

Chapter 4 Multimodal Communication Strategies in Digital Protests of Selected August 1, 2024 Nigeria Protest

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the multimodal discourse of the August 1, 2024, Nigeria protest on TikTok and Facebook, addressing a gap in understanding its application in digital protests on these platforms. Using a qualitative methodology and eight data samples, the research employs Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Halliday's Social Semiotic Theory. Findings reveal strategic use of colour, visual symbols, and interactive features to enhance protest impact, highlighting the transformative potential of digital communication in contemporary social movements. Conclusions underscore the importance of digital platforms in modern protests and suggest further research into multimodal strategies.

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The proliferation of digital media has revolutionised the landscape of protest movements globally, and Nigeria is no exception. On 1 August 2024, Nigeria witnessed a significant digital protest, a manifestation of the populace's dissatisfaction with socio-political issues. This protest, notable for its extensive use of digital platforms, offers a rich site for analysing multimodal communication strategies. The intricacies of such communication can be effectively examined through the lens of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as conceptualised by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), combined with Halliday's Social Semiotic Approach. Digital protests have emerged as powerful tools for collective action in the 21st century, leveraging the ubiquity and connectivity of social media platforms to mobilise participants, disseminate information, and shape public discourse (Gerbaudo, 2012). Unlike traditional protests, digital protests utilise a variety of semiotic resources, including text, images, videos, and hashtags, to create compelling narratives and foster solidarity among participants. The digital space provides a relatively low-cost and accessible platform for activists to reach a global audience, thereby amplifying their messages and potentially influencing policy decisions (Castells, 2012). The digital protest in Nigeria on 1 August 2024 was characterised by the strategic use of social media to highlight grievances, coordinate activities, and generate international awareness. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were instrumental in spreading information rapidly and engaging a diverse audience. TikTok, in particular, played a crucial role in this protest by allowing protesters to create and share short, impactful videos that quickly garnered widespread attention. The use of hashtags like #EndSARSToday and #ReformNigeria exemplifies how digital activists create and utilise succinct, memorable phrases that encapsulate the essence of their movements and facilitate the aggregation of related content (Bruns & Burgess, 2011).

Multimodal Discourse Analysis, as developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), provides a comprehensive framework for examining the various semiotic resources employed in communication. MDA posits that meaning is constructed not only through language but also through other modes such as images, gestures, and spatial arrangements. In the context of digital protests, this approach facilitates an understanding of how protesters utilise a combination of textual, visual, and auditory elements to articulate their messages and mobilise support. The 1 August digital protest in Nigeria, characterised by the deployment of hashtags, memes, videos, and infographics, exemplifies the multifaceted nature of contemporary protest communication. TikTok and Facebook videos, with their dynamic combination of visual and auditory elements, provided a powerful medium for protesters to convey their messages succinctly and persuasively. Halliday's Social Semiotic Theory, on the other hand, emphasises the social functions of language and other semiotic modes.

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