

Cultural Representation in Kenya's Viral TikTok Ad 'A Family that Flies Together

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Abstract

There is little that has been done in examining the techniques comedians use in the rapidly digitalizing Kenyan ad space and motivation for their rich ideas. Digital media, especially TikTok mimics the constellations of folklore and cultural sensitivity among African communities and their means to connect while meeting consumer needs and wants, and at the same time, entertainment. Analysis of TikTok data reveals close connection of viewers with Awinja Nyamwalo's ad. Technique, twists and wits used, are captivating and transcend ad's promotional role. Amid concerns on safety of digitally mediated tools, artificial intelligence can be used so that more informative, culturally-embedded content can be developed.

Keywords: Colours; Choice; Consumer; Norms; Strategy; Content

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Introduction

The societal role of celebrities continues to be appreciated and explored. Creativity and excellence of comedians, cartoonists, musicians, athletes, writers, economists, physicists, innovators and other professions has as a result given meaning to life and inspired many beyond imagination, other than creating highways for laughter, creation of wealth and opportunities. However, little has been done in examining the techniques comedians are using in a rapidly digitalizing global ecosystem or motivation for their rich ideas, especially in the Kenyan context. In this article, we attempt to explore the power of creative thinking in translating creator's cultural substance into client's value through the lens of one of Kenya's renowned comedians, Awinja Nyamwalo. It is an attempt to unpack one of her viral TikTok Ads 'A Family that Flies Together' that has gained fame in the online social networks.

In Kenya, the place and space of Awinja Nyamwalo's works, there is much that happens. Oftentimes, comedians are quick and fast in making sense of the happenings with a pinch of literary taste. While one school of thought holds that use of satire, for example, has waned and that it was at its peak when Kenya was a one-party state, there are those who contest that the catalytic role of comedy has continued to bludgeon with the changing times. These terminals could be relevant in shaping ongoing discourses as far as artistry works in Kenya are concerned; these terminals are beyond the scope of this article that makes a deliberate

bias to unravel only one of the many TikTok ads that have been created in the Kenyan ad-space. Although exponential growth of digitally mediated tools introduces an interesting allure to the existing debate, the essence of this endeavor is to appreciate local artistry works through advertising and how this best applies in solving local marketing problems. It is also a metricized endeavor to make local creations, especially those that reflect African's cultural identity and representation appreciated, other than contributing to literature that pertains marketing through entertainment.

To so profoundly unravel the aforementioned, various lines of literature are infused to provide equilibrium in this article. Such works include explorations into celebrities' use of stellar star power to shape discourses, extend relevance of power of stories through visualization and foundational role of magic through action and how this applies in marketing – especially in a territorialized digitalizing state.

TikTok app, the digital space that the article focuses on, has seen a tremendous evolution to become a hype that it is today, as much as there are hurdles it has had to surmount. TikTok is a novel version of Vine, a free iOS and Android app that allowed users to create and share seven-seconds long video clips in 2013. In years that followed competition saw new entrants such as Instagram

and Snapchat leverage in the technovation – increasing the flame of most celebrities and brands that they advertise. But in late 2016, ByteDance, a Chinese developer introduced A.me to the market which would later morph to Douyin. In the year that followed, Douyin merged with musical.ly to form TikTok, which enjoys presence in over 150 countries, as much as some are thinking about banning the app. This supercharged app uses algorithms that make it additive to users therefore ideal for competitors in deepening penetration among online consumers market segmentations. Businesses must advertise. This is because the price for failure is steep, as much as it costs money to advertise or leverage on technovation, if businesses are to break even. [TikTok] analyses everything you do. It checks what kind of users you follow, which videos you watch the most, and then it gives you more of that.

Artificial General Intelligence is powering the capability of online social networks to learn using algorithms. As such, online network tools are rapidly learning from each other. They seem to be wanting to 'lean' on or 'whispering' to each other like the thirteen witches detailed Broderick's (2013) masterpiece 'The Witch in the Woods' who'd a habit of whispering spells.

But in the USA and India, for instance, recent developments are suggestive of unrelenting campaigns to clip TikTok's exponential growth. Notwithstanding these developments, the hype that TikTok has created mimics the constellations of folklore and cultural sensitivity among African communities and trade routes that they used to connect – this time round, with astronomical levels of efficiency and effectiveness that are geared to meeting consumer needs and wants, and at the same time, offer them some entertainment.

