman pretends to be nice) and counter factive (when what is presupposed is not only untrue but contrary to facts, often introduced by the conditional if-clause construction: If I were you, I would not agree).

Pragmatic presuppositions make meaning within contexts. Context, generally, is the site in which a communicative event occurs (Crystal, 1987:48) or "the environment in which a word is used" (Yule, 1996a:128). It is also a term used to provide links between linguistic items and the social and situational factors of communication (Adegbite, 2000:64). It is technically constructed by Lyons (1977:572) as:

a theoretical construct in the postulation of which the linguist abstracts from the actual situation and establishes as contextual all the factors which, by virtue of their influence upon the participants in the language event, systematically determine the form and the appropriateness of the meaning of utterances.

There are four types of context, which are: the physical, the socio-cultural, the linguistic and the psychological (Adegbija, 1999:19). The physical context is the location or setting in which an utterance takes place or is applicable, a state, a town, a market, a room, etc. The socio-cultural context, is concerned with the cultures, values, customs, habits and beliefs of the participants in discourse, and how these interact within the communicative process. While the linguistic context concerns the words that occur in the verbal environment of an utterance (i.e. co-texts), the psychological context is the state of mind of the participants in a discourse event. All these are crucial to assuming a 'common ground' that presuppositions engender and they are pertinent to the inferential process of adducing to, or deducing from the meanings of utterances.

Hymes (1964) identifies features of context as participants, topic, setting, channel, code message form, and subsequently adds key and purpose to them (Brown and Yule, 1983). As pragmatic analysis essentially investigates "that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered" (Leech and Short, 1987:290), it goes without saying that a framework that adopts presupposition and context is viable in the explication of slogans. This position is justified by Yule (1996b:127) who

asserts that the study of 'invisible' meaning, or "how we recognise what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written)...must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations" based on "the context in which they occur" (Yule, 1996b:12).

### 13.4 BACKGROUND TO STATE CREATION AND NUMBER PLATE SLOGANS

Nigeria is a colonial creation, which has evolved through a gradual and systematic process. The geographical territory referred to as Nigeria today was made up of autonomous kingdoms, the caliphate and empires up till the 19th century. However, British imperialism that took a new turn in the last quarter of the 19th century as a series of events culminated in the creation of the multi religious, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic country, i.e. Nigeria, the most populous African nation.

The British attacked Lagos in 1851 by gunboats, and by 1861 had consolidated their victory and declared Lagos a colony. Series of campaigns were launched against the kingdoms and empires in the hinterland, and by the end of the 19th century, almost all what now constitutes Nigeria had effectively fallen under the British rule. Miss Flora Shaw, a correspondent of London Times, coined the word "Nigeria", which was adopted by Brigadier General Lord Lugard, the first Governor General and her future husband, (Adedimeji, 2005; Omolewa, 1986).

On January 1, 1900, the British government took over the possession of the Royal Niger Company, which had administered the 'territories'. The protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated on January 1, 1914 by the Governor General, Lord Lugard, and modern Nigeria effectively set afoot. For administrative convenience, Nigeria was divided into Southern and Northern Provinces in 1922 and this continued till 1946, when the idea of federalism was introduced by Sir Arthur Richard who formalised the creation of

three regions: Northern, Eastern and Western Regions (Crowther, 1978) after the South was split into two in 1939 by Governor Bernard Bourdillon.

On May 27, 1967, more states were created from the existing regions and Nigeria had twelve. Additional seven states were carved out of the existing ones by the Federal Military Government, headed by General Murtala Mohammed on February 3, 1976, making nineteen. In September, 1987, two more states were added, making the number of states in Nigeria twenty one. On August 27, 1991, General Ibrahim Babangida, as President, further created additional nine and Nigeria became a country of twenty nine states. This status remained till October 1, 1996 when General Abacha added additional six new states and the total number of states became the thirty six we have today (with Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory).

By 1997, new number plates were introduced and the new ones are state names and slogans, such that every state as well as the Federal Capital Territory, had its slogan, its motto or catchphrase. Such slogans soon gained popularity as they served as cognomens for the states they refer to.

