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DISSERTATION TOPIC

**COMMUNICATING LOSS THROUGH #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS IMAGES ON
TWITTER**

By

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my parents Mr. and Mrs. N L Sibanda with deep gratitude for their limitless sacrifices and for believing in me.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of Twitter images to communicate pain, anger, grief, hope, determination and other sentiments resulting from loss. By focusing on images shared on the Twitter handle #BringBackOurGirls started as a social media campaign against the kidnapping of school-going Nigerian girls by a militant group, Boko Haram, the research analyses how meanings are constructed through several codes. Drawing insights from semiotic concepts and theorizations about the role of social media in initiating and running online protests, the research considers the significance of the #BBOG campaign and the images that were posted on its Twitter handle from the onset.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research examines the use of Twitter images during the #BringBackOurGirls campaign created as a response to the kidnapping of Nigerian school girls by Boko Haram militants in 2014. Focus is on the codes that were used in these images and what they signified regarding the loss of the Nigerian girls to Boko Haram. The research pursues these codes and discusses the messages they convey. Images are the visual representation of something meant to serve a purpose and they can either be to communicate or entertain (Kress and & van Leeuwen 2006). The study will look at what the images communicated toward the fight against the Boko Haram in a bid to save the abducted girls.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

On 14 April 2014, at the Government Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria, a total number of 276 girls were abducted by the Boko Haram, an extremist and terrorist organisation based in the north-eastern of Nigeria (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). Nigeria, a country in Africa, is well known for its political violence and religious conflicts. According to the Hausa language Boko Haram is a name which translates roughly as “western education is forbidden”. The group is famous for attacking Christians, Muslims clerics and Government targets as well as for bombing churches, mosques, schools and police stations. They are ideologically opposed to the Western culture as well as the education of girls and thus coordinated the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in Nigeria.

The #BringBackOurGirls is a movement that was initiated by Oby Ezekwesili, a Nigerian woman demanding government officials to fulfill their duties as protectors of the Nation and save the girls that had been abducted by the Boko Haram. According to #BBC trending the #BBOG was first used in Nigeria on the 23rd of April 2014, on Twitter, and it then spread across all social media platforms. A Facebook page was created by Oby Ezekwesili to raise awareness about the abducted Nigerian girls. This movement was dedicated to giving individuals tools to help raise awareness and push the Nigerian government to act swiftly and rescue the girls. This campaign has been widely used over 3.3 million times on Twitter by different kinds of people worldwide. It gained worldwide momentum to the extent that it caught attention and drew the participation of influential and prominent people (Peters 2014). Among the prominent people who participated in the campaign include Michelle Obama, Malala Yousafzai, David Cameron and Queen Latifah.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Recent studies by writers such as Serafini (2009) have shown that we are now living in an accumulating visual culture where images and non- verbal resources are no longer used mainly to entertain and illustrate. Rather they are becoming significant in communication and meaning-making. The users of the #BBOG campaign adopted the use of images to communicate their concerns. Implementing a semantic approach in the analysis of the #BBOG campaign images used on social media, expressly Twitter, this study explores the role #BBOG images played towards the progression of a social media campaign: saving the abducted girls and fighting against Boko Haram.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research examines the role images played in the #BBOG campaign, particularly the messages they conveyed through various codes.

The objectives may be stated thus:

- To highlight the semiotic codes contained in #BBOG.
- To examine the recurrent messages in the #BBOG images.
- To analyze the sentiments and themes evoked through #BBOG images.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What semiotic codes prevail in most #BBOG images?
- What recurring messages are found in the images used in the #BBOG campaign?
- What are the dominant themes in the #BBOG campaign?
- What sentiments are evoked in the #BBOG images?

1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the images posted on Twitter social network platform under the #BBOG handle, this means that the study is delimited to images only posted and/or re-tweeted on this handle. The #BBOG Twitter handle has more than 500 images posted, not all images will be discussed, but only a total of 20 images posted during the early days of the campaign up to the middle stage of the campaign.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research explores the succession of visuals as a tool of communication in social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls. It also serves as a way of exploring how meaning was brought out through the employment of semiotic codes. Visuals are perceived as a new and effective way of communication and spreading information.

This research will benefit the media students and image researchers as it will expand their knowledge on engaging social network sites for protests, on how to construct and use images as a tool of communication for the protests. It will explore the role of social media as an instrument of global mobilization in a bid to fight against terror. The study will also explore how social media campaigns succeeded as a search database of information and as a popular platform of expression. It will expand the understanding of images as a communication tool and how to appreciate images used on campaigns.

1.8 DISSERTATION LAYOUT

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter has introduced the research by providing the reader with an idea of what constitute the whole research and how it will be conducted. This includes the background of study, statement of problem, aims and objectives of the research and the significance of the study.