Equally, in Awinja Nyamwalo's ad, there is a lot that imitates literary devices developed and used by advertisers in hitherto days and today. How the devices are enmeshed paint the image of hitherto African community that was well advanced in 'mobilizing', 'popularizing' and that shaped frugal strategies to gain a competitive differential in a given market niche. Narratives could be shaped around heroism based on cultural preoccupation, norms and family structures. Appeals could be made to target consumer segments based on age, gender, income or geographical market. Signals such as drumbeats, songs – their pitch and tone, fire and smoke – their scale and magnitude could be used in giving direction or enchanting buyers and sellers. Sacred trees, rivers, hills and caves were protected, respected and traditional communities thronged there for find absolution or gain favour with the creator. Mechanics that power TikTok work in a similar way – better, faster and easier [1]. Who has documented witchcraft in Bolobo observed that: If a certain ivory-worker sells his work as fast as he can do it, and at high prices, it is immediately taken for granted that he has surrendered some relative to the baloki [witches] as wages for their favourable intervention.

Moreover, it is plausible that witchcraft and sorcery may have played a critical role in giving advertisements color during festivities. This is because witches and sorcerers were wielders of superstitious powers that caused tension and anxiety in the community. In some communities, witches, sorcerers and

rainmakers were elevated to higher pedestals. Wielders of superstitious powers were assumed to be bearers of supernatural powers. This consisted of revered men and women who could instrumentally influence community to war, prophesied events, healed diseases, dispelled curses and other misfortunes. They also attracted good fortunes such as rain or bumper harvest. These men and women saw their territories named after their 'wonders', causing attraction yonder. In contextualizing this, a story is told of a Nilotic community who trekked south from Khartoum in Sudan to Ortum in present day Pokot, marking seasonal commemorations karur-tum [meaning, celebrations are at their fever pitch], a Nandi festival marked by food, songs, pomp and color.

Traditional technologies such as stone grinding and iron making propelled industrial operations of the time such as flour grinding by stone, arrows and spears made from iron or activated charcoal that served as fastidious catholicon obtained by burning of incense or boiling special herbs, barks and roots. Different communities, influenced by geography and social occupation enjoyed a comparative advantage and were interdependent, living on a barter trade that required a double coincidence of wants. In this traditional market ecology, witches and sorcerers often acted as seers, spies or market intelligence organs – oftentimes, mighty [and wealthy]. Their power to know and heal, bless, curse or cause trouble can only equate to modernized stage of Artificial General Intelligence. In this traditional African society, men and women with bad eyes could transmit disease without touching the victim, causing paralysis or death of the victim. Stories are also told that these people held a special place in society and could fly long distances with high velocity. It is this notion of non-motorized locomotive that Awinja Nyamwalo capitalizes on in her TikTok Ad and that gives this paper loci.

Before unpacking the notion into digestible bits, tangentially, the ad is in so many ways reflective of the African way of way life – ubuntu – as declared in the caption 'A Family that Flies Together...', mirrors the Bayombe proverb that says 'a real family eats the same cornmeal'. Yombe people are found in Angola, Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. The caption also speaks boldly to Christian consumers who form majority of the Kenyan population through Biblical allusion of Proverbs 22:6 "A family that prays together stays together".

Dholakia (1999) explains that digitalization is a silhouette for shopping in a digitizing age enhancing salability of businesses. Works pay attention to the supermarket, painting it as the ideal stage where technological change will have great impact. Choice of Awinja Nyamwalo's ad for a supermarket, thus, resonates with empirical literature. These aspects are revisited in this article.

Awinja Nyamwalo's child, Persuasion and Modern Advertisements

Various stratagems have been employed by business and corporations to appetize the psychology of customers. The bottom-line of this has been novelty in crafting of information to make it memorable, relevant and that attracts and boosts business objectives key results. Beyond the undercurrents that

voices and faces behind the ads are motivated by money and may not be trusted, there is consensus within literature that ‘someone trustworthy’ delivers better intangible power of marketing. This must be accompanied by knowledge about the condition on which the celebrity is hired to speak to, which condition must well resonate with target audience [2]. Veirman, Hudders and Nelson (2019) posit that trust must co-exist with expertise for an endorser to gain credibility, making them appealing and persuasive. Whereas Awinja Nyamwalo has presence on other online social media networks, or her videos downloaded, edited and reshared, this paper only explores the aforementioned online content in its localized digital space – Awinja Nyamwalo’s TikTok account, [@jackyvike].

