# Influence of stereotyped portrayals of women in Nigerian electronic media advertisements on perception of women in Nigeria

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**Abstract**
This study examined perception of stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements against the backdrop of cultural orientation values in Nigeria. Anchored on Bandura's social cognitive theory, the broad objective was to find out how stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements affect the perception of women in Nigeria. Survey was employed as the research design and a sample of 281 respondents drawn via social media posts and email invitations using the Qualtrics survey software. Findings show that though advertising is still a key force in shaping perceptions, stereotyped portrayals are not solely responsible for the perception and stereotypes of women in Nigeria. Also, underlying cultural orientation values aid women's stereotypical portrayal in electronic media advertisements and foist a perception of reduction and idealization of women. Further findings show that cultural orientation values of Nigerians affect perceptions and enable discrimination against women than stereotypical portrayals in advertisements. The study concludes that in the absence of stereotypical portrayals, negative perceptions and stereotyping of women will persist due to cultural orientations. However, advertising still contributes in the fuel that propels stereotyping of women in Nigeria notwithstanding the significant improvements in role portrayals in electronic media advertisements.

**Key Words:** Stereotypes, Portrayals, Culture, Advertisements, Perception

## Introduction

The question of whether the mass media serves as a mirror reflecting society or a creator of culture for most societies remains one of the most debated issues in communication literature exploration of the relationship between mass media and society over time. At the centre of the continuing debates is mass media portrayal of women, particularly in advertisements (Lysonski & Pollay; 1990; Milner & Collins, 2000; Zayer & Coleman, 2015; Adinlewa & Ojih, 2018; Dalamu & Ogunlusi, 2020; Onuh & Okoro, 2022). In consequence, the controversy between critical media sociologists - who emphasize the value-producing function of mass media, and empirics - who are foremost interested in demonstrating how social reality is reflected in mass media seems to have subsided in recent years, resulting in a compromise integrating both approaches. Much of the empirical research of the past decade points indeed in the direction of a creative, reinforcing or transforming cultural impact of mass media advertisements (Furnham & Li, 2008).

More than ever before, advertising in today's society, has a profound impact on how people understand life, the world and themselves, especially with regard to their values and their ways of choosing and behaving. Advertising provides images and language that are relevant to its target audience while keeping pace with specific cultural, economic and sociopolitical changes in society. Consequently, advertising serves as a critical mirror that reflects societal lifestyles and behavioural trends (Zhang, Zheng & Zhang, 2020). However, Northey, Dolan, Etheridge, Septianto & Van Esch (2020) observe that advertising is a "distorted mirror" as it serves

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the interests of the advertisers by portraying selected lifestyles and values considered to be beneficial to the advertisers and neglecting some values that may be cherished by members of society. Oyinade, Daramola & Lamidi (2013) also note that gender role stereotyping as a communication strategy was often used by advertisers to establish a shared experience of identification with the consumers. These stereotypes include portrayal of young and physically appealing women, as well as portrayal of women in decorative roles or as sex objects.

Studies on gender role portrayal in advertisements have attracted the interest of researchers and scholars on a global scale over the past few decades (Furnham & Schofield 1986; Mwangi 1996; Nassif & Gunter 2008; Fowler, & Thomas, 2015; Taylor, Mafael, Raithel, Sascha, Anthony & Stewart, 2019; Ihechu & Nwabuisi, 2021; Sharma & Bumb, 2021; Taylor, 2022). Traditionally, women in advertisements have been portrayed in stereotypical roles, such as the mother or the seductress. The changing social climate and the evolution of the role of woman in the home and in the workplace have given rise to questions regarding the appropriate portrayal of women in the media today. Taylor et al (2019) observe that consumers' perceptions of particular models, such as females, may be structured based on their portrayal in the media, often leading to outdated stereotypes being promoted.

Research findings suggests that exposure to gender role stereotypes in advertising often influences gender-stereotyped perceptions and attitudes (Makama, 2013; Matthes, Prieler & Adam, 2016; Zhang, Zheng & Zhang, 2020; Northey et al, 2020; Terlutter et al, 2022). Consequently, this study examines the outlook and manifestation of women in the advertisements and also about the perception and estimation of the general public that whether their portrayal is according to the cultural values and norms and how stereotypical portrayals of Nigerian women in electronic media advertisements are significant and also to know about their opinion that whether the portrayal of women is justified or not.

**Statement of the Problem**

Stereotyped portrayals of women in media have over time attracted ire of criticisms. Some critics believe that such portrayals are deliberately restricted to serve male goals (Nyamnjoh, 2005; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Mager & Helgeson, 2010). Others blame commercialization of the media as being largely responsible for stereotypes both old and new that have done immense harm to the image of women in society (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008; Prieler & Centeno, 2013; Sharma & Bumb, 2021). The older form of stereotyped portrayal of women is that of submissive, house-bound women interested in nothing beyond their daily toils and foibles. The updated stereotype is that of attractive object (Anorue & Onyebuchi, 2012). The mass media and advertisers are increasingly being criticized for using the updated stereotype in commercials which advertise the female anatomy to sell products that bear no relation either to their physique or needs.

