

Cartoon Application in Communication and Social Mobilization in Nigeria's Bring Back Our Girls: The way Forward

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ABSTRACT: *There is no doubt that art is an effective way to communicate messages. Pictures and cartoons cover for a shortfall of issues which cannot be wholly captured in words. The visual nature of cartoons gives it the ability to evoke emotions and cause people to act and react in a certain manner. The concern of this work is to investigate the potency of the cartoons used in the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, between May 2014 and January 2015. The study adopts the pragmatic theory as a framework. Using content analysis the study collated and analysed cartoons published on local and international websites on BBOG campaign, to gain accurate insight, 126 respondents from Calabar Municipality graded all 35 cartoons on their social mobilization content. Analysis of the data revealed active cartoon publications on the campaign, also a larger percent of the respondents indicated that the cartoons were potent for social mobilization. The paper recommends that in regard to the effectiveness of cartoons in communication, more NGOs, Governments and the active public should employ cartoons as a means of commenting on the challenges bedevilling the society.*

KEYWORDS: Cartoons, social mobilization, communication, pragmatic theory

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an interesting experience, over time man has developed very creative ways of expressing himself and passing messages across. These messages are sometimes mundane, and sometimes they are downright massive and focus on edgy societal issues. The idea of dumb art or art for art sake is one with really weak roots, art is deliberate, and all works of art carry intended messages which address societal happenings. In this wise, art is purposive and issues based.

Douglas, (2013) defines communication as “the act of conveying intended meaning to another entity through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules. The basic steps of communication are the forming of communicative intent, message composition, message encoding, transmission of signal, reception of signal, message decoding and finally interpretation of the message by the recipient”. Cartoons thrive on shared meaning, in the symbols and labels employed to convey messages, this way the message conveyed is understood and not lost.

Social Mobilization

UNICEF (2013) on its official website views social mobilization as “a process that engages and motivates a wide range of partners and allies at national and local levels to raise awareness of and demand for a particular development objective...” With the advent of the internet, social mobilization has increased in participation and has become more effective, involving millions locally and internationally. Calls to sign petitions, to participate in a protest, a boycott and strike action are all part of social mobilization.

Statement of Problem

There is a popular notion that cartoons are humorous caricatures and aside igniting laughter, they cannot be treated seriously. This study investigates the validity of this assertion and particularly related to handling national issue like Bring Back Our Girls’ syndrome.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives in this study are as follows:

- (i) To understand the role of cartoons in the Bring Back Our Girls’ Campaign.
- (ii) To learn the intensity of the compliant and non-compliant cartoons used in the cause of “Bring Back Our Girls”.
- (iii) To determine the usefulness of cartoons in mobilizing people towards a cause.

Research Questions

The following essays are the possible research questions for this study:

- Q1 what is the frequency of the cartoons used in the Bring Back Our Girls’ campaign?
- Q2 Which media (local or international) published more social mobilization compliant cartoons?
- Q3 Are cartoons effective for social mobilization?

Significance of the Study

The survivorship of this study will depend on these facts:

- (i) The study will illuminate the power of cartoons and artwork in general in persuading, negotiating and causing change.
- (ii) The study will improve upon sound, logical visual literacy.
- (iii) It will be a basis for further research.

Scope of the Study

The study covers the period between May 2014 and January 2015. The study is also limited to cartoons published on local and international websites within the stated period.

Theoretical Framework

For guidance and proper grounding of this study, the pragmatic theory has been applied to provide framing for the study.

Pragmatic Theory

This theory holds that the primary essence of art is to serve a function and to have consequent effects upon its audience. Laurie Spiegel (1998) in her article on Theories of Art identified key components of the pragmatic theory. In her submission, art is:

- A means of communication
- A means of perceiving a higher or ideal reality

- Instructive, didactic or propagandistic.

In the light of this theory, cartooning is a purposive art, designed to communicate messages with consequent reactions from its consumers.