Veirman et al (2019) have delved into the delicate issue of how the new age of influencer marketing targets children and by extension the family. The trio draw a sharp image that attends to time children spend on online social networks. Without discounting the role of blogging influencers on children’s consumer behavior, they suggest that the number of child and adult vloggers has continued to burgeon. As a consequence, they have become new wielders of ‘magical’ powers that advertisers need to pool more young consumers to marketed products. Awinja Nyamwalo’s child represents these children in the ad. On one hand, her voice of innocence as they fly on the broom is representative of children’s inadequacy to scan through ads – therefore vulnerable to influencer’s sense of enchanting power. On the other hand, it is pointedly, revelation of the power that children have on imbuing consumption and influencing choices that families have to make, when it comes to consumption [3]. Who have discussed the stories of magic and the magic of stories assert that family was one of the primary agents of socialization.

Dholakia (1999) argues that shopping, as a household chore, should be fun and adds that is it mainly done by women – amid changing traditional gender norms, family structures and technological shifts. Choice of characters in the ad is adept and reflective of gender roles in an African setting and to some extent, indicative of increased nuclearization of family [4]. Who have analyzed children's perceptive reactions to TV advertisements across the region perspicaciously notes that television advertising is particularly relevant if children, cartoons, songs, celebrities and humor are used in advertising food. Other than influencing products packaging, choice of colors, voice, tone and pitch that advertisers use is metricized to grab consumers’ attention and influence choice [5,6]. Consumer choice of color is a critical aspect

of product differentiation. However, certain product markets may tend to use symmetrical colors and products and only differentiated by packaging design. For example, manufacturers of edible oils prefer using yellow color but competitors in pursuit of unique identity would prefer a different color for their product.

Consumption is an epitome of power and freedom where each consumer should be treated as king or queen. This is the whole essence of ‘consumer sovereignty’ as detailed by Heath and Heath [3]. Producers must organize themselves so deliberately to meet consumers’ ‘pleasurable dreams’ or ‘grandiose fantasies’ though persuasion, deceit, manipulative techniques or advertising, which [2] equates to ‘propaganda’. This is the highway to winning consumers’ hearts and minds - something that Awinja Nyamwalo does with diction.

TikTok Ads as means and ends

Marketing on TikTok adds allure to modern advertising. Put differently, TikTok provides a highway for advertisers to build their clout. Many followers are every influencer or celebrity’s dream. Techniques they use to keep the number of followers growing may vary; it ranges from tokenism to open bribe, or buying accounts with huge junks of followers to easily promote products. But infusion of entertainment in advertising on in TikTok works as modern system of magic, which propensity to alter consumers’ attitudes and behaviours (Miles, 2002).

Awinja Nyamwalo’s ad was uploaded on TikTok on 1st May, 2023 which is coincidentally an international day for workers. The timing is not mistaken but resonates with workers’ anticipations for pay rise, translating for higher disposal income, affordability of consumer goods, relaxation and interaction with family. Forty-three (43) days later since the upload, the metrics for the ad were as shown on **Figure 1**.

This careful crafting of wit as shown is Awinja Nyamwalo’s choice of words and attire, indisputably rhyme. The composition of the rhythm created, is a proto-science that surpasses any good imagination in the theatre of modern advertising. Rather than share a dry crust of content or upload, transmit or distribute obscene content, the ad is profoundly enriching and targets consumers of all ages. Reactions with emojis were deliberately relaxed in present analysis; multiplicity of emojis in terms of type and numbers used proved technically impossible to measure. For the same reason of estimation, it was also critical to harmonize the language used through translation. As much as

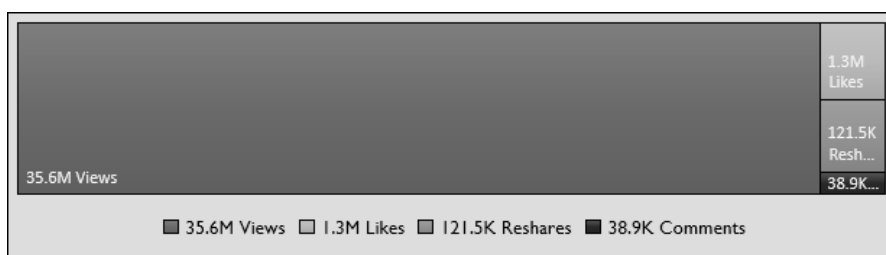


Figure 1 Key metrics of Awinja Nyamwalo's TikTok Ad - 43 days after upload. Assumptively, there were about 850K views, 30K likes, 2,825 reshares and 905 comments, daily within the duration under consideration. Metrics were visualized by authors.

possible, translations accounted for context to minimize on bias. After rounds of filtrations, 1,540 comments were subjected for analysis.