However, while several studies have shown that women are stereotyped in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria (Anorue & Onyebuchi, 2012; Oyinade, Daramola & Lamidi, 2013; Endong & Obonganwan, 2015; Adinlewa & Ojih, 2018; Ihechu & Nwabuisi, 2021); there is little or no perspective on how such stereotyped portrayals affect audience perception of women in Nigeria. Consequently, the extent to which women in Nigeria are perceived in social relations between the male and female gender based on their stereotyped portrayals in electronic media advertisements remains uncertain. Also, the extent to which stereotyped portrayals in advertising or than cultural stereotypes are responsible for perceptions of women roles in Nigeria is in question. Against this backdrop, this study evaluates stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements on perception of women in Nigeria to sample opinion regarding the extent to which the portrayals have reduced the value of women in the perception of the audience or idealize the status of women as given through the advertisements.

**Objectives of the Study**

The fundamental objective of the study is to evaluate the perception of women in Nigeria with regards to the stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements. This is in view of research findings that advertising has become a formidable force in society that is changing perceptions and redefining values. The specific objectives of this research can therefore be itemized under the following spotlights:

1. To find out how stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements affects perception of women in Nigeria.
2. To determine whether stereotyped portrayals rather than cultural orientation values is responsible for perception of women in social relations.

3. To find out the extent to which the stereotyped portrayals reduce or idealize the value of women in the perception of the audience.
4. To determine the relationship between stereotyped portrayals and the perceptions and attitudes of Nigerians towards women.

**Research Questions**

Based on the objectives set out by the study, the research questions drawn to guide in data collection are as follows:

1. How are stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements affecting perception of women in Nigeria?
2. To what extent are stereotyped portrayals rather than cultural orientation values responsible for perception of women in social relations in Nigeria?
3. How are the stereotyped portrayals reducing or idealizing the value of women in the perception of the Nigerian audience?
4. What is the relationship between stereotyped portrayals and the perceptions and attitudes of Nigerians towards women?

**Literature Review**

It has been widely recognized world over that the mass media plays an instrumental role in bringing social transformation and social change by promoting and disseminating information. The content of the mass media is also believed to reflect the pattern of value in any society. Advertising has also been noted to exert significant influence on the perceptions, attitudes and values tenaciously held by societies and portrayal of women in advertisements has ever remained a key subject of debate in both academic and social circles of society. The prevailing perceptions and attitudes of the society towards women get revealed through the way subjects dealing with women are treated by the media in advertisement (Kumari & Joshi, 2015). Whether deliberately or unintentionally, the way women have been portrayed in advertisements is a subject of controversy. Consequently, this study reviews literature on the key variables in the study under three subheadings using the traditional critical narrative literature review approach.

**Mass Media Representation and stereotyping**

There is no doubt that over time, the mass media have proved themselves as the boon to bring about social change and development in all societies if properly harnessed. Notwithstanding, the mass media has been severally criticized and accused for being responsible for the discrimination, stereotypes and stigma suffered by certain groups in society as a result of how such groups are represented by the media. Stereotyped portrayal of women particularly through advertisements has often been the basis for the blame and lashing at the mass media. More often than not the mass media depicts women in advertisements as sexual objects with little value, thereby sending negative messages about the ways in which women should be perceived and treated. The consequence of such perceptions is the constantly degrading status of women in the society (Diabah, 2019).

Representation and stereotyping of gender in the mass media has for many years been associated with relations of domination and subordination - "where men are represented as sportsmen, politicians and businessmen, women are represented as associated to the lack of status and power" (Coombes & Singh, 2022, p. 604). Therefore, in spite of several conventions, mass media representations of women remain a disturbing constant. Representations of women across all media tend to portray beauty, size/physique, sexuality, emotional dealings and relationships; all within narrow confinements. Men on the other hand are represented as the major protagonists in television and other forms of media and these representations beat down the representations of women in the media more times over. The major conventions for the diverse media forms feature the constant depiction of women as the weaker sex, faint hearted, picky in making important decisions, dependent, fashion and beauty oriented, pink lovers and worst of all, sexually available basically for the satisfaction of the male fantasy (Lou & Tse, 2021). With the vastness and prominence of the media advertisements in contemporary society, it will be of no surprise the extent to which these representations through stereotyped portrayals can affect perceptions and attitudes towards women and define social relations in Nigeria.

