

Assessment Of Public Perception Of Advertising And Gender Inequality In Makurdi Metropolis

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pp 367-376

ABSTRACT

This study “Assessment of public perception of advertising and gender inequality in Makurdi metropolis”, investigated the perception of advertising and gender inequality by the people in Makurdi Metropolis. The perception theory anchored the study. The survey research design was adopted with questionnaire used as the data collection instrument. Findings from this study revealed that that the people in Makurdi Metropolis are exposed to advertising messages through the following media on a regular basis: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards/neon signs, car branding and posters/handbills. It also found that the public in Makurdi Metropolis perceive that there exists some form of demonstration of gender inequality in the advertisements they are exposed to and that the people in Makurdi Metropolis perceive the following as the ways in which gender inequality manifests in the advertisements they are exposed to: portray women as subordinates to men, portray men as super beings, place women as being in charge of home chores, depict women as sex objects for men and show that men are stronger and women weaker. Therefore the study recommended, among others, that advertisers should ensure that they package advertising messages that promoting equality of all gender categories will be fair and that regulatory agencies such as APCON and other related bodies should check the activities of advertisers and advertising agencies regularly to ensure that they deviate from the portrayal of gender inequality in the advertising messages they make available to the public.

Key words: Advertising, Perception, Gender, Inequality

Introduction

Gender inequality is an issue that has attracted global attention over the years hence the inclusion of the subject matter in the millennium development goals (MDGs). This inclusion is in a bid to make possible gender equality and empower women. Goal three of the MDGs states thus: *to promote gender equality and women empowerment*. The focus of MDG goal three shows that gender disparity has been an issue that always existed in favour of the men hence this MDG goal is aimed at ensuring women empowerment for equality of all genders.

One area of concern in the way and manner women are depicted in the media is in advertising messages transmitted. Ray (2008) noted that media do not address serious issues about exploitation and unequal treatment to women in different spheres but is keen in reporting sex-related incidents by way of sensationalizing news of atrocities on women. In a like manner, Alicat (2012) opined that: ...in most ads it is the men that are overpowering the women. In many ads the women seem very helpless, wearing little cloths, and look up to the men as if they themselves are almost nothing. The reason why advertising companies do this is because advertisements speak to their audiences. Even though most women and people don't want to admit this, but we do live in a man's world and are used to it. That is why it is so easy to be able to publish all of these ads and how they are accepted in our society.

Two commercials are shared by Alicat (2012), which blatantly portray and encourage inequality between men and women. First, Molson Canadian's most recent commercial for Molson 67, a low-calorie beer. Here, Molson has created the term "guyet" to describe a male dieting, because apparently calling it what it really is, a *diet*, is too feminine. According to Molson (2014, p.23) women diet to be thin while men "guyet" to enjoy the things they love: beer, bacon, and burgers. What is even more interesting is not the obvious disparaging of all things deemed feminine, but the exaltation of all things deemed masculine. As Jezebel (2014) explains, when a man diets, he is mocked. When a woman drinks beer, eat burgers, or plays sports, they become more appealing under the male gaze (as long as they look sexy while they do it!). Jezebel (2014, p. 67) writes, "This is a layer of gender inequality above and beyond sexism...it's an drocentrism, the privileging of the masculine over the feminine" (Alicat, 2012).

The rationale for trivialization of women is expressed in Holtzman (1978, p.23) where he avers that: "In the Nigerian situation, a lot of historical, social research conducted, indicated that the women's place is in the home. Right from childhood, children (male and female) are taught to keep the roles associated with their sexes. For example, a boy cannot be taught how to cook in the kitchen except after his seem day education he may be interested in catering studies as a profession". Endorsing this viewpoint, Anyanwu

(2002) says that a content analysis of mainstream media in Nigeria reveals one dominant orientation. Women are largely seen and not heard. Their faces adorn newspapers. However, on important national and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the story only gains real prominence if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene.