The second chapter shall discuss the views of other scholars on the main subjects of the research and it will provide an appreciation of the theoretical framework that will be employed to analyze the research data. Methodology will be explained on the third chapter, it will explain where data was collected from, how it was collected and what was used to collect it. It will further provide relevant information about ethics taken into consideration for the research. The fourth chapter will critically analyze the data collected for the study. Chapter five is the final chapter that brings together all the arguments raised in the previous chapters.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Boko Haram: It is a Hausa name which translates as “western education is forbidden”, Boko Haram is a Nigerian militant group of people that is believed to have been formed in the 1990s.

Communication: It is the process by which information is exchanged between people or individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, visuals or behaviours.

Images: It is a visual representation of something.

Social Media Campaigns: These are campaigns that are initiated online and are used to form transitional communities and work as source of information.

Twitter: It is a digital platform that allows its users to share photographs and videos and supports one on one, one to many and many to many communications between the users.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the research. It constituted the background of study, statement of problem, aims and objectives of the research, the significance of the study and an outline of the research. Key terms were also defined. This chapter examines literature relevant to the subject under analysis. It focuses on existing literature on social media protests and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. Accordingly, the review will be divided into two sections: review of literature on Social Media protests and review of literature on #BringBackOurGirls campaign.

2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Social media campaigns are campaigns that are initiated online and are used to form transitional communities and work as source of information. Crider (2015) examines the use of social media in the protest movements of the 21st century. He points out that some people charge hashtag (#) activism with being a “lazy” form of expressing outrage and/ or support for an issue. However, others recognize its power to drive people to spread information rapidly. This shows how important social media is to protest movements as it is a way of spreading information. Crider agrees with other scholars that literacies of the 21st century are electronic, aural and image based. Consequently, therefore he is of the view that social media is vital to activist’s work.

Nwabuzor and Gezer (2015) analyze the role of social media as an instrument of global mobilization. They allude to the fact that various campaign texts posted on social media are

aimed at mobilizing global support against terror. This solidifies the researcher's views on the subject as it reinforces or highlights the major role played by social media in mobilizing support and awareness of the campaign and the need to increase its use in fighting against terrorism.

Lopes (2014) states that social media introduces speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques. There has been fast spread of information through social media which helps with the validation, mobilization and scope enlargement of protests. Lopes also observes that social media has created massive networks that not only connect the entire world, but also give people the ability to easily publicize opinions at a low cost, and to the speed and scale of group coordination. This sheds light on the fact that new tools found in social media act as a catalyst for popular movements around the world and that they provide more sources of knowledge.

Cammaerts (2015) studies the relation between social media and activism while giving an overview of the ways in which social media and digital networks are contextualized and examined in relation to social movements and activism. The emergence of digital networked technologies has led to the convergence of channels of distribution and communication formats including social media which particularly dwell more on the use and sharing of visual images. This shows that communication has gone beyond simple text communication and use of words as social media incorporates various media formats such as images to effectively send messages and rally support for activist programs such as the #BBOG campaign. Social Media is seen as a multimodal tool because it unites different forms of communication on one platform. This

strengthens the view that images played a pivotal role in the #BBOG campaign as communication of messages went beyond texts but based more on images published in order to achieve a certain emotional reaction from the masses around the globe. Cammaerts seems to agree with other scholars who have looked at social media and activism all around the globe.

Steinert- Threlkeld, Mocanu, Vesipgnani and Failer (2015) examine the connection between online social media behaviors and offline protests. They articulate that social media makes it easy for people to participate in the protests. As it is noted that individuals in a wide range of countries use social media to organize large scale protests, for example, #BBOG was initiated by an individual via social media and their popularity reinforces the argument. This sheds light to the fact that social media can be used to facilitate large scale protests offline and that it has the capability to help individuals protest and help the state repress individual protests. This reinforces the researcher's view that social media plays a major role in the success of protests.

Stokes and Lynn (2014) observe that social media strategies are now an essential part of many advocacy companies. Unlike traditional forms of media social media allow for interactive experiences both with content and other users. Recent events have further highlighted the power of social media. The #BBOG was used to call global attention to school girls kidnaped in Nigeria, with some analysts suggesting that the campaign raised sufficient awareness to help spur the Nigerian government to action. Social media, with written, audio and video opportunities, can be an effective way to share a good story. It should be noted that in order for one to have such a good social media strategy as purported by Stokes and Lynn can achieve effective

communication and great responses from audiences. The use of images is crucial in order to “incite, influence, or interest” an audience as the study recommended. This boosts the following study which analyses the importance and use of images particularly in the #BBOG campaign.