Mass media representation and stereotyping thus, has been alluded to with reference to depiction or portrayal of women in advertisements. However, representation being a heavily loaded word, calls for a more in-depth analysis of social structures in order to understand why, how and

when the media re-represents certain aspects and events. This will aid in understanding the underlying concept of representation as a form of portrayal, as well as provide a link to ideological streams of thought, cognition and social values of society. More theories on gender representation in the media expose the fact that simple stereotyped roles of femininity are attached to women with limited variations such as mother and wife. According Sharma & Bumb (2021, p. 238) "women are also more likely to be shown in ways that focus on sexual availability, passiveness, and dependence on other people – they are motherly or domestic, sexualized, or too often represented as victims". "Female characters are "typically younger than male counterparts and less likely than males to be portrayed as leaders of any kind."

Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka & Buczny (2018, p. 739) therefore surmise that the mass media create a slim-framed, young and unintelligent woman as the ideal woman in society. "The mass media create the notion of false needs in women and hence uses stereotypes to sell products that satisfy these needs. If media is projecting a woman as sexually available, then it's her body parts we see". This is one act that advertisements have instilled to gratify men's pleasure. Consequently, advertising messages that are transmitted often show that to be considered a normal woman in society, women have to make themselves sexually attractive to men (Barker, 2008). Here again, there is an obvious projection of false needs and this representation places women as the golden price for any man who would patronize the media.

Culture can be regarded as the signifying practice of representation because everything that culture constitutes is a direct resultant of how issues about life and the world have been represented to us (Barker, 2008). This implies that everything in society is in a constant rotation of either being misrepresented or under-represented or over-represented by the mass media. As the mass media have become increasingly influential, they have fast become recognized as popular culture and hence anything projected from them sticks to peoples' subconscious. Given this influence, there is the likelihood that so many stunts involving the bodies of women in the media especially from Western advertisements are now becoming status quo in popular Nigerian culture as they shape perceptions and determine attitudes of Nigerians towards women.

**Stereotypes and Gendered Stereotypes in the Media**

Technology has enabled vast majority of people around the world to be exposed to the media from very early ages. The images shown through mass media surround and teach people lesson about how the world should be viewed. This presents an alarming problem to society due to significant evidence of stereotyped portrayals of females through advertisements and other entertainment content. The ways in which the stereotyped portrayals represented in media, especially on electronic media, can lead to the continuing upholding of negative stereotypes especially those culturally gendered to the oppression of women and the continued belief that they are objects of male satisfaction.

It is generally understood that gender-based stereotypes are a direct result of patriarchal ideologies operating in society based on diverse cultural values of the people. Many of the stereotypes result from culturally preconceived definitions of women and men's role in society. Looking at the traditional roles that are associated with women and men usually provides a backdrop for other categories that are used to analyse representation of women in the media. Traditional roles for women are that of wife and mother. Another addition to the roles of women was sex object due to objectification of women as well as women who did not occupy traditional roles as wife and mother. These three roles are a constant in academic discourse as well as popular debate (Das, 2011; Bantebya, Muhanguzi & Watson, 2013; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017; Eisend, 2019). Furthermore, the culturally traditional roles assigned to women and men are also used as basis for the formation of character inferences. The character traits provide insight into the social cognition of a given gender within a society.

The mass media play a key role in reinforcing gender stereotypes through representations and re-representations as depicted in advertisements and other entertainment-oriented media content in Nigeria. As media has become more and more powerful in shaping the world's belief system, the struggle to maintain a unique understanding of 'self' apart from media interference has become increasingly difficult. This has led to the increase of gender stereotyping in society as a result of perceptions and attitudes formed through exposure to mass media. The mass media have thus been categorized as one of the most powerful reinforcers of long held culturally

based gender stereotypes in spite of studies affirming the fallacy of such stereotypes.

The extent to which negative stereotyped portrayals in mass media advertisements affect those who find their identity as part of these stereotyped portrayals is viewed as a direct variant of media effects. Eisend (2019) thus concludes that people feel threatened in scenarios where they believe their performance will give them away as epitomes of their group's negative stereotype. A situation Liu, Kanso, Zhang & Olaru (2019) describe as 'stereotype threat' because the existence of these negative stereotypes threatens performance and how one thinks of himself/ herself. Even if the person does not believe the stereotype or give credence to its potent existence, the threat of being identified with a negative stereotype can create an avenue for that person to feel under constant pressure about his/ her performance. This is because gender stereotyped portrayals in mass media advertisements consists of beliefs about the mental and physical traits particular to the existence and performance of male and female. These beliefs are nothing short of an intricate definition of the social construction of what is expected of members of society in their social relations with either males or females.