### 13.5 DATABASE

The data for this study derive from the slogans constructed by each state of the Nigerian federation. The following is the alphabetical list of the thirty six states and Abuja as well as their slogans:

Abuja:	-	Centre of Unity
Abia:	-	God's Own State
Adamawa:	-	State of Sunshine and Hospitality
Akwa Ibom:	-	Land of Promise
Anambra:	-	Home for All
Bauchi:	-	Pearl of Tourism
Bayelsa:	-	Pride of the Nation
Benue:	-	Food Basket of the Nation

Borno:	-	Home of Peace
Cross River:	-	The People's Paradise
Delta:	-	The Big Heart
Ebonyi:	-	The Salt of the Nation
Edo:	-	Heartbeat of the Nation
Ekiti:	-	Fountain of Knowledge
Enugu:	-	Coal City State
Gombe:	-	Jewel in the Savannah
Imo:	-	Land of Hope
Jigawa:	-	The New World
Kaduna:	-	Liberal State
Kano:	-	Centre of Commerce
Katsina:	-	Home of Hospitality
Kebbi:	-	Land of Equity
Kogi:	-	The Confluence State
Kwara:	-	State of Harmony
Lagos:	-	Centre of Excellence
Nassarawa:	-	Home of Solid Minerals
Niger:	-	The Power State
Ogun:	-	The Gateway State
Ondo:	-	The Sunshine State
Osun:	-	State of the living spring
Oyo:	-	The Pace-Setter State
Plateau:	-	Home of Peace and Tourism
Rivers:	-	Treasure Base of the Nation
Sokoto:	-	State of the Caliphate
Taraba:	-	Nature's Gift of the Nation
Yobe:	-	The Young Shall Grow
Zamfara:	-	Farming is our Pride

### 13.6 METHODOLOGY

There are thirty seven data in all and these are grouped into seven based on their structural patterns. Group A consists of three data all beginning with "Centre of", Group B comprises four data all beginning with "State of..." and Group C items are nine all ending with "...State". While Group D is membered by six items ending with "...of the Nation" and Group E has only three items which all begin with "Land of...", Group F has five items also beginning with "Home". The last Group G, consists of eight items that do not reflect any of the previous lexical patterns; the data rather exhibit miscellaneous forms. All these make thirty seven slogans, representing the thirty six states and Abuja, the capital.

With a minimum of three data in each group, the analysis covers the first three items in each group based on the alphabetic order of their referents on the list. Thus, twenty one slogans are analysed with the pragmatic presuppositions underlining them highlighted and the four contexts underpinning their propositions identified.

### 13.7 DATA ANALYSIS

#### 13.7.1 Group A: Centre

- |    |                      |   |       |
|----|----------------------|---|-------|
| 1. | Centre of Unity      | - | Abuja |
| 2. | Centre of Commerce   | - | Kano  |
| 3. | Centre of Excellence | - | Lagos |

#### Analysis

The use of centre presupposes a place where most important things happen, the focus of attention, the cluster of concentration and the influential component of an entity. The three 'centres' in this group are noted for their distinctiveness in terms of what they project.

(1.) That Abuja is the centre of unity presupposes that Nigeria is diverse. Apart from Abuja being the geographical middle point of Nigeria, the nucleus of the country, it is the focus of international attention, and the seat of national Government. Abuja unites the diverse groups of Nigeria in that it does not belong to any of the geo-political zones, it rather unifies all.

(2.) That Lagos is a centre of excellence presupposes that the state is great. Having been the capital of Nigeria since the colonial period up till 1991, the state has had the fortune of attracting the best to itself from all over the country, and even the international community, such that it is the microcosm of Nigeria. Part of the pragmatic presupposition in force is that anything anyone does in Lagos would excel. It is the commercial capital of the country and has more schools, hospitals, industries, human resources, employment opportunities, media houses, higher institutions of learning, banks, etc. than all other states of the country. This has made its population to swell because it is taken for granted that it offers a lot of opportunities for everyone to excel and achieve his/her best.

(3.) That Kano as a foremost beehive of commercial activities is validated by its being second only to Lagos in terms of commercial activities. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Kano served as the trade route between North Africa and Sudan, the groundnut pyramids that characterised Kano symbolised its commercial resourcefulness and the whole range of commodities of trade like clothing, leather works, beads, agricultural products and modern financial institutions, engineering and construction companies would truly position Kano State, created on May 27, 1967, as the commercial capital of the whole of Northern Nigeria, making it justifiably the centre of commerce.

## 13.7.2 Group B: State of

- |    |                                   |   |         |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|---------|
| 4. | State of Sunshine and Hospitality | - | Adamawa |
| 5. | State of the Living Spring        | - | Osun    |
| 6. | State of Harmony                  | - | Kwara   |

## Analysis

The data in this group focus on the 'state' as part of the federal government. The pragmatic presupposition underlining them is that a state exists in each case with a quality - natural, historical, social, ecological, strategic or general.

