



Colour, Colour Modulation and Contextualization in NCDC Covid 19 Sensitization Posts: A Multi-Modal Socio Semiotic Approach

J. BENJAMIN-OHWODEDE, D.L. EFOBI
University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State

Abstract. This paper examines the structure of selected Covid 19 sensitization pictorial post designs on Facebook; disseminated by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). This is done in order to establish the intention and significance of design choices. Posts used for this investigation are composite texts with ‘low modality’, purposefully selected to depict how colour modulation, colour representation, and contextualization reflect the cognitive and cultural aspects of the image producer and the (implied) viewer. The socio semiotic framework proposed by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) is used to describe how the use of low modality images (based on a scale ranging from ‘naturalistic’ to ‘abstract’), as a motivated semiotic resource, reflects how posts impact the viewer. The analysis of the data shows that these composite texts are used by NCDC to sensitize the general public and are deliberately crafted for different categories of viewers. It also demonstrates that the producer’s intentions are geared toward making messages visually attractive, easy to comprehend and less technical through the use of explicit features. Findings reveal that such composite texts which engage the use of techniques vis-à-vis complementary text modes persuade viewers to comply with Covid 19 safety guidelines and policies.

Keywords: Covid 19, NCDC, Socio Semiotics, Colour Modulation, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

1. Introduction

The rising use of digital technological resources as a means of expression is reflected in the type of information we consume today and has more or less redefined the representation and significance of language in general. We are living in an age where

the multiplicity of semiotic resources is the focus and concept multimodality is moving into the centre of practical communicative action (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001). Due to digital technological advancement, the multimodal nature of communication in general has been made more visible. Several digital materials that we consume today combine different semiotic modes (colour, images, layout, font, gestures and voice) in crafting messages. The question however, is why? Why do these text producers see the need to combine modes in varying ways in order to pass a message across? The answer to this question lies in the principle that guides the socio-semiotic framework proposed by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006). They posit that “signs made are always a motivated conjunction of form and meaning” (p. 10). This means that every single sign produced by an addresser is not arbitrary but is meant to serve a specific purpose because “at the point of making it, the sign maker considers it the most apt and plausible in terms of representational mode” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001, p.7). The use of multimodes therefore has a communicative value which the image producer intentionally makes manifest to serve specific motivated purposes.

Consequent upon these facts, this paper aims to use this same principle to account for how messages in selected Nigeria Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC) Facebook posts are consumed and interpreted. Selected posts for this study are thus, composite texts; a combination of images, writings and other graphic elements.

1.1 Corona Virus Disease (Covid 19) and the NCDC

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus resulted in the COVID-19 pandemic. “The globalization of the outbreak of this disease has its root cause in the mutation of SARS-CoV-2; which was first reported

in Wuhan, China and has increased in its transmissibility” (Platto et al, 2021, p.14). The outbreak has been detrimental to both the socio-economic and educational systems of countries all over the world.

With the vulnerabilities of African healthcare facilities, there was the need for agencies in charge of disease control to ramp up its sensitization campaigns in order to curtail the spread and prevent Africa from becoming the next epicentre. To this end, African Union member states set up measures to sensitize the general public with Covid-19 information through scientific and public health updates in form of weekly/daily press briefings by the Presidential Task Force (PTF), distribution of safety guidelines and policies on Covid-19, road-walks, community outreaches and awareness campaigns. In Nigeria specifically, NCDC, established in the year 2018 in response to public health emergencies, engaged in sensitization activities via the main-stream media coverage and the social media platforms so as to reach out to citizens regarding safety and precautionary measures. Such sensitization activities carried out all over the nation include the distribution of handbills, hanging up of banners in every health care facility and public spaces and the ‘take responsibility campaigns in cities, towns and communities.