Gender roles are defined by behavioural patterns and gender stereotypes are beliefs birthed out of social constructions about masculinity and femininity in line with cultural beliefs and values. Stereotyped portrayals in the mass media advertisements are very prominent and influential; they affect the general views and perception of women and men by people exposed to them. This affects how people think and what they believe about males and females (Matthes, Prieler & Adam, 2016). The implication is that in as much as their beliefs may vary from reality, the beliefs are still potent enough to affect perceive males or females as well as their attitudes towards them.

**Culture and Nigerian Cultures**

Although culture is a fuzzy concept without fixed boundaries - meaning different things according to situations and context, there seem to be a general agreement about its substance. According to Tooby (2015), culture refers to society and its way of life. It embodies the set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned behaviours that are shared in a particular society, giving a sense of belongingness and identity to members of the society. This implies that what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce are components of culture. Causadias (2020) adds that all forms of culture exhibit unique ways and value systems that aid and affect individuals in their perception and reaction to different life circumstances. Culture at its most basic level can therefore; be defined as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social organization - a system for creating, storing, and process information. Culture thus, is a system, a dynamic whole that creates and is created by people, places, and practices. The system and its components are inseparable and engaged in mutual determination: the whole organizes the parts and the parts organize the whole (Raeff, 2017).

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and their attached values (Tooby, 2015). Concepts of culture can fall into a number of different categories as such there are no specific general classifications. This is because culture cannot be easily contrasted in terms of good versus bad or true versus false since it deals more with beliefs, and value system of different groups and societies. The classifications simply reflect diverse perspectives, all of which may have some merits. The implication is therefore for cultural analysts to decide which perspective best suits the purpose of their research and explain it to their audiences within such contexts.

People create culture through shared practices in places, and culture shapes how people engage in practices and build places. National cultures which refer to deeply rooted set of values that are shared by members of a nation emerge through shared practices (Causadias, 2020). What forms national cultures depends on what the various multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic or multi-religious groups of humans share in common despite their diversity; which permeates them to think, imagine, and learn, as well as on what collective behaviours shape and sustain viable patterns of life in their ecosystems. National cultures must be thinkable and learnable as well as livable by a significant majority of people in a given geographical space.

The national cultural policy defines Nigeria's national culture as "the totality of the way of life evolved by Nigerian people in their attempt to meet the challenges in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing Nigerian people from their neighbours" (NCP,

2019, p. 7). As a further step to create a common cultural frontier for Nigeria in spite of the diversity of her people, the Federal Government created the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism by mid-2006, the ministry was renamed Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, with the mandate to promote the nation's rich cultural heritage, through the identification, development and marketing, of the diverse cultural and tourism potentials. Although diverse in many ramifications, the national culture of Nigeria is shaped by the multiple ethnic groups - "Unity in Diversity"

This implies that though diverse in ethnic, linguistic and religious attributes, Nigerians share a distinctive set of beliefs, assumptions and attributes that are generally held as values; and expressed on a number of dimensions: power-distance, masculinity-femininity, individualism-collectivism, and uncertainty-avoidance. These dimensions have considerable individual variance and overlap among the various cultures in Nigeria and perhaps with other national cultures but are useful in predicting general behaviour of Nigerians as well as their perceptions, and provide guidance when communicating and interacting with Nigerians. The Nigerian Pidgin English is one of the common attributes of Nigeria's national culture that is unique across the federation. Cultural differences in perception, or the process by which people become aware of their environment, emerge in the ways groups perceive the self, versus others alongside other key areas of perception such as the perception of emotions, the environment and sensory perceptions. Culture shapes the way people perceive their self and others, as well as the relationship between the two; and culturally dependent dominant modes of thinking affect decision making and the processing of information. Culture influences perception and perceptions lead to stereotypes which are universally used by every human being in processing information about the social environment and are not only inevitable but also are usually quite functional for effective social interaction.

**Theoretical Framework**

The *Social Cognitive Theory* of Mass Communication" proposed by Albert Bandura in 1986 can be most efficiently applied to this study as the research seeks to evaluate the perceptions of the audience regarding Nigerian electronic media portrayal of women in advertisements. Given the major role played by the mass media in society, understanding the psychosocial mechanism through which symbolic communication influences human thought and affect action is of significant import. Social cognitive theory provides an agentic conceptual framework within which researchers examine the determinants and mechanism of such effects. Human behaviour has often been explained in terms of unidirectional causation, in which behaviour is shaped and controlled either by environmental influences or by internal dispositions.

Social cognitive theory explains psychological functioning in terms or triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 2004). In this transactional view of self and society, personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events; behavioural patterns; and environmental events all operate as interacting detriments that influence each other bidirectional. The obvious starting point for an analysis or evaluation of stereotyped portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements using social cognition lies in the informational cues that are present in the social environment - the appearance and behaviour of other persons depicted, and the characteristics of the social setting. However, the forms of social understanding that underlie audience perceptions rely not only on the informational cues that are momentarily present in the immediate context of the advertisements but also require the retrieval of relevant prior experiences from memory (Alvarez-Risco, Del-Aguila-Arcentales, Rosen & Yáñez, 2022).