This goes to show that gender discrimination in advertisements and the media in general has often been in favour of the men folk. This subjective representation of women in the advertisements and the media industry across societies such as Nigeria is a major source of concern for many reasons. This may undermine the rights of women and may deny them equal opportunities of advancement and may further deny the Nigerian society the benefit of maximizing the full potentials and human resources of the women in national development process.

The foregoing discussion assumes that gender inequality manifests in advertising and media contents and usually in favour of men. The researcher is thus curious to unravel the correlation between advertising contents and gender inequality. The researcher shall focus specifically on finding out how advertising messages accessed by the people of Makurdi Metropolis has had effect on encouraging gender inequality.

Statement of the Problem

A repetitive use of notorious gender stereotypes (such as showing women only as careers of the family or as sexual objects) affects the public's perception of reality. The stereotypes are everywhere. They exist in the portrayal of glamorous women to promote cosmetics and beauty products or in stories of women as cares and homemakers, again often to sell household food and services (The International Federation of Journalists, 2009). According to Rebelgrrl (2013), what a wonderful (and very current) questions and issues, the researcher has observed and focus on the effects of the unrealistic, unachievable standard of beauty for women and girls presented by corporate mainstream media and how men are raised to fear "feminine" traits, while women are often celebrated for displaying some "masculine" characteristics. On the other hand, Alicat (2012) has observed that women, however, are not the only ones being targeted by corporate consumer media. Recently, several commercials have appeared on television which not only mock the feminine, but also mock men who may portray feminine characteristics.

The views expressed above show that advertising contents and media contents in general are perceived to exhibit some form of gender inequality in favour of men. What is however, not certain here is how the people in Makurdi Metropolis perceive advertising contents they are exposed to in relations to gender inequality. What then is the perception of advertising and gender inequality by the people in

Makurdi Metropolis is the problem this study investigates.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To find out the nature of exposure to advertising messages by the public in Makurdi Metropolis.
- ii. To find out the people's perception on the portrayal of gender inequality in advertisements they are exposed to.

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of exposure to advertising messages by the public in Makurdi metropolis?
- ii. What are the people's perceptions on the portrayal of gender inequality in advertisements they are exposed to?

Conceptual Clarification

Advertising

Advertising can be said to be a form of communication for marketing and used to encourage or persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners; sometimes a specific group) to continue or take some new action. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behavior with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. In Latin, *ad vertere* means "to turn the mind toward." The purpose of advertising may also be to reassure employees or shareholders that a company is viable or successful. According to Arens (2006) advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media; including mass media such as newspaper, magazines, television commercial, radio advertisement, outdoor advertising or direct mail; or new media such as blogs, websites or text messages.

Corroborating Shimp (2000) avers that commercial advertisers often seek to generate increased consumption of their products or services through "branding," which involves associating a product name or image with certain qualities in the minds of consumers. Nwosu. and Nkamnbe (2006) adds that non-commercial advertisers who spend money to advertise items other than a consumer product or service include political parties, interest groups, religious organizations and governmental agencies. Nonprofit organizations may rely on free modes of persuasion, such as a public service announcement.

Advertising is widely regarded as both a social and economic force in all free enterprise systems the world over. This is due mainly to the fact that advertising is recognized as a persuasive information force in influencing and affecting the behavior of people in a society. Although advertising has grown from a state of crudity to the highest level of sophistication today, it has continued to utilize the

same sets of methods, tools and techniques that have been in use overtime (**Preko 2012**).

What has become an important decimal in the tremendous development of advertising practice is the fact that it has attracted a wide array of perspectives of exploration and exploitation all in attempt at understanding the meaning of this persuasive force. According to Dyer (1982:2), advertising simply means "drawing attention to something or notifying or informing somebody of something". Dyer's definition of advertising is rather narrow but Wright, Winter and Zeigler (1982:10) added that advertising is "...controlled, identifiable information and persuasion by means of mass communication". Both definitions tended here clearly lack depth especially when weighed against the practice of advertising as a promotional component.

That notwithstanding, Arens (2006) argue that advertising is usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products and services or ideas and there must also be an identified sponsor. Kazumi and Batra (2004) corroborated that fact when the duo stated that advertising is a powerful communication tool, visible and perhaps one of the veritable tools of marketing communications that helps to market products, ideas, images and services.