With over 2.4 million followers, NCDC official FB page was created on the 17 of January 2016 for the purpose of public sensitization and education on Covid-19 and other infectious diseases. NCDC provides unbiased and accurate information about adhering to precautionary measures against infectious diseases such as Covid-19, the vaccination programme and daily case-updates through a series of animated videos, records of daily briefings, events and sensitization campaigns including the upload of diverse multimodal information. Various social media networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook connect millions of people daily and are therefore crucial to facilitating the propagation of vital communication as it is one of the best technological innovations for the dissemination of information concerning infectious diseases such as Covid-19 (Anyim, 2012, p. 43). Thus, NCDC Facebook regular mobile and timeline uploads of multimodal information (textual, visual and temporal) regarding Covid-19 case-updates, FAQs and answers on Covid-19 vaccination, self-isolation/quarantines, isolation centres, lockdowns, testing, use of face masks, the 20minutes hand washing exercise, travel restrictions, social distancing amongst others reaches over 2million citizens within

a very short time span. Such multimodal imaging and communication strategies serve as an effective linguistic resource for the dissemination of Covid-19 related information.

2. Literature Review

Studies on social semiotic multimodality have been carried out in areas regarding the application of multiple modes in meaning interpretation. Researchers have proposed that meaning can be framed through the interactions of socially organized semiotic resources. Studies examined in this section are interrelated with our research. But then again, differences lie between studies reviewed this study in terms of methodical and theoretic procedures.

Huang (2009) discusses the development of sequence images and use of semiotic resources in creating visual narratives; manga (Japan comics). By examining visual displays and representational resources, Huang questions the “logocentric bias in narrative tradition” (p. 1). Employing the multimodal social semiotics, Huang demonstrates that there are differences between manga and Western comic’s vis-à-vis socio-cultural practices obtainable in the Western and Eastern parts of the world. Findings reveal the inclination of traditional narratives towards verbal modes rather than non-verbal modes and that incorporating all the representational resources in manga helps in generating meaning. Semiotic resources and their affordances; the influence of socio cultural practices on manga conventions and the use of a metalanguage to explore storyboarding were all examined as part of the implication of the study. That is, working within the tenets of multimodality, Huang highlights the implication of the use of metalanguage in interpreting the different forms of meaning in visual narratives. Just like this current study, working within the tenets of multimodality, there is a demonstration of how the semiotic modes or components operate simultaneously to establish meaning in specific social contexts.

In an interdisciplinary study, Chu & Coffey (2015) examine the concept of multimodality in the characterisation and structuring of two autobiographical graphic narratives featuring two Asian female travellers. Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional critical discourse analytical tool as a theoretical frame work, their objective is to decipher the intricacies concerning the production and circulation of graphic novels in South East Asia. Their study therefore examines how these tools namely discursive events (micro), discursive

practices (meso) and social structure (macro) are interconnected aspects of a communicative experience. They submit that “the use of multimodal ways like integrating time and space into comic, graphic and textual semiotic modes, graphic novels are used to depict travel narratives across South East Asia” (p.145) and that the authors of both novels successfully create “identities and narratives in a textual and multimodal manner” (p. 158). Their study is therefore seen as a reflection of how the different modes in a multi-layered communicative process interact in socio-cultural interpretations. This study echoes Xu’s (2012) social semiotic analysis of multimodal advertisement where he explains how visual and verbal semiotic modes complement and supplement each other to reveal both the denotative and connotative meanings embedded in the text. Using Fairclough’s three dimensional frame work, Ferreira & Heberle (2013) carry out a critical discourse analysis on a magazine advertisement in order to reveal how textimage and other communicative modes form “a multifaceted problem-solution structure that echo the qualities of art and poetry and create a need-problem for a product-solution” (p. 131). In their analysis, which is theoretically influenced by social semiotics, they submit that the magazine advert identifies several modern day “social issues and question the extent to which the educated target audience is aware of the messages in the advertisement or just believes that they are” (p. 131).

Obi-Ani et al (2020) question the roles (positive or negative) played by social media platforms in sensitizing or desensitizing the public about the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria in particular. Their research hypotheses state whether religious practices, government policies and technological innovations do or do not significantly affect social polarization/interactions and the spread of Covid-19 real or fake messages to the general public. Basing their investigation on these three hypotheses, their study reveals the usage of these outlets to inform and misinform the Nigerian populace through the spread of unverified information or assumptions. They advise that individuals should either conduct personal research from verifiable internet sources like the World Health Organization (WHO) or the NCDC which are health institutions. This present study analysis the intentions of NCDC Covid-19 multimodal sensitization Facebook documents. Thus, attention is placed on how meaning is framed through incorporating written, visual, gestural and spatial modes within a single domain. That is, how a multimodal design framework is used to demonstrate

the interplay between different socio semiotic modes during the communication process

3. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the social semiotic framework for studying Multimodal Discourse provides a background for which motivated signs and their functions are accounted for. This approach is adapted from Michael Halliday’s *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978). Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) developed it further to become a social semiotic approach to studying other sign systems such as image with the aim of showing how semiotic resources shape individuals and society. So, they focus on the social actions that multimodal texts are used to perform. For them, ‘signs’ are never arbitrary. They are motivated and are produced to serve a social function or a specific need in society. This means that when people produce text, they use the most apt means for materialising their rhetorical assessment of the environment into a design likely to meet his/her political aims (Kress & Van Leeuwen, p. 4).

Just like words, texts with visual designs; images are a motivated blend of form and meaning used to represent concepts, thoughts, ideas and feelings. Kress & Van Leeuwen’s (2006) approach therefore provides a framework with which images can be analysed –image grammar (p. 20). They opine that images are not just expressive and aesthetic but also have structured political and communicative dimensions (p. 20). According to them, “visual communication is always coded. It seems transparent only because we know the code already, at least implicitly – but without knowing what it is we know, without having the means for talking about what it is we do when we read images” (p. 32). Their framework recognises culturally produced regularities that are received, produced and exchanged by people in society and use them as yardsticks for generalising interpretations. The fact that regularities can be observed shows that each representation has its own unique significance and deserves attention.

The framework which they propose for understanding the underlying structure of image presentation is referred to as the socio-semiotic theory of communication and as earlier stated, it adopts the theoretical notion of *metafunctions* from the work of Halliday (1978) to explain how these regularities perform different social functions:

- The ideational or representational
- The interpersonal or interactive
- The textual or compositional

The three social functions above form the heuristic context upon which the structures underlying visual communication are conceived by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006).

The *ideational* or *representational* social function captures how the semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world and the internal state of mind of the producer of the image. The *interpersonal* or *interactive* social function projects the relationship between the producer, the viewer and the object represented. Lastly, the *textual* or *compositional* social functions show how the image coheres both internally and externally with the context in which it is used.

Modality is an aspect of image reading which examines how true to life representations are. They can be less real, real or more than real, depending on the validity markers used to identify the domain in which they are used. For example, if a photograph of a girl lacks necessary textural details like hair strands, varying skin tones, etc. it can be said to be less real. If it captures all these as a human would see them in real life, it can be said to have high modality. If on the other hand it begins to look too ‘fantastic’ (beyond normal and almost ethereal), modality dips again. The validity markers associated with naturalistic images (images that depict natural phenomena such as humans, vegetation, etc.), are always on a scale ranging from low to high. In this paper, we have selected colour modulation, representation and contextualization. This is because they are the lexical markers seen to be relevant for the description of our choice of data. Concerning colour modulation, the greater the abstraction from saturation, differentiation and modulation, the lower the modality. For representation, the less textural details shown, such as creases on clothes, hair strands, skin pores/defects, etc. the lower the modality. And for contextualization, the absence of, or the less detailed a background is, the lower the modality. All three informs the classification of the images in the selected data as low modality images.

In order to carry out the analyses, the technique is to describe exactly how the presentations of low modality in selected NCDC Covid 19 sensitization images on FB are effectively utilized to carry out the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of multimodal communication.

4. Research Methodology

The samples for analysis are acquired from the official Facebook account of NCDC. They comprise

multimodal posts in which many are composite (combine images and verbal [written] captions). Some combine naturalistic images and verbal information, while others combine comic-like images (images with low modality). These are selected in order to determine the communicative value of such design choices by the image producer(s). Out of thirty-five (35) multimodal posts, seventeen (17) are considered most suitable for the study and are thus, purposively selected to describe how colour; colour modulation and representation, and contextualization (elements that determine modality) enable the modes complement each other and by so doing, influence the way viewers consume the texts.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The texts used for this analysis are composite in the sense that they combine images and verbal captions/information on Covid 19 in passing messages across to viewers. Composite feature is found in all the selected texts for this study. This section therefore accounts for how this intersemiosis impacts interpretation and also explains the socio semiotic significance of their use.

