


Chapter 3

“No Gree for Anybody”: Internet Memes and the Framing of Resistance in Nigerian Online Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Internet memes serve as a tool for resistance in Nigerian online discourse, focussing on the 2024 New Year slogan “No gree for anybody.” Using 40 purposively selected Internet memes gathered between January and March 2024, from Facebook and X, the analysis draws on Benford and Snow’s Collective Action Frames and Kress and van Leeuwen’s concept of visual grammar. Dominant issues expressed through the memes include social inequality, infrastructural challenges, political discontent, gender roles, and national identity. Through visual exaggeration, narrative framing and symbolic juxtaposition, the memes highlight people’s daily struggles and frames of resistance. The memes’ visual symbolism fosters resistance, critiques societal norms and amplifies marginalised voices. This research concludes that internet memes play a crucial role in shaping resistance discourse in Nigeria, serving as both a reflection of ongoing struggles and an active space for expressing defiance, identity, and solidarity in the digital age.

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INTRODUCTION

The slogan “No gree for anybody” emerged as a 2024 New Year’s resolution in the Nigerian online space, with people jointly and tacitly adopting the phrase as the hallmark to guide the New Year. New Year’s resolutions, often personal, are common across cultures. However, the digital age has fostered collective forms of resolutions, where culturally significant slogans like “No gree for anybody” serve as a rallying point for social movements. The slogan evolved into a tool for shared resistance in the Nigerian online space, aligning with the “social media ritual” of New Year’s resolution (Hallinan et al., 2023). Burgess et al. (2018: 10) see media rituals as “generic conventions and media practices”, highlighting how people use media in response to planned and unplanned events, celebrations, or crises to communicate shared values. This means that while people build a sense of online community through social media rituals, the intentions behind these rituals are not fixed but negotiated based on established norms (Highfield, 2016). Notwithstanding the universal patterns of social media rituals (Trillò et al., 2022), there are cultural differences in the way people deploy them when they engage in online communication. This accounts for why the slogan could be perceived in a positive or negative sense, depending on how it is contextually deployed. Internet memes in online communication provide a unique way for people to relate together, with a shared understanding of how to forge ahead in the complex world.

In the Nigerian space, the earliest use of the expression is traced to Evangelist Agatha Moses’ song, “I no go gree”, written as a gospel song to inspire the Christian faithful to be resilient in their pursuit of expected miracles. The phrase embodies concerns about self-confidence and resistance against oppression (Nwabunwene and Waive-Aghante, 2024). Beyond reviving the almost-forgotten song, contemporary artists also composed new songs after the phrase became popular. Oludipe Oluwasanmi David, a Nigerian singer professionally known as Spyro, took advantage of the trend to release a single titled “No gree for anybody” in 2024. His song also reiterates self-assertion in daily dealings. Sequel to the diverse application of the phrase in different discourse situations, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) tagged the expression a “message of rebellion” because of its revolutionary tendencies (The Guardian, 2024), fearing that the continuous use of the phrase may lead to societal chaos.

While existing research on New Year’s resolutions focuses on individual behaviour change, such as the adoption of healthier lifestyles including eating habits, improved personal productivity through weight loss or the cessation of negative habits like smoking (Oscarsson et al., 2020), there has been limited exploration of how culturally significant slogans function as collective resolutions. These studies typically examine the psychological mechanisms underlying goal-setting and self-

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