Olutonkumbo, Suadi, Cephas and Abu-Samah (2015) dwell on the concept of social mobilization and its implications for the cross-cultural research. To achieve the primary objective, this study adopted the method of content analysis of relevant existing literature; materials, pictures, as well as news reports to draw up conclusion based on the subject matter. The study revealed the importance of unity among nations, in the campaign for #BBOG, in the midst of religious turmoil, different cultures, gender inequalities and ethnic diversities. This has much bearing on the importance of images in the #BBOG campaign as the paper sheds more light on how personal and group protests using images were effective and what message they relayed to the world and with what response. The scholars however focus more on what these pictures meant to cross-cultural research.

Silverstone (2006) argues that social media has acted as an agenda setting platform for the whole world through the #BBOG. He points out that the hashtag and accompanying photos has forced the issue into a global agenda therefore social media has become the requisite medium for agenda setting globally. This shows how much the social media is influential as we saw prominent people also partaking in the campaign, for example, Michelle Obama making a statement in the Hallways of the State house.

As can be noted, literature on social media campaigns mainly focuses on the importance of social media in providing users with a platform and an opportunity to address issues which are of significance to them. Social media enables people to network and form social groups through which they can mobilize and pursue agendas which have a bearing on them as individuals and groups. The next section focuses on literature that has been written about the #BBOG campaign in particular.

2.2 THE BRING BACK OUR GIRLS CAMPAIGN

After the abduction of the 274 girls from a Secondary School in Chiboko, Nigeria, by Boko Haram, a social movement was initiated where the Nigerians took the streets of Abuja in protest and demanded the return of the girls. The movement quickly spread across online spaces and spread throughout social media where people began to hold up signs with the Twitter hashtag #BBOG. This development prompted scholars to focus on some aspects of the Twitter movement, some of which are discussed here.

Isharaza (2014) examines #BBOG campaign and the representation of distant suffering. Isharaza points out that in the wake of the attack on the secondary school, an international social media campaign was launched to pressure the Nigerian government and international community to respond and help rescue the abducted girls. This enlightens on how the #BBOG campaign came into being and digs deep into its nature and characteristics of the campaign as a global movement or campaign. Among the questions posed by the study is whether #BBOG was a sincere campaign or just a fashion trend in society whereby people merely shared the posts and images.

Isharaza further investigates the uniqueness of #BBOG and dwells more on its effectiveness as a representation of distance suffering.

Loken (2014) studies the international social media firestorm collected under the #BBOG. She highlights that much can be derived from the images and language used in the campaign as many of the images used can be viewed in many perspectives. This outlines how and what images communicated and sheds light on the whole outlook of the campaign, that is, the attitudes and views/ideas behind the campaign which are very equipping in understanding the movement thereby informing the following study. She however takes a different perspective on the whole abduction and subsequent #BBOG campaign focusing more on the problematic narratives of women evoked.

Berents (2016) examines the broader context and effect of social media campaigns that specifically invoke the concept of “girlhood” in their responses to crisis or tragedy. The scholar focuses on the #BBOG campaign by the Nigerians which was adopted globally in response to the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls by the terrorist group Boko Haram. She points out the impact of individuals in organizing protests as a measure of activism. Berents focuses more on the concept of girlhood arguing that social media activism condensed into hashtag and tweets (re) produces problematic and limited concepts of girlhood. Mention of the #BBOG campaign, the role of social media, and the impact of images is however made.

Olson (2016) examines the ways in which social media communities sustained the #BBOG, bridging online and offline communities to form a united movement. The scholar studies the evolution of #BBOG to analyze the ways that online communities can educate, organize, and mobilize publics. This sheds light on the stages of worldwide phenomenon and shows the effect it had on the global community and in how the world communicates/ mobilizes which are key components of investigation. Olson goes on to look at online communities and their fabrications.

Maxfield (2015) places the #BBOG campaign in the context of racist and imperialist narratives troubled history. He examines the issues behind the appropriation and abandonment of the #BBOG phenomenon by revealing the implications of the international campaign and existing power relations. He also examines the assertion that digital campaigns are technologically determined. This sheds light on the fabric of the whole campaign and informs much on the context of its inception and existence together with the various possible unconsidered and unforeseen discrepancies and inconsistencies among many different people and ideologies that were involved in the campaign. His study, though based on a current phenomenon, however focused more on the campaign's historical context and how this context shaped the campaign.

Page-Society (2015) scrutinize whether hashtag activism can create real-world change. The scholar contributes to our knowledge the sequence of events, the overview and organizational effectiveness of the #BBOG campaign while shedding more light on the reactions to and the life expectancy of the campaign by providing a critique of the #BBOG campaign. Much is gathered on the organization and effectiveness of the campaign as observations point to the campaign,

though comprehensive, as being decentralized and lacking integration in delivering its message. Detailed information about who did what and for what effect is provided positioning one to make a good analysis of the campaign. The study concludes that hashtag #BBOG was greatly used on social media as a protest and that it has lived on social media despite the fact that there was an imitation #Bringbackourdaughters which was less known.

Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) examine the discursive features of the #BBOG campaign and the role of effectiveness in relation to social actors in the campaign discourse. The findings from their study reveal that #BBOG campaign exhibits a great deal of effect at the level of vocabulary reflecting moods, feelings and emotional language in the representations of persons, groups and governments. This informs much on the attitudes, thoughts and feelings which dominated the campaign and weighs in on the issue of the representation which is crucial component of study. Chiluwa and Ifukor, however, submit that practical offline action is needed in campaigns of such a nature. The scholars are in line with other scholars who agree that offline action and skactivism is crucial to social media protests.

Emma (2015) examines the changing nature of international communication, occasioned by social media use of hashtag as auxiliary channels of international communication. She reviews and highlights the use of hashtag in various instances for internet activism and zeroes in on the Bring Back Our Girls hashtag. Emma points out the strengths and weaknesses of the hashtag as an instrument of international mobilization. The study posits that as the #BBOG campaign aptly demonstrated, hashtags have become the formidable instruments for international public

mobilization. Online activities were found to form a synergy with offline activities in efforts towards global public mobilization. He agrees with other scholars that offline activities need to accompany online activities.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study borrows insights from semiotics to discuss images under the #BBOG campaign. The semiotic approach was founded by Ferdinand De Saussure and later developed by various scholars including Roland Barthes, Charles Peirce and Daniel Chandler. The study will use Roland Barthes' ideas to analyze the data. Barthes (1967) observes that reality is always encoded; that all denotation is connotation. He declares that semiology aims at taking in the system of signs; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects and the complex associations of all these. These constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification. Barthes is interested in applying the method of semiotics into the reading of everyday life; this is how semiotics began to become a major approach in cultural studies.

In understanding signs, Barthes proposed key concepts of understanding meaning and these are:

- Denotation
- Connotation

For the better understanding of the data, the researcher employed both denotation and connotation because these play a significant role in the study of signs and interpretation of images. They enable an understanding of images, the #BBOG images in this case, as culturally

and historically specific. The #BBOG images carry with the orders of meaning which should be considered.

2.3.1 Denotation

It is simply the description of what, or who is represented. Denotation is described as the “literal” and “obvious” meaning of a sign. This means that the study will use this principle to identify signs used in the images for the #BBOG campaign. The denotation of a representational visual image is what can be understood by any viewers of different cultures as depicted.

2.3.2 Connotation

Connotation refers to socio-cultural and personal associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. They are the ideas and values expressed through that was being presented and through the way in which they were presented. These happen to be related to the interpreter’s class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter, basing upon the above information and sources, examined the social media campaigns and how they are crucial in organizing offline protests and making the initiated protests successful. It examined literature on social media campaigns and the role they play in today’s society. Apart from the review of literature on social media campaigns in general, the literature review also focused on scholarly literature on the #BBOG campaign. Several critics look at this campaign and focus on different aspects which were raised in the review of their

literature. Barthes's semiotics was also discussed and identified as the theoretical grounding of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed literature relevant to the study. It focused on how the present study links with other researchers and what related studies have said about social media protests and the #BBOG campaign. The chapter also discussed the theory guiding the study. This chapter explores the methods and techniques that were used by the researcher to collect information. The researcher justified why particular methods were selected for the present study. The qualitative research method is used as it is descriptive in nature. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:30) refer to qualitative research as a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live. Researchers who use this approach adopt a person-centered holistic and humanistic perspective to understand human lived experiences without focusing on the specific concepts (Field & Morse 1996:8).

3.1 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Burns and Grove (2003) define a research design as systematic plan and procedures used by the researcher to develop a study. This means that the researcher employs a particular method to collect, examine and understand the data under study. For this study, a netnographic method was employed as a research method. Netnography is a qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets 2002: 65).

Netnography is not so unique from other methods. However, its feature of being able to examine interactions that take place in a public space makes it distinctive from others (Kozinets 2010). This method consists of three forms of data collection namely archive, elicited and field notes.

Archive is engaged where data is collected through the participation of the researcher. A participative approach was used where the researcher was a member of every social network group that was initiated for the #BBOG campaign. The researcher downloaded prolific quantities of data and focused on those within the time frame. The researcher categorized and continually sorted data as it was collected.

3.2 POPULATION

The population of the study was characterized by a total number of 11 images selected from Twitter social network platform under the #BBOG handle from a number of 350 images. These images were posted by different people from different backgrounds, cultures and ethnic groups which made the population relevant for the study from the 1st of May 2014 to the 15th of April 2015.

3.2.1 SUB-POPULATION

The sub-population of the study consisted images posted on Twitter under the #BBOG handle. These images were posted by different participants with different intentions toward the need to save the abducted girls and fight against Boko Haram. The study used 11 images that were posted during the campaign from 1st of May 2014 to the 15th of April 2015.