The composite texts are represented in such a way that the modes mutually complement each other. The colour modulation, which is represented in low modality, guarantees that only the necessary components of the image that help complement the verbal mode should remain the focus. Unnecessary details, such as colour shades and texture, as is common with naturalistic images are completely left out or greatly minimised as they tend to distract viewers from paying attention to the message. Representation allows the viewer adequately identify only relevant features of the participants, that help reinforce the verbal mode. Contextualization commits the viewer towards interpreting every single visual clue presented in the text because they are perceived as intentional, and thus relevant.

5.1. Colour modulation, Colour, and Representation

As previously stated, the colour modulation has low modality as they are basically solid flat colours like what is obtainable in comic strips. As opined by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001), “colour, functions as a formal semiotic device to provide cohesion and cohesion” (p. 58). The aim is to make them match up more closely with their accompanying verbal captions and decontextualized backgrounds which are also generally flat solid colours. This marks some form of convergence between the modes; so that they

all blend in together and form a more integrated composite. Representation (a scale ranging from fine-grained to minimal textural details) on the other hand, uses colour and textural details to indicate low modality and also has varying significance. Most of the posts are placed on white or off white backgrounds which makes any other colour pop. Apart from this, because the images have low modality, the image producer is also able to use colours as semiotic signs where needed to signify entities. As such, the textural details represented range from low modality naturalistic image presentation to sensory textural coding.

Fig. 1.1



As a means of identification, colour is used as a tool to differentiate participants (both written captions and images). For instance, in Fig. 1.1, only colour is used to differentiate human participants. Why is it necessary to differentiate human participants who are otherwise, exactly alike? Suggestively, colour serves a purpose. Diversity of colour not only tricks the viewer into viewing the participants as separate individuals, it also makes the text a lot more visually attractive. The participants are only differentiated by the colour of their clothing. This way, texts appear less monotonous and can engage the viewer more.

The use of low modality colour modulation ensures that images, signs and verbal captions are easily observable and differentiated. This is especially important because the representational, interactive and compositional meanings which the visual modes present are crucial to the meaning of the verbal or written details and the overall message of the posts. For example, in Fig. 1.2 below, the participants are seen exchanging a handshake. Information value of placement and salience make them the first elements the viewer pays attention to in the post. Generally, in terms of information value, items on the left are regarded as ‘Given’ information, while those on the ‘right’, as ‘New’ information. Space is used as a frame to accentuate the difference in information content. At the interactive meaning level, they are equals or contemporaries. This is not ‘New’ information; people exchange handshakes. At the interactive level, it indicates that they are familiar with one another. However, this can cloud their judgment about the health risk of such a gesture, angle of presentation presents an ‘offer’ meaning, which offers the participants as entities to be observed. This allows the viewer act as an observer on the side-line. As an observer, the viewer is made to take into account, the meaning of the zoomed image representing a ‘beyond what the eye can see’ version of what a handshake from a seemingly healthy looking person might mean. The verbal text elaborates this by providing ‘New’ information about the nature of the image. Colour ties both modes in this image and it is used to show that a handshake may contain ‘more than what meets the eye’. It is presented in a blue circular shape as a means of identification.



Fig. 1.2

The accompanying verbal or written information complements this visual information by partly repeating the content of the image by implying that one of the participants may be infected and not show symptoms, thereby, infecting others.



Signs such as  and  are used in Fig. 1.3 below to indicate that a phenomenon is positive or negative respectively. Symbolically, green is associated with life and growth, while red is associated with death and danger. Consider Figure 1.3 below



Fig. 1.3

The word ‘precautions’ is captured by the images with the green positive symbols as against those with the red negative symbols. As such, the images with the green positive symbols are the prescribed ones that indicate that one should be aware of the necessity of ‘taking precautions’. This is further complemented by green colour they both share.