Bring Back Our Girls

Almost two years ago, precisely on the night of April 14, 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from their hostels at a government secondary school in the town of Chibok, Borno state. Boko Haram, the Islamist terror group plaguing the North-Eastern part of Nigeria claimed responsibility for the abduction. According to statistics from Bring Back Our Girls' official website, 276 school girls were kidnapped, 57 escaped, while 218 are still missing to this day, (Bring Back Our Girls, 2016). Even today it is believed that government is not doing enough to rescue the abducted Chibok girls.

The Bring Back Our Girls campaign has undoubtedly generated a lot of sympathy and support from the international community. Michelle Obama, wife of the President of America and the popular France based *Charlie Hebdo* magazine called for more efforts to rescue the abducted girls. There is the danger that these girls may be psychologically and sexually abused. Every potent means of communication must be employed to appeal to the sensibilities of parents, government and the general population to increase efforts towards saving the school girls from their violent abductors.

Brief History of Cartoons Journalism

We all recognize cartoons as quirky representations of life. It is interesting to note that although this art form became popular in the 20th century when it featured in newspapers, film and most recently the internet, her art has been on for several thousand years. A close look at some historic caves shows that our earliest ancestors (cavemen) drew cartoons on cave walls to reflect their encounter with fellow men, beasts, and environment and ritual practices. In line with this reasoning, Kunzle (2009) in 'Microsoft Encarta' defines cartoon as "a drawing made on paper in preparation for and in the same size as a painting, tapestry, mosaic, or piece of stained glass". He goes on to state that "since the 1840s the term also come to mean any humorous, satirical or opinionated drawing, typically one printed in a newspaper or magazine, with or without a short text." Although this definition covers much on the nature of cartoons, it is not totally up-to-date as modern-day cartoons have electronic dimensions, as displayed on film and TV. According to Cool cartooning (2008), "in later centuries other societies such as the Mayans and Egyptian carved intricate cartoons upon solid rocks. In fact the languages of these people were represented by figures of animals and people carved into their tombs and temples".

The Greeks were also one of the earliest makers of this art form; they created mosaics. *Merriam Webster Dictionary* (2015) defines mosaics as "a decoration made by inlaying small pieces of variously coloured materials to form pictures or patterns". In the 17th and 18th centuries, cartoons began to feature in books, newspapers and magazines. In modern-day, cartoons are everywhere, on newspapers, books and magazines; they are also on billboards, posters, television and the internet.

Characterization of Political Cartoons and Social Mobilization

Cartoons are mostly satirical; the satirical makeup of the art is a deliberate effort by cartoonists to spur thinking and to cause change. According to Stravroudis (2014 p. 3),

“political cartoons are anything but innocent caricatures”. In that same vein, Brown et al. (2010) affirms that, “cartoon journalism recreates and rejuvenates a proactive being in man which will warrant socio-politicized actions.” Political cartoons are active comments on the political scenario of a given society, thus, they are criticisms of what or who is not going right. Often laced with humour, political cartoons have the ability to thrust salient messages on the minds of consumers. Through the effective use of symbolism, labelling, exaggeration, irony and juxtaposition, cartoons make us have a critical think on our state of affairs. ‘Political’ here is an umbrella term for socio-economic and religious realities.

METHODOLOGY

In carrying out this study, the quantitative method of research has been put to use with a particular bias for content analysis. Hoslti (1969, p. 14) defines content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” Hoslti’s definition asserts that content analysis is not used solely for analysing textual data but also for analysing pictures and even videos. The 35 cartoons used for the study were presented alongside the rating scale, to 126 respondents from Calabar Municipality, consisting of 30 Artists, 36 Journalists, 30 Lecturers and 30 Students. Their responses to the items on the rating scale, which were built on a four-point Likert scale, were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, t-test, and analysis of variance with its accompanying F ratio test.

Content Categories and Units of Analysis

Content analysis has been used here to analyse cartoons used in Bring Back Our Girls’ campaign (as presented on the internet). In line with the objectives of this study and to put to rest the research questions of the study, we identified two content categories for the study:

- (i) Social Mobilization Compliant (SMC) to represent cartoons targeted at mobilizing support for the rescue of the abducted Chibok girls and
- (ii) Non-compliant Cartoons (NCC) to represent cartoons which trivialized efforts to rescue the abducted Chibok girls.