3.3 SAMPLING METHODS

Sampling involves the selection of a number of study units in such a way that the units represent the larger group from which they were selected (Patton 2002). The study employed non-random sampling method which is purposive sampling. Kothari (1990) notes that the purposive sampling

method involves the choosing of particular units from a universal unit sample. The samples of the study were 20 images selected from #BBOG Twitter handle from May 2014 to May 2015.

3.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Sampling is a process of selecting, for example, images from a population of interest so as to fairly generalize the results back to the population from which they were chosen. Images were observed from the #BBOG handle and 20 were chosen for the study. The images were chosen to ensure that the researcher got accurate and different signs from the pictures. The images were made up of personal protests, group protests and artificially made images. During the study, there was observation on the campaign and images which were continuously being produced and posted and this was done to ensure that the selected images would surely represent the other images posted about the campaign. Observations took place on the #BBOG Twitter handle because it is an evocative platform which serves a powerful public space for minorities and the marginalized voices and it is seen as a tool for progress (Smith 2015).

3.5 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data is analyzed to obtain usable and useful information. The analysis of data describes and summarizes the data under study. It is during this process when raw data is refined to information. The study used semiotic analysis to refine its data to information. Semiotic analysis is the study of signs. In understanding signs, Barthes proposed key concepts of understanding meaning and these are denotation, connotation and myth, the study employed denotation and connotation to analyze the research data.

Denotation is simply the description of what, or who is represented and is also described as the “literal” and “obvious” meaning of a sign. Therefore, the study engaged this principle to identify signs used to construct the images for the #BBOG campaign. It further employed the connotation principle which refers to socio-cultural and personal associations (ideological, emotional etc.) of the sign. These are the ideas and values expressed through what was being presented and through the way in which they were presented. These happen to be related to the interpreter’s class, age, gender, and ethnicity and so on. Here the research looked for a deeper meaning of the images constructed looking at why they were constructed and for what purpose.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher did not use any human participants however the research duly considered that the issue is sensitive to families grieving the unknown whereabouts of their loved ones. The study managed to be cautious towards the grieving hearts through the wise choice of words which weren’t harmful but soothing. Above all the researcher managed to be honest and cautious.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the multiple ways through which information was gathered for study, addressing the population, sampling procedures, data collection instrument and procedures. Ethical concerns which could have impacted on the survey were attended to. The next chapter looks at the collected qualitative research data with special attention to what signs were used on the images and what they communicated.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at the methods used in collecting and analyzing data. The population and the sample were identified, including the sampling method and procedures that were used. This chapter presents and interprets the collected qualitative research data with special focus on what signs used on the images collected from the #BBOG campaign Twitter handle communicated. These will be analyzed using semiotic approach whereby Roland Barthes's idea of connotative and denotative levels of interpretation will be employed. Data will be classified as following: #BBOG Logo, Personal protests of drawn images and personal protests of prominent people.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Following is the data collected and analyzed for the study.

4.1.1 THE #BBOG LOGO

Campaigns are an active means towards a goal. They are shaped by themes, a motto, a vision and a logo. The #BBOG campaign came to be associated with a specific logo, portrayed below, which communicates and symbolizes the campaign's vision. Resultantly, it suffices to make it the starting point of the analysis.



Figure 1. The #BBOG logo

The #BBOG logo comprises of red and white colors with words reading ‘#BRING BACK OUR GIRLS NOW’, in bold font, inserted in the middle. Red is the color that was declared for the campaign as a way of honoring the girls. Generally, red is associated with blood, danger, fear and suffering. Ironically, at one point it represented the threat of communism to the capitalist West. In the present context, however, it symbolizes the suffering of girls kidnapped by Boko Haram. It is not clear why such a colour came to be the symbol of a campaign against a militant group when in some cultures; black would be the appropriate colour for mourning and grieving. Is it possible that red could have been chosen to boldly declare war on Boko Haram? That if they come to the open they are going to be met with stiff resistance from ordinary people sympathizing with the kidnapped girls?

Set against a white background, though, it is possible to conclude that the red marking the words “bring back our girls” represents blood spilled in the name of Boko Haram. It tells of the peace that is threatened by the blood-thirsty militants. The logo has the word ‘our’, a possessive word, which creates a sense of ownership and unity. The world is imagined as one and affected as much as the families of the abducted girls. The ‘we’ saying ‘our’ in the slogan is everyone partaking in the #BBOG campaign. The word ‘NOW’ is written in a larger font as a way of signifying urgency and declaration.

4.1.2 IMAGES OF PERSONAL PROTESTS (DRAWN IMAGES)

During the process of image construction for communicative purposes one considers the following options; construct an image to be viewed as a negative regard by audiences (in order to

‘attack or ‘discredit’) and construct an image to be viewed with a positive regard by audiences (in order to enhance the image) and construct an image. A number of images created during the campaign comprised sketches drawn in order to communicate specific images. Below I discuss five such sketches.