The notwithstanding, the impact of these past experiences depends entirely on how they have been encoded, stored, and retrieved from memory as shaped by long held cultural beliefs. This is because the influence of the past is necessarily mediated by the qualities it has been imbued with in the mental representations that endure across time. These representations are not objective or complete records of prior experience; rather, they are subjective and selective impressions. Thus, a great deal of social cognition research relating stereotyped representations has been concerned with understanding how mental representations of the social world are constructed, stored, and later retrieved. A foundational assumption of this perspective which lends credence to the application of the theory to this study is that social cognition involves a dynamic process integrating bottom-up, stimulus-driven input with top-down, memory-based representations.

**Method of Study**

Given the objectives of this research, the survey research method was employed as the design. A sample of 281 respondents between the ages of 18 and 45 participated in the study. The respondents were recruited in July 2022 via social media posts and email invitations, asking for electronic media audience members between the ages of 18-45 to take part in an online study regarding stereotyped portrayals of women in advertisements and audience perception of women in Nigeria. The online survey was built and distributed using Qualtrics survey software. Participants agreed to the informed consent statement before they were screened for age and gender, after which they were exposed to selected advertisements and asked to complete the multi-scaled questionnaire regarding stereotyped portrayals of women in advertisements and perception of women in social relations in Nigeria. Incomplete surveys were removed from analysis (reducing the sample size to 281 from initial 352 participants).

**Results**

The perception of women in Nigeria as conceived by this study was couched under two assumptions - advertising stereotypical portrayals of women versus cultural orientation values of Nigerians regarding women in social relations. It was combined under the latent variables to facilitate clear interpretations. To identify the latent variables, the complete dataset of 281 participants for the study was taken. The adequacy of data collected for analysis was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The overall reliability and validity value were .717 and .769 which is greater than .7 considered acceptable in most research situations and analysis can yield meaningful results. The socio-demographic data (gender and age range of participants provides a better understanding of the sample population in relation to the variables under investigation.

**Figure1: Percentage Gender Distribution of Participants**

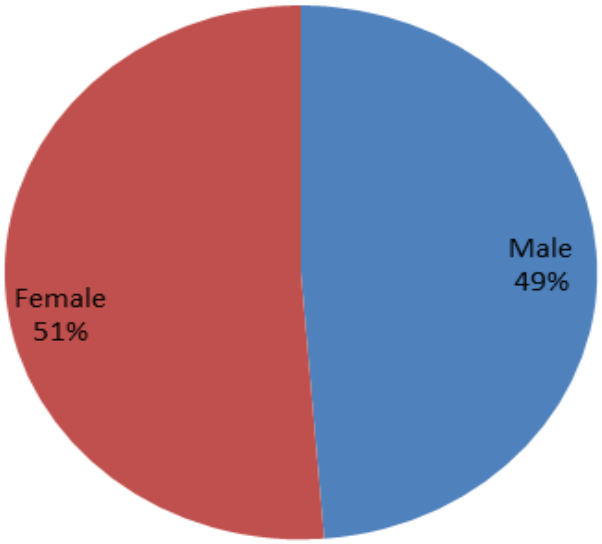



Figure 1 shows statistical and graphical representation that the sample is almost evenly divided between female and male, implying that both gender participated in the study.