As revealed in **Figure 2 and 3**, 831 comments bore positive vibes while 709 bore negatives sentiments. Contents with negative vibes connoted shudder and not negative perspectives about the ad. The crux of this revelation has everything to do with the nature of ad itself. This is as revealed in the sentiment analysis in figure 3. Followers who felt ad influenced them positively were leading at 1279 followed by those who were joyful and those that revealed trust. As already explained, it is risky to conclude that there was disgust or anger, for example, as this might have had everything to do with surprise or amazement, instead.

Analysis of popular words that followers used was done. It was revealed that 'emergency', 'landing' and 'broom' were leading, followed by 'reverse', 'wow' and 'love', in that order. The remainder of the prominent words are as detailed in **Figure 4**.

Analysis of the popular words produces an interesting word cloud as shown in **Figure 5**. More prominent words are larger or more striking as opposed to less prominent words which are smaller.

Even more interesting is the weekly analysis of popular words within the first five weeks, since the upload was done. For four straight weeks, 'emergency' and 'landing' were the leading word; within the first two weeks, the audience was mainly Kenyan. But in the third week, 'language' is suggestive of a new wave of viewers who may have been thrilled by the ad but constrained by language barrier. Analysis of week four strengthens this viewpoint with 'africans' - suggestively, growing popularity across Africa or beyond Africa.

Humor and Entertainment

The most prominent theme in the comments is humor and entertainment. Elements, such as the creative portrayal of a broom as a mode of transportation and the absurdity of an "emergency landing," create a lighthearted atmosphere that viewers find amusing and enjoyable. For example, one viewer highlights the humor in the unconventional use of a broom for transportation by commenting, "This is cheap, it doesn't use fuel." Another common sentiment is "I can't stop laughing," indicating the video's ability to generate laughter and satiation. Comments referencing the unexpected and comical ending

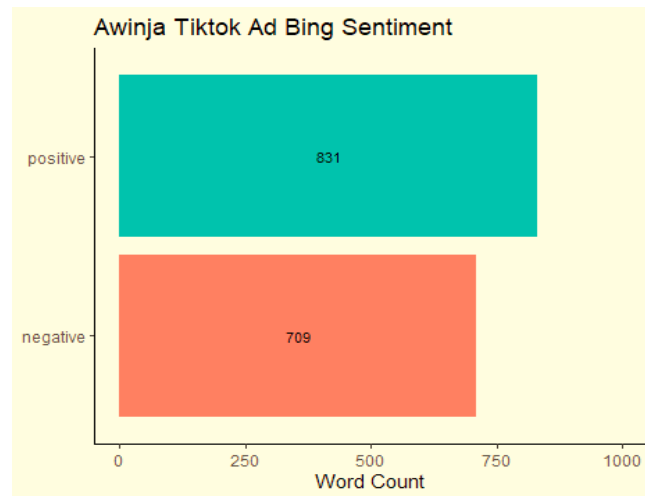


Figure 2 Analysis of comments. Visualization was done by authors.

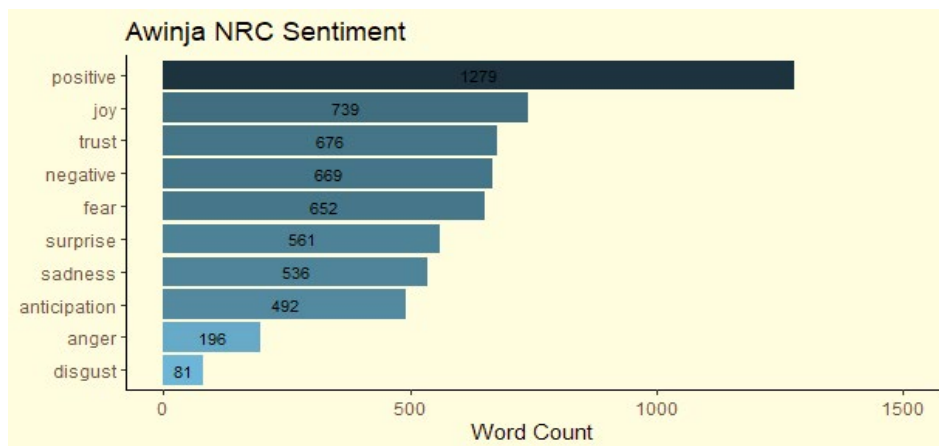


Figure 3 Sentiment analysis, visualization was done by authors.

of the video, such as "Emergency landing for me," further demonstrate the video's success in entertaining its audience. The ad's use of humor and entertainment effectively engages viewers and generates positive reactions. The creative and lighthearted approach to marketing resonates with viewers and contributes to the ad's viral success.