Figure2. Artificial Image

The image above clearly shows how people were individually involved in the protest by going an extra mile of drawing images to express themselves and represent the kidnapping of the Chibok girls by Boko Haram. The image portrays a minor with teary eyes, a bleeding forehead, and a mouth covered by a masculine hand. Beneath is a message with key words highlighted in red. The teary eyes in the image communicate the suffering and pain these girls are going through from being away from their homes. The teary eyes tap into the viewer's emotions and evoke empathy and sympathy for the girls. Its effect, therefore, is to solicit pity. The masculine and strong hand that is covering the minor's mouth signifies violence. The hand also symbolizes abuse and force experienced by the Chibok girls as a result of their kidnapping. The minor's eyes display fear.

The black background in the image diminishes readability evoking the feeling of perspective and depth for the safe return of the girls. Generally black symbolizes evil and darkness. Compared with white in the logo, this shows how the Boko Haram's evilness has threatened and overshadowed peace. When the logo and the sketch image above are taken together they communicate contrasting meanings through colour symbolism. The shadowy hand without a body or face shows that the terrorists remain anonymous to the world. The words on the image are a plea for support through prayer. This plea is obviously meant to invite more people to support the cause. The artist used the word 'pray' which betrays the belief that prayer can also play a role in saving the abducted girls. The word is also highlighted in red to represent pain, suffering and abuse.

As already observed from the sketch discussed above, a number of images were typically biased towards women, particularly the girl-victims of Boko Haram. Another example of such sketches follows below:



Figure 3. Artificial Image

The image uses a female figure to stand in for the girls and represent the masses behind her. The face is almost expressionless although one can discern a note of sadness. While the colours on the image are not vivid, there is a tinge of purple on the girl's face and the head wrap that she adorns on her head. The colour purple signifies royalty which suggests that the producer views the girls as princesses of Nigeria. This is because "So education is truly a girl's best chance for a bright future, not just for herself, but for her family and her nation" said *Michelle Obama –Bring back our girls* (2010).

The words in the picture speak volumes about the author's perception of Boko Haram. The group is referred to as a 'Monster', a name which is associated with something that only means destruction and has no empathy and doesn't care about happiness. Boko Haram is a Hausa name which translates Western education is forbidden and this image elaborates on that through the words 'scared to death of an educated girl.' The words in the image therefore spell out Boko Haram's mission as that of stifling the education of girl children. Although the name "Boko Haram" says nothing about girls, the author takes a feminist stance in view of the kidnapping of only girls during the raid on the 14th of April 2014.

Contrary to what appears an expressionless face is another sketch with a teary face below in Fig 4. This is also an outstanding image because it is a drawing and not an actual picture. It produces an imaginary and somber atmosphere. Somber colors were used to give a dull effect; the kind of situation the girls are likely to be experiencing. The tear stains developing from the girl's eyes represent grief and pain, similar to the other images that have been discussed above. The text

used raises awareness that the kidnapping of the Chibok girls is not only a human rights violation but is akin to a war atmosphere. It then makes an explicit demand by inverting the popular demand “Bring back our girls now” to ‘NOW! Bring back our girls. This shows the immediate nature of the demand and the priority of the demand as “now” is not only put first but is also written in capital letters.

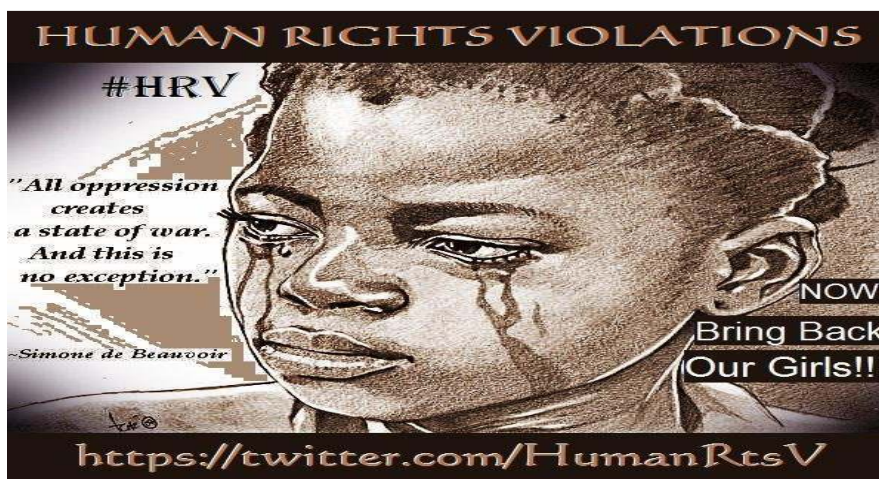


Figure 4. Artificial Image.