The units of analysis are:

- (i) Local Media (LM) to represent cartoons from websites in Nigeria.
- (ii) International Media (IM) to represent cartoons from International websites.

Questionnaires were administered to 126 respondents comprising 84 males and 42 females.

Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	84	66.7	66.7	66.7
Female	42	33.3	33.3	100.0
Total	126	100.0	100.0	

Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Artist	30	23.8	23.8	23.8
Journalist	36	28.6	28.6	52.4
Lecturer	30	23.8	23.8	76.2
Student	30	23.8	23.8	100.0
Total	126	100.0	100.0	

Out of these, 30 were lecturers, 30 Artists, 36 Journalists and 30 Students. Between May 2014 and January 2015, a total of 35, LM (18) and IM (17) cartoons were published on the internet. The questionnaire asked respondents if cartoons are effective for social mobilization. All 35 cartoons within the study period were part of the questionnaire, and respondents graded them on a 4-point Likert scale.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Responses on the effectiveness of BBOG cartoons in social mobilization

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	6	4.8	4.8	4.8
Agree	72	57.1	57.1	61.9
Strongly Agree	48	38.1	38.1	100
Total	126	100.0	100.0	100.0

The results showed that 6 persons disagreed, 72 agreed and 48 of the respondents strongly agreed to favour the effectiveness of BBOG cartoons in social mobilization. When the mean ratings were tested against a theoretical expected level of 3.5, the difference was significant ($t = 16.536$, $p = .000$). This was interpreted to mean that cartoons are significantly effective as tools for social mobilization. The mean ratings were computed for each of the 35 cartoons. The whole descriptive statistics are shown in the table below.

Media Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
LM one	126	2.00	4.00	3.3333	.05040	.56569
LM two	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM three	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
LM four	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
LM five	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM six	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
LM seven	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
LM eight	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM nine	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
LM ten	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
LM eleven	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM twelve	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
LM thirteen	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
LM fourteen	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM fifteen	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
LM sixteen	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
LM seventeen	126	3.00	6.00	5.4762	.07619	.85524
LM eighteen	126	2.00	6.00	4.7619	.12919	1.45012
IM one	126	1.00	6.00	4.2857	.17047	1.91356
IM two	126	2.00	6.00	5.3810	.08497	.95379
IM three	126	1.00	6.00	3.0952	.18904	2.12199
IM four	126	2.00	6.00	5.1905	.08561	.96095
IM five	126	1.00	6.00	3.1905	.18230	2.04632
IM six	126	2.00	6.00	5.0000	.10328	1.15931
IM seven	126	1.00	6.00	3.2857	.17919	2.01140
IM eight	126	2.00	6.00	5.1905	.08995	1.00967
IM nine	126	1.00	6.00	3.2857	.18130	2.03512
IM ten	126	2.00	6.00	5.3333	.08433	.94657
IM eleven	126	1.00	6.00	3.3810	.18200	2.04297
IM twelve	126	2.00	6.00	5.1905	.10554	1.18466
IM thirteen	126	1.00	6.00	3.4762	.18643	2.09271
IM fourteen	126	1.00	6.00	5.1429	.11803	1.32493
IM fifteen	126	1.00	6.00	3.4286	.18634	2.09162
IM sixteen	126	2.00	5.00	3.1429	.07945	.89187
IM seventeen	126	1.00	6.00	3.4286	.18634	2.09162
Soc Mob Compliant	126	2.00	6.00	3.2063	.08305	.93224
Non Soc Mob Compliant	126	54.00	108.00	87.1429	1.40157	15.73262
Valid N (list wise)	126	34.00	98.00	69.3492	1.64297	18.44226

From the **Table** all the 18 cartoons on the Local Media (LM) were rated as social mobilization compliant while 9 out of 17 cartoons on the International Media (IM) were rated as non-compliant. The mean rating of the local media cartoons were compared to the international media cartoons using the independent t-test. The results showed that the difference was significant (mean_{local} = 87.14, sd = 15.79; mean_{int} = 69.35, sd = 18.44: t = 8.239, p = .000).