Disbelief and Amazement

Within the discourse surrounding 'A Family that Flies Together', a prevailing theme emerges: viewers' overwhelming expressions

of disbelief and amazement. The ad's fusion of creativity and marketing prowess triggers disbelief, blurring lines between reality and illusion. As exemplified by the query, "Is it true? It's also funny," emotions oscillate between incredulity and amusement, enriching viewers experience. Moreover, the ad's narrative intricacies induce awe. Comments like "I can't believe what I just watched" underscore the unexpected twists and wits, captivating audiences and transcending its promotional role. The synergy of effects and narrative fosters collective amazement, reflecting Awinja Nyamwalo's portrayal and ad's

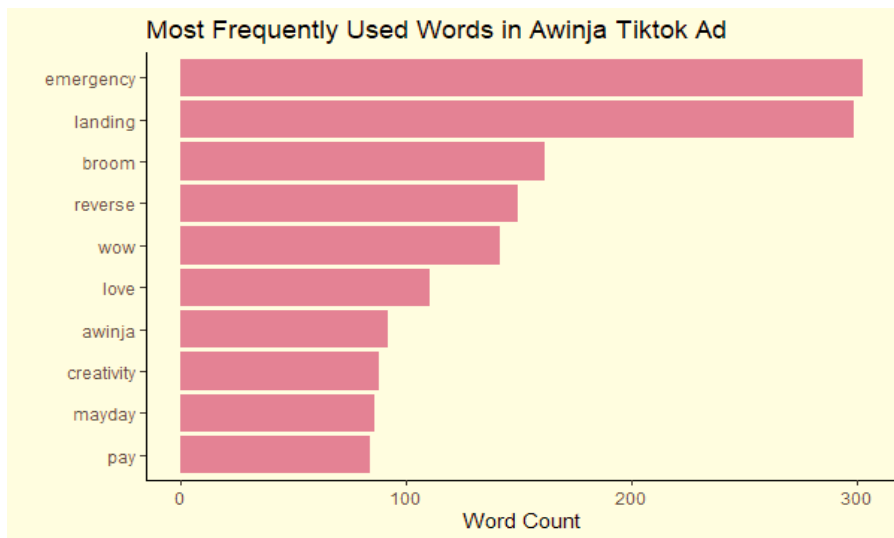


Figure 4 Popular words, visualization was done by authors.