In Fig. 1.4, the image producer uses colours to capture sensory coding orientations. In the ‘offer’ angle of presentation, the red pigmentation around the head of the represented human participant is an attribute associated with fever, while three ash lines are used to visualize the almost invisible but present cough droplets which may contain the virus. We do not usually see fever but we can *feel* ones temperature in order to identify it. Also, we may not see cough droplets, but we *feel* or *hear* it. Colour has been manipulated in this low modality images to capture these ‘beyond the visual’ symptoms of Covid 19 such as cough, fever, and general distress. In terms of information value, it presents what may be labelled as ‘New’ information. That is, cough, fever and general distress are part of the symptoms that often accompany the respiratory illness; Covid 19 which the viewer should be aware of.

In Fig. 1.5, the three wriggly ash coloured lines also capture the *sound* and *vibratory effect* of sneezing which is one of the symptoms of Covid 19 indicating that one is unwell.



Fig. 1.4

Fig. 1.5

The images, like many others presented in an ‘offer’ angle allows the viewer observe them closely in order to understand the information their use provides. The visual-sensory colour techniques are used to make the texts easy to comprehend by making the human participants to partly repeat the directives specified through the verbal or written components of the texts.

In terms of *representation*, the colours and textural details are used to mark off or differentiate represented participants. Representations of textural details varies but are greatly simplified in the sense that they allow the viewer identify and differentiate objects and human participants. The intended African audience forms the basis of

the textural details used to represent most of the human participants. Many of the represented participants have brown skin and dark hair. As minimal as the textural details are, they make the classification a lot more generic to represent a typical African. It serves a dual purpose; to present a conceptual/generic pattern of the addressee(s), and in spite of the generic presentation, to represent a level of closeness through frontal and/or close-up shots where necessary. This means that in as much as the minimum use of naturalistic texture makes the images represent the Nigerian audience in particular, a frontal and/or close-up shot could also be presented in such a way that captures a ‘demand’ address, demanding that the addressee (s) establish an imaginary relation with the represented participant.



Fig. 1.6



Fig. 1.7

In the fig. 1.6, the human participants represent the implied Nigerian viewer and at the same time, establish a close relation by ‘demanding’ to be imitated by the viewer. The directive to ‘wear a mask’ is therefore directed at the implied (Nigerian) viewer. In Fig 1.7, textual detail captured by the brown skin colour and dark hair plays a similar interpersonal role. However, in addition to this, as a result of its placement on the right angle of presentation (‘New’ information zone), the new added feature of personal address is presented. That is to say, “I am talking to you”. The textural details on the leaves in Fig. 1.8, even though significantly still low, is important for identifying the kind of leave as its significance is important in the text.



Fig. 1.8

The green leaves and the red embedded in the gift wrappers in Fig.1.8 are symbolically associated with Christmas because over the years, these colours have been the traditional colours associated with this festive season. This representation of colours as semiotic modes is therefore complementary of the social and cultural concept of Christmas. Hence, at the textual level, there is a link between the “notions of ‘colour schemes’ and ‘colour harmony’ into the social and cultural concept of [for instance] grammar in the more traditional sense” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002, P. 344). The presence of only the gifts might have been ambiguous without proper identification of the leaves due to clearness of textural details. As such, the meaning of the post might have been impacted. ‘This season’ in the verbal text is thus lexically modulated by the symbolic meaning of the combination of the leaves and gift packs.

The human participants both have white and grey hair, indicating their age group and by implication, their vulnerability regarding the high risk of contracting Covid 19. Both colour modes are representative of maturity, minimalism and conservativeness. Again, the accompanying verbal information (*Love protects*. So, avoid the risk of travelling and getting your elderly family infected) complements this visual information. In other words, love and protect the elderly, who may have underlying conditions and are more likely to get severely sick with Covid 19.

Contextualization

The images are represented within minimal or low modality contexts (settings). Any material that does not add any significance to the setting is simply omitted. This is because only that which is necessary to serve the

communicative purpose of the design is that which is represented. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), “by being ‘decontextualized’, shown in a void, represented participants become generic, a ‘typical example’ rather than particular, and connected with a particular location and a specific moment in time.” (p. 161). To say that an image is presented in low modality, the image also has to be presented with none or minimal background information that informs setting.