**Figure 2: Age Range of Participants**

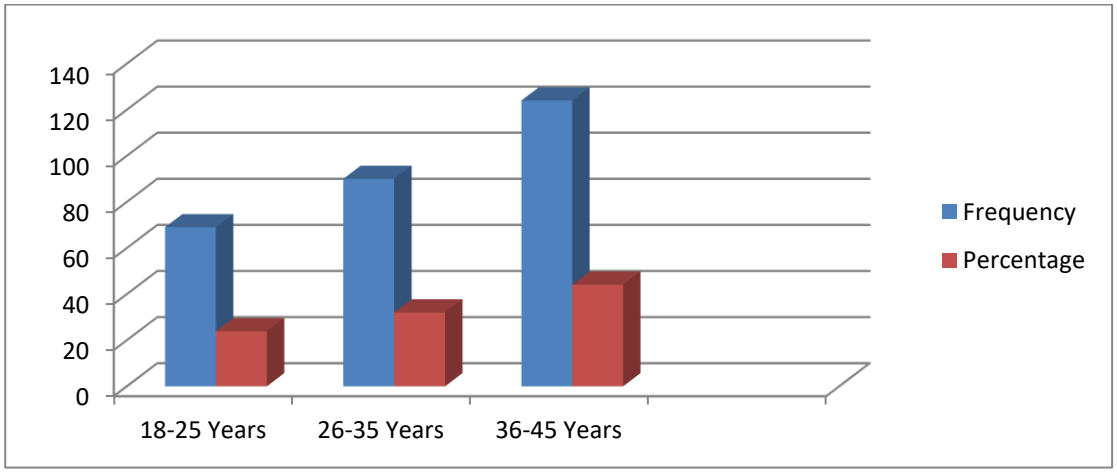
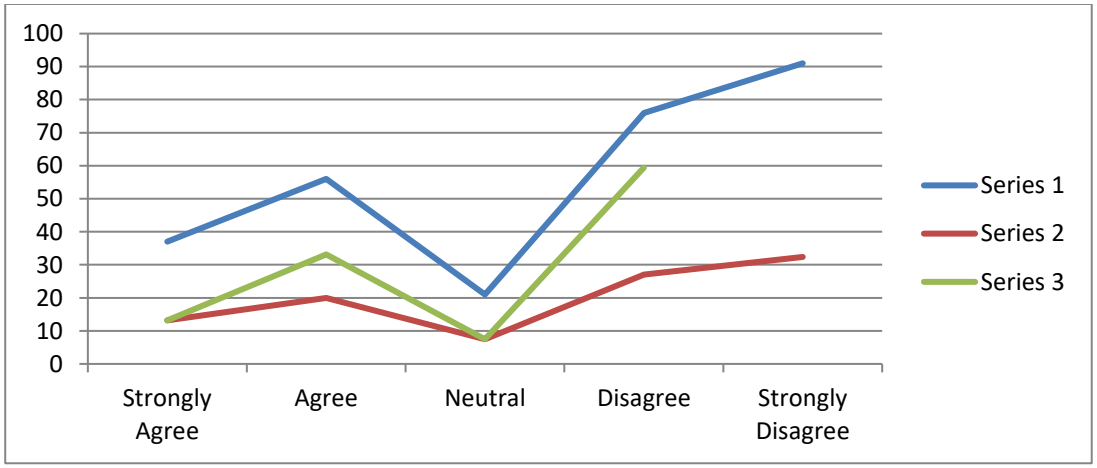



Figure 2 also show both statistical and graphical representation of the age distribution of the respondents to the study. The age distribution is slightly more skewed, as a greater majority is between the ages of 26-45 however the difference between the various age groups is not too large, concluding there was no bias in collecting the data.

The survey included questions to investigate individual participant's perception of women in Nigeria with regards to the stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements and their pre-existing cultural orientation values. The questions were scaled open ended questions that required the participants to agree, disagree or stay neutral in five separate categories, as seen in figure 3 and table 3 below.