(4.) Adamawa State, created on August 27, 1991 exploits in its slogan the connotation of sunshine as happiness on the one hand and the temperate tropical weather it has on the other. It presupposes that there are social activities that can put sunshine in one's life in the state, itself hospitable with tourist attractions such as the Lamido's Palace, Kiri dam, Koma hills and the Elephant House. As people would normally want to have sunshine, as opposed to darkness, and would want to be properly hosted, the slogan projects that it is a place to be as the presupposition covers good climate and good accommodation facilities.

(5.) Osun State derives its name from 'River Osun' which is believed to have a goddess that people worship. The significance of the river is heightened by the adoption of its name by the state and the river is presupposed to be a living spring that is worshipped with reverence veneration. The slogan pragmatically presupposes the existence of a river, a living spring in the that serves as the distinctive identity of the state.

(6.) Kwara is a state of harmony. This is justifiably so as it is one of the most peaceful states in the country, despite its ethnic heterogeneity. Different tribes that constitute Kwara live harmoniously. Since its creation on May 27, 1967, the

state has managed to forestall crises that would have belied its claim to harmony of faiths, peoples and customs.

## 13.7.3 Group C: ...State

- |    |                 |   |        |
|----|-----------------|---|--------|
| 7. | God's Own State | - | Abia   |
| 8. | Coal City State | - | Enugu  |
| 9. | Liberal State   | - | Kaduna |

## Analysis

The data in group C, based on the senses embedded in their modifiers, also foreground their status as components of the Nigerian federation. Like the immediate previous group, the items presuppose the existence of states.

(7.) Abia's State slogan, 'God's own state' would ordinarily presuppose that the people are Godly and that other states are not God's own people. Blessed with mineral resources, inclusive crude oil, like other states in the region, the source of the slogan appears to be an adaptation of "God's own country", the US slogan, though the state cannot be said to occupy in Nigeria the position that the U.S. occupies in the world. The state carved out of Imo State in August 27, 1991 associates God with its success.

(8.) Enugu's slogan is rooted in its history. Coal deposits were first discovered there in 1909 and the small mining town established in 1912 grew and developed on that account to become the capital of the former Eastern Region. Enugu is conscious of the significance of coal to its political, economic and strategic status and the totality of all this is the pragmatic presupposition underlining the slogan of the state.

(9.) That Kaduna, a Northern State, is a liberal State presupposes that other states of the North are not liberal. The Jihad of 1804 had unified the North under

the Islamic banner such that other parts of the country consider the North to manifest religious conservatism. As Kaduna was created to serve as the capital of the old Northern Region (later the capital of the North Central State and is more pluralistic than a typical Northern city), the underlining presupposition is aimed at suggesting a difference – a place where all people regardless of their faiths, are welcome and are free to practise their faiths.

#### 13.7.4 Group D: The Nation

- |     |                           |   |         |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---------|
| 10. | Pride of the Nation       | - | Bayelsa |
| 11. | Food Basket of the Nation | - | Benue   |
| 12. | The Salt of the Nation    | - | Ebonyi  |

#### Analysis

The data in this group all end with the expression “of the nation” which presupposes the existence of a nation. Based on explicit and/or implicit endowments assumed to be abundant in the state, each state claims its importance within the geographical entity of the nation.

10. Bayelsa State’s slogan presupposes some qualities/attributes that the state possesses and of which the whole nation is proud. The large deposits of petroleum products, from which the nation derives almost all of its revenue and foreign exchange earnings, are part of the pride intended. People are proud of what is beneficial, good, noble and rewarding about them and it is assumed that the state, by virtue of the qualities, it believes it has, considers itself the pride of the whole nation.

11. That food as the most basic need of individuals and nations constitutes the thrust of Benue State’s slogan presupposes the abundance of agricultural products (in the state) with which the state feeds the nation. Agriculture,

actually, forms the backbone of the state’s economy, engaging more than 70% of the population. Apart from engaging in diary, livestock and fishery, Soya beans, palm kernel/oil, rice, citrus fruit, coffee, among others, thrive in the state. As no individual or nation can survive without food security, the state establishes its distinctiveness on the basis of offering the nation its large food basket.