The reference to Simone de Beauvoir is interesting because she had a significant influence on both feminist existentialism and feminist theory. The quote is taken from her work *The Second Sex*, in which she produced an articulate case that throughout history women have been relegated to a sphere of “immanence and the passive acceptance of roles assigned to them by society.

The final two sketches to be discussed are a departure from the sketches discussed so far in that they capture groups of people. The first, figure 5, has nine people who are looking upwards as if in appeal to a higher authority.



Figure 5. Artificial Image

It may be supposed that the people are of different ages suggesting that the abduction of the girls affected a cross section of people. Different gestures are employed; others are just pointing in the air, one has a fist in the air, some have both hands in the air and the other is waving a flag.

During protests, a fist in the air signifies a symbol of solidarity and support. It is also used as a salute to express unity, strength, defiance, or resistance. This shows the defiant and unified nature of the campaign as a stance against women's oppression. Similarly, waving a flag is a symbolic act which shows freedom, pride and strength. Waving of a flag is usually a gesture of patriotism. The shadowy figures may well represent a "black movement" which may point to the stance taken by the black majority in solidarity with the movement to free "our" girls.

The other image showing many figures follows:



Figure 6. Artificial image

The image is characterized by red drawings of people of both sexes of different ages holding hands against a white background. The idea of cartooned people holding hands demonstrates unity and solidarity across gender lines. Icons in the shape of hearts are also part of the image. These are meant to communicate the aspect of love and affection towards the kidnapped girls. Loud-speakers represent the loud voices of people clamoring for the return of the girls. The image above communicates unity among people globally, as they come together to fight Boko Haram and demand the return of the abducted girls. The colours are consistent with earlier uses of red and white to show militancy and the need for peace.

4.1.3 IMAGES OF REAL TIME

Besides the sketches that were drawn by some people in the fight against Boko Haram, there were also images of real time which appeared on the #BBOG Twitter handle. These are images that were captured at different intervals for the purpose of the campaign. The research identifies

them as real time images because they are not drawn but they were captured. AN example appears below:

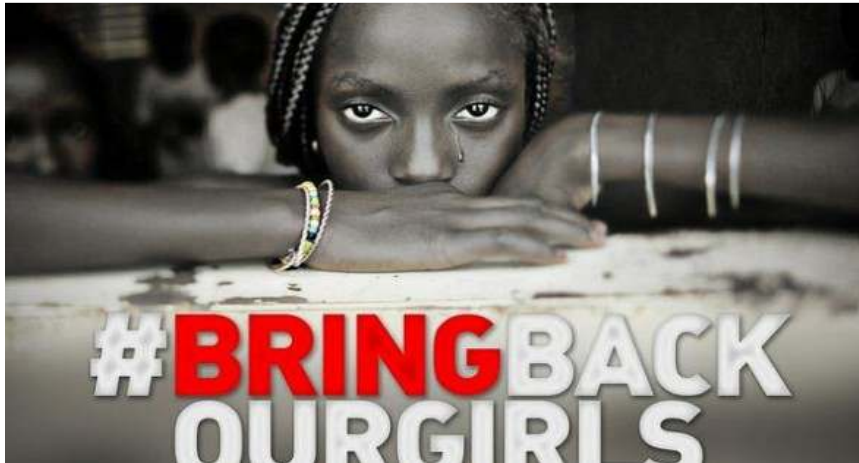


Figure 7. Real time images

The image portrays a black girl with clear eyes which, without noticing the tears, would make one assume that the girl is in good health. However, her eyes are inclined upward in a pose which would imply a cry for help. The tear flowing down her cheek shows hurt, defeat and pain which arouse anger and pain on the viewer, and a need to avenge the girls.

The caption, ‘#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS’, is deliberately written in capital letters to make the message visible. Not all signs used in the images are meant to communicate the need to save the girls however. Some of the props distract one’s attention from the misery and worry. For instance, the bangles on the girls’ wrists seem to be communicating something different.

As already observed from the real time images discussed above. Another example achieving the same purpose but collaging two images and concepts is the next image:



Figure 8. Real time pictures

From the above image, five open palms serve two purposes. The first is to communicate words “we are not for sale”, which is a common notion with most Africans because of the controversy around the paying of bride prices in most African cultures, printed on the palms. This gives a sense therefore that certain people view women as commodities and objects which can be owned and this image fights against such notions. The second purpose, deriving from the use of open palms is to signal the message “stop” as usually seen used in sign language and even police officers in traffic control. The girl has a head wrap on her head something consistent with Nigerian culture and some images used in the campaign. The girl has a scar on her face which means she is a victim of physical abuse. The girl represents the other abducted girls and her scar is a reflection of the pain they are going through. The scar will not only be in the girls’ lives but in the lives of the world as well. This communicates the need to save these girls from the torment

they are facing as young as they are. It can be observed that the image was drained of colour and the result is a sense of gloominess or sadness.