Next, the ratings were compared by occupation of respondents using one way ANOVA. The descriptive statistics are shown in the next table.

Mean rating of the 18 locally and 17 Internationally published BBOG cartoons by occupation of raters

Occupation		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Soc Mob Compliant	Artist	30	103.2000	4.56675	.83377	101.4947	104.9053	96.00	108.00
	Journalist	36	85.0000	15.48086	2.58014	79.7620	90.2380	54.00	102.00
	Lecturer	30	72.0000	10.21156	1.86437	68.1869	75.8131	60.00	84.00
	Student	30	88.8000	11.83333	2.16046	84.3814	93.2186	72.00	108.00
	Total	126	87.1429	15.73262	1.40157	84.3690	89.9167	54.00	108.00
Non Soc Mob Compliant	Artist	30	75.2667	17.87299	3.26315	68.5928	81.9405	46.00	96.00
	Journalist	36	65.4167	14.34548	2.39091	60.5629	70.2705	42.00	89.00
	Lecturer	30	51.2667	9.68445	1.76813	47.6504	54.8829	34.00	61.00
	Student	30	86.2333	10.76291	1.96503	82.2144	90.2523	69.00	98.00
	Total	126	69.3492	18.44226	1.64297	66.0976	72.6008	34.00	98.00

The analysis also revealed that Artists rated the BBOG cartoons as most social mobilization compliant, followed by journalists, lecturers and students for both local and international media cartoons.

The results of the ANOVA are presented in the **Table** below.

ANOVA of intensity of social compliance of the BBOG cartoons by occupation of respondents

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Soc Mob Compliant	Between Groups	14861.829	3	4953.943	37.591	.000
	Within Groups	16077.600	122	131.784		
	Total	30939.429	125			
Non Soc Mob Compliant	Between Groups	19968.785	3	6656.262	36.018	.000
	Within Groups	22545.850	122	184.802		
	Total	42514.635	125			

These results showed that the influence of occupation of the respondents was significant in both local and international media cartoons (all p-values associated with the computed F-values are less than .05).

Summary of Findings

The grading which was done on a 4-point scale showed that cartoons from local media were graded as more social mobilization compliant with indication that most of the non-complaint cartoons came from international media. The results of the study point strongly towards the high potency of cartoons in communication, the Bring Back Our Girls campaign and the potential of the BBOG cartoons in igniting action.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Cartoons are effective and affective means of communicating important issues. As earlier stated, they have the ability of embodying and transferring emotional cues in a way that conventional texts delays. When people are constantly exposed to certain images, they

become more agreeable to the projected images. The following are recommendations based on this study.

- (i) NGOs, activists and the concerned public should use cartoons more often as an effective alternative for criticism and mobilizing support for a cause.
- (ii) Artists and communicators have a burden to create the awareness that cartoons are not only humour intended, but also a powerful tool in fostering change.
- (iii) The internet is becoming increasingly popular and cheaper to access, this makes it a fertile place for ideas to take hold and spread, thus publishing cartoons on the internet to combat social ills is a viable way of causing social-economic and political change among stakeholders.