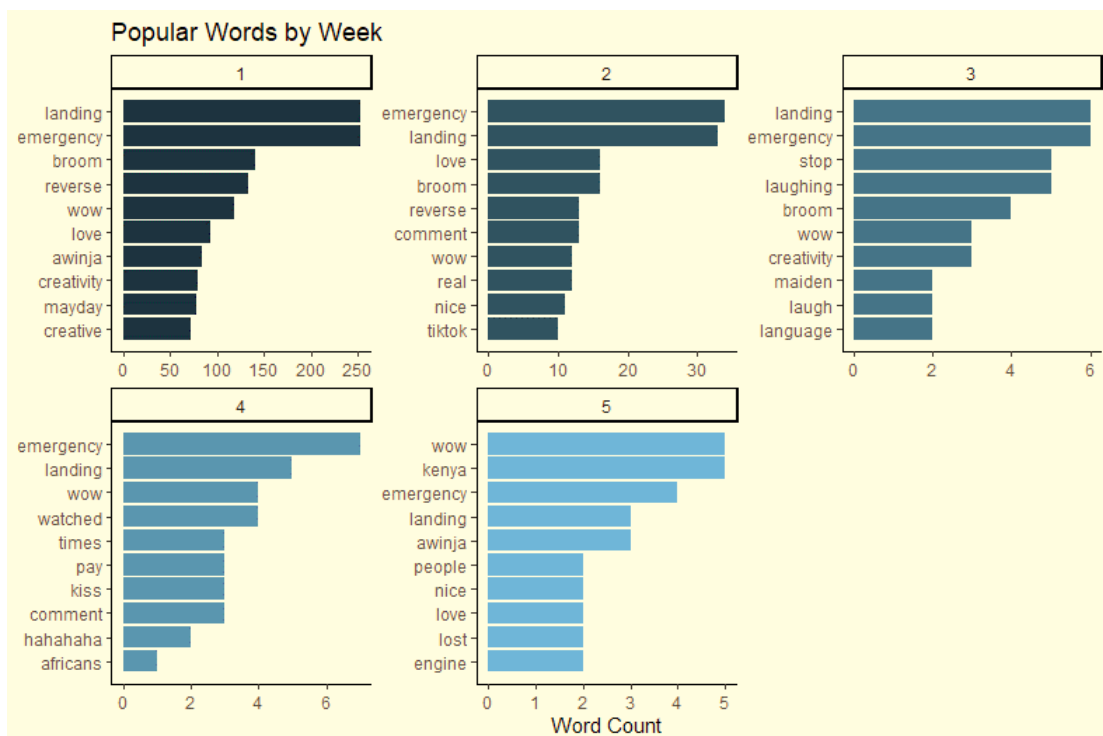


Figure 5 Popular words per week, visualization was done by authors.

cultural resonance with consumers. Intricately weaving disbelief and wonder, 'A Family that Flies Together' celebrates the potent fusion of narrative ingenuity and visual effects. Viewer's incredulity fuels cultural echoes, cementing marketing's alliance with cultural representation.

Creative and Artistic Expression

This analysis delves into the creative and artistic expression theme, unraveling the captivating interplay of imagination and skill that has charmed viewers. Amid the comments, a clear admiration for ingenuity shines through. The broom's transformation into a magical transport resonates, as expressed in the comment "This creativity is wonderful, keep it up." The ad's fusion of everyday objects with fantastical notions captivates hearts. The tapestry of skillful editing weaves an artistic spell, blurring reality and wonder. A viewer's exclamation, "African innovation," encapsulates the ad's ability to transcend its purpose, becoming an artistic testament. The exploration of creativity and art within 'A Family that Flies Together' is a testament to the potency of imagination. The ad's ability to infuse magic into the ordinary speaks volumes about the allure of creative thought. Through skillful editing and inspired artistry, the ad not only enthralls but also underscores the fusion of marketing and cultural resonance in today's media landscape.

Cultural Identity and Unity

Beyond its story, the ad strikes a chord of recognition. Comments like "My southern African people, I can hear the accent nice content" underscore its ability to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. This shared understanding creates a tapestry of connection. The ad's allure lies in its familiar touch. "Kenya, wow, it sounds similar, my eastern people, one love" captures the essence of unity it evokes. Familiar elements sew the fabric of togetherness, unifying diverse communities [7]. Moreover, the ad spotlights regional pride. "This can only happen in my 'Kambaland'"

showcases its role in celebrating distinct cultures while nurturing a wider sense of unity. In essence, the exploration of cultural identity and unity within 'A Family that Flies Together' highlights its role as a cultural bridge. By weaving shared experiences, languages, and humor, the ad exemplifies the integration of marketing and cultural resonance, uniting diverse African hearts.

Blurring Reality and Fiction

This analysis embarks on a thought-provoking exploration of this theme, unraveling the intricate interplay of authenticity and illusion that captivates audiences. Viewer comments mirror this sense of wonder. "I don't understand the language, but I'm so interested. Emergency landing" highlights the ad's captivating intrigue, transcending language barriers. Its realistic editing and sound effects make the unreal feel authentic. The ad's magic extends further. "Did the security at the door feel that something just passed on top?" reflects its power to blur boundaries, making the extraordinary seem ordinary. This interplay between the everyday and the exceptional ignites curiosity. Deeper emotions are unveiled too. "It seems to lock even the sins in the soul. I wish I could get it" speaks of its ability to resonate on a profound level, touching souls and evoking introspection. In essence, the ad is a portal into a realm where reality and fiction coexist. Its seamless blend of authenticity and illusion showcases the fusion of marketing and cultural resonance, underscoring the potency of storytelling in the digital era.

Conclusion

Future studies should aim to identify value in online content. Considering that social networks provide options for sharing, liking and commenting, use of artificial intelligence to detect and foil harmful content is critical to protect upload, transmission or distribution of obscene content. This will broaden space for more informative, culturally-embedded content to be developed.

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