With a different approach to the campaign is the next image which employs clear protest rather than appeal.



Figure 9. Real Time Images

The picture above shows a rally of men and women in campaign for #BBOG. The participants wear red, a colour which is synonymous with the campaign as observed during the discussion of the campaign logo. The image portrays people with placards that are advocating the end of terrorism and the rescue of the girls. The image communicates hope that the people still has.

The final two images to be discussed are a departure from the image discussed above because they capture groups of people. The first, figure 10, has children who are posing at the camera enjoying they moment.



Figure 10. Real Time Images

The image portrays school children, of different ages, with smiling faces, which is an expression of excitement. What seems to excite them is the fact that they go to school, something that can be gleaned from the school uniforms they wear. Unlike the images discussed so far, this particular image shows happy faces. The reason, it seems, is to communicate what Boko Haram has stolen from the Chibok girls. Not only has it separated the girls from their mothers, but it has also robbed them an opportunity to build their own dreams and shape their destiny through education. More so, that from abducting them they took away their freedom, their peace and the smiles on their faces. The image is certainly a counter-attack on Boko Haram's propaganda against Western education.



Figure 11. Real Time Images

The picture of the ‘women’ has girls and seemingly old ladies who might be their parents which show that the abducted girls are someone’s daughter. Note the gloomy pic on the bottom right of the image which appears to be on the wall or imaginary as if to say she is a thought in their minds. The image also shows the girls surrounded by walls which might mean that they are trapped and oppressed. The story written marks one empathize with those affected and the color of the short paragraph is the same as the United Nations’ logo which shows the link or oneness. At the bottom, that is, the bottom line is written in red and in bold letters which summarizes the whole appeal and message of the whole image.

4.2 Conclusion

The analysis has explored the role #BBOG images played toward the progression of a social media campaign meant to save Nigerian girls kidnapped by the militant group Boko Haram. It was observed that images appeared in different forms and used a number of codes to communicate sentiments which include grief, pain, hope, fear and determination. The #BBOG images communicated the need to save the abducted girls and fight against the principalities of

the Boko Haram. Images, it can be noted, play a pivotal role as a tool of communication and the meanings they express are culturally and historically specific.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed images posted on #BBOG in the light of what they communicated in the campaign against Boko Haram. This chapter concludes the research by outlining the main points that have been noted by the study.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study sought to draw attention to the different signs employed in the images of the #BBOG and what they communicated. The significance of the study was explained in the first chapter as the research was being introduced. The chapter explored the background of the study and what triggered the researcher to do this research on #BBOG campaign. The chapter also gave an overview of the problem statement and objectives which guided the research.

Significance literature on the concept of social media protests and #BBOG was reviewed in the second chapter of this study. The chapter explored the different understandings of social media protests and noted that they act as a tool for global mobilization against terror and that they set an agenda globally. It was also noted that social media provides users with a platform and an opportunity to address issues which are of significance to them. This chapter also discussed literature on the #BBOG. It was noted that the campaign has lived on social media despite the fact that there was an imitation called #Bringbackourdaughters which was less known and used. An overview of the theoretical approach to the study was also made in this chapter. Roland Barthes' ideas were explored because of their relevance to the analysis of semiotic signs.

Chapter three focused on the methodology of the study. Netnography can be credited for its assurance for collecting data online. The chapter focused more on the method of collecting data and explained the procedures taken in identifying the population and sample of the study. The chapter also revealed how data was collected.

Chapter four analyzed the #BBOG images. This chapter looked at what signs were employed in the images and what they communicated. The continuous employment of color symbolism and facial expressions to communicate emotion was discussed. It was generally observed in the chapter that all images posted on the Twitter handle were communicating toward the fight against Boko Haram and the need to save the abducted girls.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

From the images that were used during the #BBOG campaign, it is observed that the most prevailing semiotic modes employed were faces of women and children with different facial expressions and colors of red, white, purple and black. Other images used faces of children and women who had nothing to do with the girls that were kidnapped as a way of representation. Some images were dominated with different colors which were used interchangeably to communicate the pain and suffering inflicted on the Community of Nigeria, the world at large and the suffering of the girls. However white was employed as a way of advocating for peace.

The recurring message found in the images which communicated toward the need to save the abducted girls was 'Bring back our girls'. This dominated all the images because it was the

theme of the campaign and it had a tone of demand with the word 'NOW' appearing either at the beginning or at the end. Despite the fact that the campaign involved many participants from different continents, common themes included love, the need to empower women and the idea of nationhood. The images used during the campaign portrayed the following sentiments: fear, hope, concern, despair, grief and determination.

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