12. The use of ‘salt’ in the slogan of Ebonyi State is metaphorical. Salt preserves, and makes things tasty. It thus presupposes that the state enlivens the nation with abundant agricultural and cultural activities; it preserves the nation in its own way, especially as it produces natural resources like coal, limestone, marble, clay, kaolin, iron ore, columbite, tantalite, gold, quartz, talc, mica, and petroleum products. As people need salt for food to be tasty, it is presupposed that the state provides taste to the nation’s economic and cultural life with its abundant endowments.

#### 13.7.5 Group E: Land

- |     |                 |   |           |
|-----|-----------------|---|-----------|
| 13. | Land of Promise | - | Akwa Ibom |
| 14. | Land of Hope    | - | Imo       |
| 15. | Land of Equity  | - | Kebbi     |

#### Analysis

The three slogans in this group begin with ‘land’, which connotes a sense of pride and ownership. There is a presupposition in the essence of ‘land’ as the real property, the source of subsistence and livelihood, an endowment that should be preserved.

(13.) Akwa Ibom State’s slogan “land of promise” or “the promised land” is an allusion to the Biblical “Promised Land” of Canaan, a land of opportunities for the descendants of Abraham. With its large percentage of the nation’s palm oil

plantation which provides raw materials for the agro-based industries, the sub-equatorial climate and rich oil deposits, it is presupposed that the land hands a lot of promise to investors and tourists. Whoever discovers the state, the slogan suggests, has reached "the promised land" and will, therefore, live a life of fulfillment and happiness.

(14.) The slogan, "land of hope" that Imo State adopts, presupposes the confident desire and trust that the future will be better. Created on February 3, 1976 out of the old East Central State, the State identifies the significance of hope, the magic ingredient that adds colour to life, which it promises to give to all indigenes, residents and visitors. Based on the world knowledge that Nigeria is a country where people have a tendency to be hopeless, disappointed, or discouraged as a result of socio-political and economic contradictions, the state suggests itself as a place of refuge where hope is restored, no matter the level of an individual's despondency, especially with the vast agricultural products, rich oil deposits and fledgling opportunities provided by monuments and industries.

(15.) Kebbi State as the land of equity presupposes that injustice and breaches of the principle of equity exist in Nigeria. With its combination of diverse ethnic groups among which are the Hausa, Fulani, Fakkawa, Daikarikari, Rambari, Gungawa, Dadawa, Dukawa, Zabarmawa, Rebawa, etc., the state is a melting point that can explode if ethnic diversity is not treated with sensitivity and a sense of justice and equity. The slogan contends that regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation, the state treats everyone without violating the concept of equity.

### 13.7.6 Group F: Home

- |     |                        |   |          |
|-----|------------------------|---|----------|
| 16. | Home for all           | - | Anambra  |
| 17. | Home of Peace          | - | Borno    |
| 18. | Home of Solid Minerals | - | Nasarawa |

### Analysis

There are five data in this group which all begin with 'home'. It is said that "East or West, home is the best" and everyone everywhere requires a home, a sanctuary, a place to call one's own, where one longs to be, where one feels secure in, more than anywhere else. It is the semantic and pragmatic presupposition engendering home that the slogans of this group exploit.

(16.) Anambra State considers itself as 'home for all' based on the pragmatic presupposition that everybody needs a sense of belonging. In Nigeria where the notions of 'belongingness' and 'identity' are often marked along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines, the slogan presupposes a confirmation and a rebuttal: everyone living in Anambra State is an indigene of the state; Anambra State is not like other parts of the country where identity is marked by indigene/settler dichotomy, leading to several socio-political crises. As such, it is presupposed that Anambra State welcomes everyone, regardless of status, religion, language and culture, that is ready to develop the state, and the state will guarantee him/her security that everyone desires in his/her home.

(17.) Borno State prides itself as the "home of peace", which presupposes that it is insulated from the socio-political, economic and ethno-religious crises that often disrupt peace in some parts of the country. Part of what peace further presupposes is the religious tradition of the State, Islam, otherwise called "religion of peace". The state, blending its ethnic group like Fulani, Nganzai, Monguno, etc. and its over thirty autochthonous languages without conflict, considers peace the most essential quality it possesses.

(18.) That Nassarawa State is the home of solid minerals is premised on the abundance of iron, coal, marble, granite, and other mineral resources in the state. The state is known to be a major source of revenue in the exploration of solid minerals and mining. It is on this basis that the slogan presupposes that investors

would like to go to the state if they know of the vast opportunities its mineral resources provide. As one of the newest states, created along with five others on October 1, 1996, the state appears to emphasise its selling point in order to accelerate its drive for development.