**Figure 3: Advertising Stereotyped Portrayals versus Cultural orientation Values**



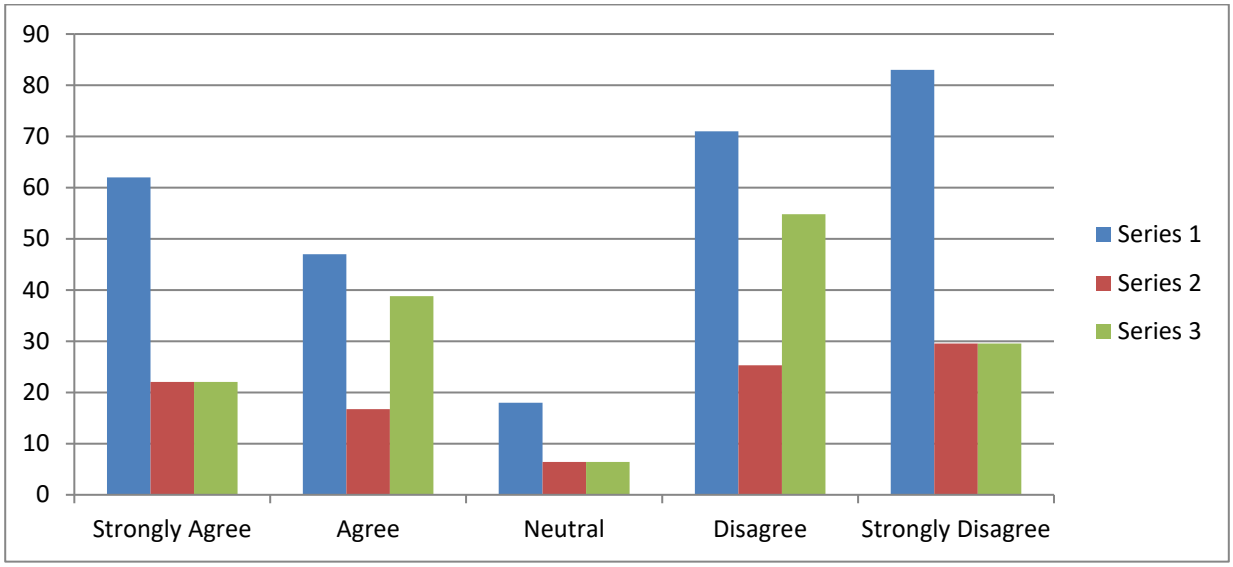

The figure shows participants' responses to advertising stereotyped portrayals versus cultural orientation values and perception of women in social relations in Nigeria. The data shows that 37 respondents representing 13.17% of the sample strongly agree that stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria do interact with cultural orientation values to determine perception of women; and 56 respondents representing 19.93% of the sample also agree. Notwithstanding, 91 respondents representing 32.38% of the sample strongly disagree, and 76 respondents representing 27.05% of the sample also disagree while the remaining 21 respondents representing 7.47% of the sample are neutral.

Cumulatively, the data in the table shows that 59.43% of the respondents to the study who are in the majority disagree with the notion that advertising portrayals rather than cultural orientation values is responsible for perception of women in Nigeria. This signifies that though

advertising is a key force in shaping perceptions in society, how women in Nigeria are portrayed in electronic media advertisements is not solely responsible for the stereotypes against women in Nigeria.

To find if the reduction or idealization of the social standing and status of women in society has any relationship with stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria, it is important to know how the participant perceive portrayal of women and whether such portrayal leads to the reduction or idealization of women.

**Figure 4: Stereotyped Portrayals and Reduction or Idealization of Women**

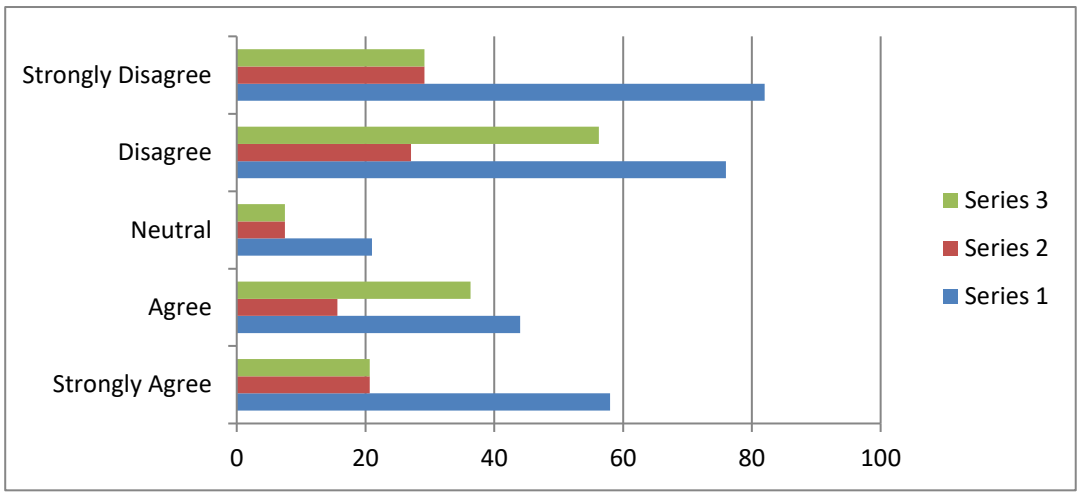



The question was open ended and scaled in five separate categories as can be seen in figure 4. Information contained in the figure shows that cumulatively, majority of the respondents (54.81%) disagree that the reduction or idealization of the social standing and status of women in society is as a result of stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria. Breakdown of the data in the table shows that out of the 281 respondents sampled for the study, 62 respondents representing 22.06% of the sample strongly agree that the reduction or idealization of the social standing and status of women in society is as a result of stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria. 47 respondents representing 16.73% of the sample also agree.

However, 83 respondents representing 29.54% of the sample strongly disagree, and 71 respondents representing 25.27% of the sample disagree; while the remaining 18 respondents representing 6.40% of the sample are neutral. It is obvious from the table that while advertising has continued to be blamed for most of the stereotypes against women in society, the participants to the study do not totally agree, implying certain underlying factors that aid women's stereotypical portrayal in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria to foist a perception of reduction and idealization of women in society.

Following Albert Bandura's theory, the survey intended to find out whether there was a relationship or difference between stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements and how women are perceived in Nigeria. The respondents were asked a preliminary question if the stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements made them more inclined to discriminate against women, and 98% of the respondents said no.