In terms of framing, almost all the texts share the same background in different posts. No extreme sharp line separates them. Instead, space is mostly used to differentiate the items in the texts. This way, they tend to be perceived more as a whole than as separate entities. However, the presentation of information gives some clues about the contexts in which the images or verbal information can be infused. This is referred to as ‘Information Value’. It signifies how the placement of elements in a text endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various ‘zones’ of the visual composition: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 177). In terms of salience, most of the posts give equal or near equal space to both modes, which again suggests that they are meant to complement each other. Some however, integrate both modes in a fashion that suggests that one mode is recognised first before the other. For example, we have the left vs. right and top vs. bottom arrangements of the visual and verbal information in the texts. (See Kress & Leeuwen 2006 and 2011 for further reading).

In instances where the image comes first, either top or left, the image provides a point of departure from which context can be infused (this is because English conventions commit us to reading from left to right and top to bottom). The item on the left occupies the position for ‘Given’ information “presented a something the viewer already knows as a familiar and agree-upon point of departure for the message” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 187). The right, on the other hand is occupied by the ‘New’ information which is something not yet known, or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer, hence as something to which the viewer must pay special attention” (p. 187). In Fig 1.9 below, the image presents one ‘New’ information, which is that in spite of taking precautions (as informed by the use of a mask by the human participant) all non-essential travels should be limited. In addition to this, as a provider of context, the information on the right provides context for the image, so that the image is infused with a generic context of ‘non-essential travel’.



Fig. 1.9

In Fig 1.10 below, this structure is used between two images. The first represents a small group of three. This number might be taken for granted as ‘Given’ information but then, it goes on to imply (using an arrow) that just three can give rise to a ‘flood’ of people. This new ‘New’, then becomes the ‘Given’ for the next ‘New’ on the extreme right. It provides the information that should be taken seriously; that a ‘few’ can give rise to ‘several’ and then, most importantly, that the virus spreads very easily. All the components of the text, in this way, reinforce each other as if in a sequential order.



Fig. 1.10

In other instances where the image forms a departure point for a verbal information directly for left vs. right presentation, the image also tends contribute to the contextualization of the verbal information on the right.

A top-down vs. vertical presentation performs a similar function. The significance of such presentation of information is however slightly different. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that the item at the top tends to make some kind of emotive appeal and show us ‘what might be’, the lower section tends to be more informative and practical, showing us ‘what is’; differentiating between ‘the ideal’ and ‘the Real’ (p. 191.) In Fig. 1.11 below, the images at the top suggest an ideal travel or vacation situation. This is contrasted with the ‘Real’ situation on ground in the form of a directive which discourages such venture by warning people to avoid non-essential travels so as not to put their loved ones at risk.



Fig. 1.11

Similarly, a centre margin presentation links the information at the marginal zones to the entity at the middle. This central entity contextualizes the entities at the margins. In Fig. 1.11, the image producer integrates both image and verbal information in such a way that information value places the central image as the context from which the entities at the marginal zones could be interpreted.

For example, Fig. 1.12 uses the colour blue that circles the human participant to create or suggest a ‘clean zone’, where cleanliness is enhanced by the important role of water in the prevention of Covid 19, opposed to the exterior. The image suggests that the act of hand washing indicates cleanliness and membership in the clean zone. In terms of composition (centre –margin composition), the outer layer encircles the inner layer, making the inner zone appear like its core. This makes the visual activities of the human participants the key idea in the text, to which ‘running water’, ‘soap’, hand sanitizer’ and ‘hand washing facilities’ in schools are associated. It tacitly persuades the implied viewer (students, judging from their classificatory attributes such as clothing and backpacks) to frequently engage in the act of hand washing.



Fig 1.12

A similar post is seen below (Fig. 1.13), where contextualization of both the items in the marginal zones and the verbal information is associated with the meaning of the item in the centre/core. Only a hand is seen, abstracted from further details. It is however linked with the images that appear in the marginal zones. All verbal information which have been illustrated visually are linked back to the act of ‘hand washing’