### 13.7.7 Group G: Miscellaneous

- |     |                       |   |             |
|-----|-----------------------|---|-------------|
| 19. | Pearl of Tourism      | - | Bauchi      |
| 20. | The People's Paradise | - | Cross River |
| 21. | The Big Heart         | - | Delta       |

This group, like Group C, has eight items. The data are varied and do not have recurrent lexical items like 'centre' state, etc that characterise the previous ones. Each slogan here also presupposes the knowledge of some peculiarities, the expression of ideas or sentiments held dear by the states.

(19.) That Bauchi is the 'pearl of tourism, is chiefly based on its hosting the famous Yankari Game Reserve, a foremost national and international tourist attraction. Other places of tourist interest in the state include Mashal Cave, the Tula Spring, the Kwawa Plantations, the Maladamba Lake, the Dams at Gubi, Katin Zaki and Balanga, among others. The Slogan here is targeted at attracting tourists, from whom the government derives a significant portion of its revenue.

(20.) The Cross Rivers State's slogan presupposes beauty, nature and perfection that characterise a garden or paradise. As a rain forest and sanctuary of wildlife, the state is the microcosm of the nation with its coastal plains, coastal mangrove wetlands, montage parkland and derived savannah, which constitute its vegetation and scenery. The paradise that the state provides, as indicated by the slogan further comprises such attractions as the Obudu Cattle Ranch, considered one of the most outstanding tourist attractions in West Africa, the colonial Old Residency Museum, Agbokum Waterfalls, Cross River National

Park, Mary Slessor's Residence, etc. Apart from these, mineral resources like limestone, calcium, zinc and manganese are in the state. The state itself was carved out of the Eastern Region on May 27, 1967, the capital of which dates back to the earliest contacts with Europeans.

(21.) Delta State's slogan, 'The Big Heart' presupposes that it is generous and resourceful. As a foremost oil producing state, with the Nigerian foreign exchange and earnings almost all dependent on oil, it suggests that the state is large-hearted to avail the whole nation the benefits of its resources. With the crude oil, natural gas, clay, silica, sand and gravel within the state, it is presupposed that apart from constituting the heart of the nation or the nerve centre of the nation's economy, the state is large, generous and accommodating.

### 13.8 CONCLUSION

The coinage of slogans not only in Nigeria but anywhere is based upon certain presuppositions which the speaker or writer has taken for granted as part of the existing world knowledge. This assumption is not always true and more often than not, based on the limited knowledge of the pragmatics of some contexts, there is a mismatch and the corresponding pragmatic failure with people wondering about the rationale behind some usages. An examination of the pragmatics of number plate slogans has revealed that slogans are not just created or coined; they are created based on some existent values which people are supposed to identify with.

This study has found that certain historical, sociological and cultural variables foreground the various senses that the slogans of Nigerian states engender. In coining slogans, it is revealed, pertinent issues that relate to different cultures in the heterogeneous Nigerian contexts are brought to bear, which make contexts crucial components of understanding the texts of the slogans.

Based on the methodology adopted, at least two data are represented from each of the six geo-political zones. The South East has the highest number of five analysed slogans, followed by the South South that has four data. The North Central, the North West and North East have three data each while the South West has the least occurrence with two data.

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# 14

## THE POLITICS AND PRAGMATICS OF SLOGANS ON NIGERIAN VEHICLE NUMBER PLATES

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### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

Advertising, political and battery recycling slogans, among others, have been largely studied (e.g. see Bradley and Meeds 2002; Dahlén and Rosengren 2005; Xiaosong 2009; Hansmann 2009; etc.). Bradley and Meeds (2002), for example, have studied the effects of syntactic complexity on attitude formation in advertising slogans. Their work specifically uses a within-subjects experiment to examine how surface-structure transformations affected reader's comprehension, recognition, recall, and attitudes toward slogans. Xiaosong (2009) focuses on the stylistic features of advertising slogans. Slogans on vehicle number plates are scarcely studied in the literature. Little work that has examined this kind of slogans is a mere review of numbering schemes, and common features of slogans on vehicle number plates in Australia. No work has subjected slogans on vehicle number plates to linguistic analysis.

Motivated by the dearth of work of this nature, the present study, which differs from earlier ones, sets out to examine the politics and pragmatics of