**Figure 5: Relationship between Stereotyped Portrayals and Perceptions**




Bandura's social cognitive theory states that that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour with the emphasis on social influence and its importance on external and internal social reinforcement. Figure 5 shows that majority of the respondents (56.23%) disagree with the statement that the stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements will make them more inclined or likely to have negative perceptions and discriminate against women. The data show that out of the 281 respondents sampled for the study, 58 respondents representing 20.64% of the sample strongly agree that the stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements will make them more inclined or likely to have negative perceptions and discriminate against women. Also, 44 respondents representing 15.66% of the sample agree but 82 respondents representing 29.18% of the sample strongly disagree and 76 respondents representing 27.05% of the sample disagree. The remaining 21 respondents representing 7.47% of the sample however, are neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Significance of the data in relation to Alex Bandura's social cognitive theory is that the survey only measures the perception of participants regarding stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria and not attitude of the individual participants to women in relation to reciprocal interaction with the environment, and behaviour as such does not necessarily translate into action.

**Discussion**

The study was conducted to determine the perception of women in Nigeria with regards to the stereotypical portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements. The data was gathered through a questionnaire administered online and the results were analyzed using the statistical programme, SPSS 20. The results of the analysis show that the relationship between stereotyped portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements as it affects perception of women in Nigeria is not significant thus underscoring the long held view of Liu, Kanso, Zhang, & Olaru (2019) that the way and manner in which women are portrayed in electronic media advertisement is not solely responsible for the myriad of stereotypes of women across society. Rather, Eisend (2019) contends that there are already widely held stereotypes against women and advertising portrayals may mildly be contributing to sustaining the stereotypes. This also resonates with the premise of Alex Bandura's social cognitive theory that emphases on the individual and the environment, positing that portions of an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions and experiences outside media influences (Farago, Eggum-Wilkens & Zhang, 2019).

Results of the study also established that cultural orientation values are more directly responsible for persisting stereotypical perception of women in social relations than the stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria. Although several scholars argue otherwise, causation could not be

proven through the study, so it cannot be said if one variable causes the other. However there is a significant correlation to the effect that advertising is also blemishing as the stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements polarizes the perceptions people have about women and significantly reinforces existing stereotypes of women. This supports the findings of Taylor (2022, p. 971) that "studies on portrayals of women should not assume that women are a homogenous market segments as significant differences in how a portrayal is received based on differences in culture/country, age, occupation, educational level, income, political orientation exist." This implies that cultural values play a significant role in the nature and types of stereotypes that exist in various societies around the world. So it is not possible to conclude that negative perceptions of women in Nigeria are due to stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements. This assertion is synonymous with the position of Hoover, et al (2019) that cultural stereotypes of men and women lead to gender-related beliefs that influence perceptions of women and are responsible for media stereotypical portrayals.

The findings that the reduction or idealization of the social standing and status of women in society is not as a result of stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria also has substance in previous studies and literature on advertising portrayals. The issue of stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising and its resultant effects on the perception of women has generated grate controversy over time, with significant attention and has drawn the interest of several scholars. Sharma & Bumb (2021) opine that constituting depictions in advertising such as women being less intelligent, remaining silent, facing aggressive behaviour from men, being dependent and in need of man's protection has over time reduced women's self-esteem and confidence. Zhang, Zheng & Zhang (2020) supports the narrative by adding that depicting women as unfocused, feminine, passive behaviour, weak physical positioning in advertisements, has caused a great damage to women's aspirations and results in negative perceptions of women in society. These positions are at variance with the findings of this study however, the findings of this study are in tandem with findings of other studies around the world. A study of Terlutter et al (2022) concludes that in spite of the many negative stereotypes against women in India women in the country are setting pace and achieving new heights and creating new avenues, therefore, advertisement portrayals of women as weak or submissive to men, though surely considered stereotypical and may face backlash from the audience does not in reality hinder women from attaining heights. Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka & Buczny (2018) had also found political ideology's relationship with reaction to gender and sexuality representations in advertisements, implying that advertising portrayals alone cannot entrench negative stereotypes but rather the established ideology of a given society.

## Conclusion

The study shows that considerable differences exist between stereotypical portrayal of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria and cultural orientation value as precursors of perceptions and subsisting female stereotypes in the country. The differences as findings of the study suggests are attributed to the varied cultural orientation value mindset of the perception of both the genders in Nigeria. Although there is significant improvement in the stereotypical portrayals of women in electronic media advertisements in Nigeria with women placed in higher roles and positions in advertisements now, stereotypical portrayal is still common and advertising contributes in the fuel that propels the stereotypes in Nigeria. However, it is the conclusion of this study that unless an aggressive campaign is launched to tackle the culturally held stereotypes about gender roles across different parts of Nigeria and the orientations that Nigerians have about the stereotypes, even when you totally stop featuring women in advertisements, negative perceptions and stereotyping of women will persist. To reduce the differences created by gender stereotypes therefore, it is necessary for advertisers to improve the status of women's role portrayal; and advertisers should also be careful when using certain role portrayals of women as it may generate more negative appeal than others, especially depicting women as subservient and weak.

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