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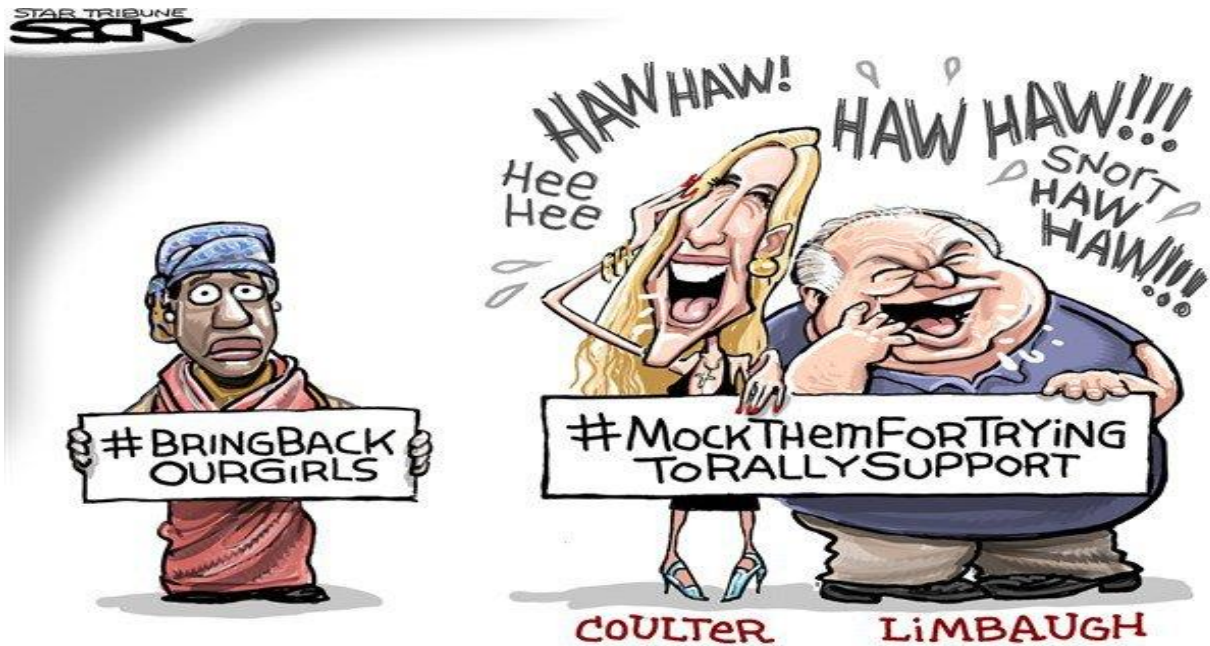
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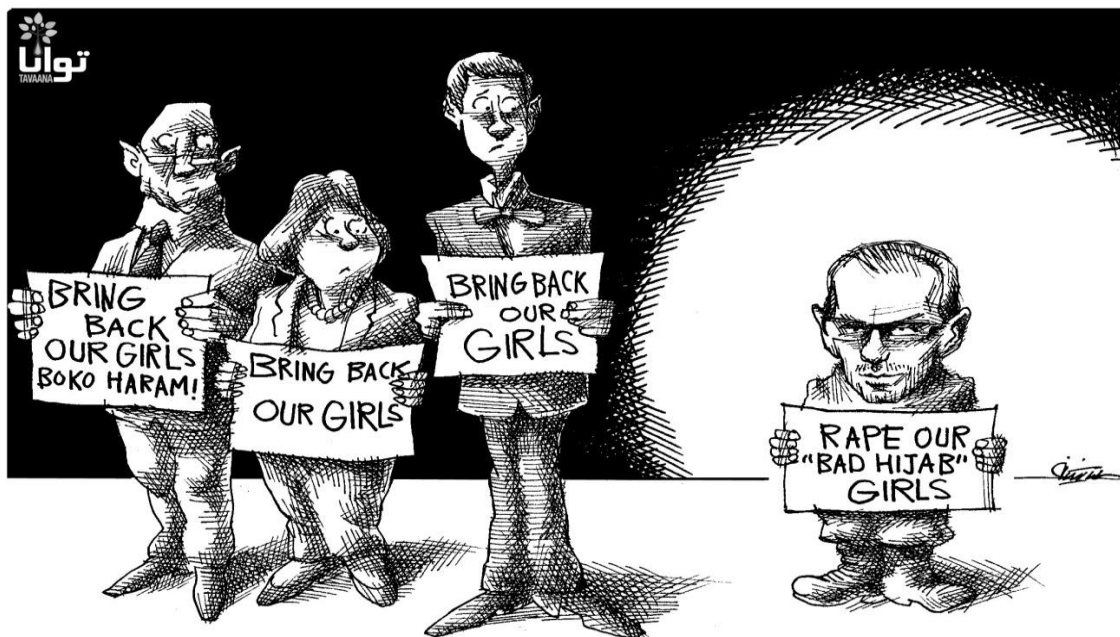
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