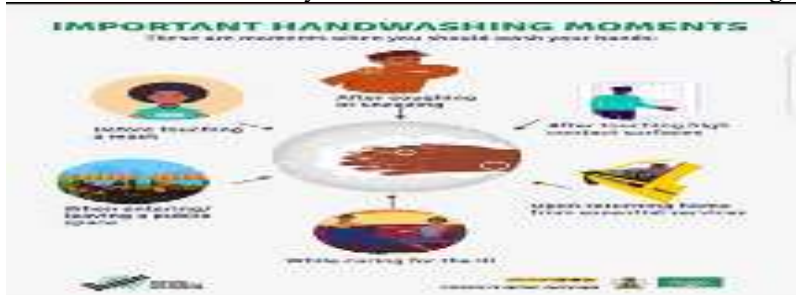


Fig. 1.13

As low modality texts, the few which are not represented in voids, or which do not have placement of information value, determine context, and have minimal details to capture the setting. For example, the backgrounds in Figs 5.2, 5.5, and 5.6 above all have floating colored symbols which have become conventionally associated as a representation of with Covid19 virus. It is made very salient because the background basically abstracts from details. This is not only used to suggest that Covid 19 floats in the air, but to also contextualize the texts in which they appear. In each of the texts, the reader is made to feel like the virus saturates the atmosphere in which the human participants and verbal information are represented, and is thereby also tacitly persuaded to take necessary precautionary measures like the wearing masks.

Certain symbols have also been used to indicate setting or create a concrete context for the verbal information. For example, the symbols of the cross in fig 1.11, used to symbolize Easter and the pine leaves and gift packs used to symbolize Christmas in Fig 1.8 above. In addition to this, we should not forget the significance of the national logos attached to each of the texts (see Fig. 1.14 below). The coat of arm, representing the country’s government and the NCDC logo are used to indicate that the government fully endorses the circulation of these messages. In this way, its context acquires an official quality



Fig 1.14

To reinforce this relation between the images and the verbal information, a set of posts are also observed to combine images and verbal captions in such a way that the meaning of one is incomplete without the other. The verbal information appeared first but could only be fully articulated by simply naming the image. This strategy playfully engages the viewer while simultaneously hoping to enlighten them. In terms of salience, the intersemiosis of the two modes takes up most of the space and even though the meanings of the combinations are restated below the images, the font size renders them almost insignificant. Figs 1.15-1.17 thus read, ‘cover up’ nose and mouth; ‘safeguard’ public places like restaurants by wearing masks, and ‘limit’ traveling during the Christmas festive season.



Fig.1.15



Fig 1.16



Fig 1.17

6. Conclusion

In this study, analysing data used by NCDC to sensitize the general public about precautionary and safety guidelines against contracting Covid 19 indicates that the intersemiosis between the different modes enhances textural coherence, thereby making the images uncomplicated and easy to comprehend. As mentioned earlier, the utilisation of such multimodes therefore has a communicative value which the image producer intentionally makes manifest in order to serve specific motivated purposes.

The multiplicity of semiotic resources makes these texts visually attractive, more concrete, more eye-catching and consequently, more memorable. The producer makes all of these achievable by using flat solid colours and minimal colour modulations which map or represent the images more closely with the their accompanying visual information. Also, low modality representation which ensures that only relevant and less distracting textural details remain, acts as a motivated semiotic resource and reflects how selected NCDC FB Covid 19 sensitization posts impact the viewer. Data analysed in this paper typifies the fact that certain elements determine modality levels; that is the concept of contextualization. In other words, how minimal

background details make relevant components salient and how the identification of information value is enhanced is appropriately demonstrated.

Interpreting the information embedded in selected NCDC Covid 19 sensitization posts contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding the curtailing the spread of the virus, in that it creates more public awareness about self-adherence to stipulated governmental precautionary measures and guidelines. In terms of contributing to knowledge vis-à-vis the area of MDA, this study draws attention to the fact that the messages behind these striking, but yet simple posts have semiotic modes whose embedded cultural references can systematically be decoded by the viewer. Accordingly, this investigation offers greater opportunities for meaning making in subsequent NCDC Covid 19 sensitization FB posts. Finally, the role and significance of this study to viewers of such posts is that it gives insights to ways an individual can unravel the meaning behind the multiplicity of semiotic resources employed by the producer. Interpreting embedded messages will in turn serve as a distraction to a plethora of unsubstantiated and unreliable social media posts that promote conspiracy theories.

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