The seemingly endless stream of definitions concerning advertising all point to the importance of this marketing communication transmitted through the media". The definition of advertising by Bonce and Arens (1986) presents the idea of advertising as the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by an identified sponsor through the various media.

When the various definitions of the concept advertising are collapsed, it becomes possible to isolate salient points that set advertising apart from other marketing communication tools. The points are discernible in this manner:

1. Non-personal
2. Paid form of communication
3. Done through the mass media
4. Used for tangible and intangible goods, idea and another Communicable phenomena
5. Involves persuasive communication
6. With identified sponsor
7. Targeted to pre-determined audience

It is just as well that these points should be explained for a proper appreciation of the salient points embedded in the advertising definition. Advertising messages are generally non-personal since they do not permit face-to-face communication with the customer. Advertising at this point is one-way in nature. In the second, it is understood that advertising comes at a cost-payment to creative persons, payment to the mass media and other miscellaneous costs. The mass media serve as vehicles through which

advertisements are carried. There are basically two kinds of media either print or electronic media. Both media present some kinds of advantages that the advertiser can harvest.

Gender

Gender is a range of physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics distinguishing between masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, the term may refer to biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or intersex), social roles (as in gender roles), or gender identity. Sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. Before his work, it was uncommon to use the word "gender" to refer to anything but grammatical categories.

However, Money's meaning of the word did not become widespread until the 1970s, when feminist theory embraced the distinction between biological sex and the social construct of gender. Today, the distinction is strictly followed in some contexts, especially the social sciences and documents written by the World Health Organization (WHO). However, in most other contexts, even in some areas of social sciences, the meaning of gender has undergone a usage shift to include "sex" or even to replace the latter word. Although this gradual change in the meaning of gender can be traced to the 1980s, a small acceleration of the process in the scientific literature was observed when the Food and Drug Administration started to use "gender" instead of "sex" in 1993. "Gender" is now commonly used even to refer to the physiology of non-human animals, without any implication of social gender roles.

In the English literature, the 'trichotomy' between biological sex, psychological gender, and social sex role first appeared in a feminist paper on transsexualism in 1978. Some cultures have specific gender-related social roles that can be considered distinct from male and female, such as the 'hijra' of India and Pakistan. In Nigerian and African societies, gender-related social roles are obvious in domestic chores, which are seen as a woman thing.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality or disparity is an issue that has over the years dominated public discourse both at local, national and international fora. It is an issue that individuals, non-governmental organizations, mass media and governments at all levels have given a great deal of attention to. Many a people and groups have put forward what constitutes gender disparity. For Musami (2010), gender disparity or inequality could be equated to the violations of certain rights or privileges of persons because of their sex. She further states that it connotes the capacity to deny or deprive any person the essence of fair judgment, violation of the principle of sagacity by reason of arbitrary concession to the other sex. This means that gender disparity is the obvious or hidden bias, disproportion or imbalance due to sex. Put differently, it is the

discrimination of whatever sort melted out against a particular person or group of persons based on their sexual category.

Gender differences had always existed in the history of mankind. This could be traced primarily to the same traits that are obviously innate (for example, reproductive organs) in the gender. In the early civilization, this gender difference was clearly depicted in their religious belief, culture, government administration and employment patterns. For instance, in the Ancient Greeks, their gods were classified as being either male gods like Zeus or female gods like Venus. While Zeus was regarded as the most powerful god having other gods under its domain, Venus and other female gods were linked to matters of fertility and productivity. In culture and administration and employment, gender disparity was also inherent. For instance, in the Ancient Roman Empire, females were never made "Cease" and neither were they member of the Senate. In Egypt, women were neither made the "Pharaoh" nor were they ever recruited in the army. Even in the Christian faith, there were contentions especially during the era of religious awakening about the role of women in ministry. They were not allowed to engage in public ministering as it is today.

Disparity based on gender takes place at different levels. Sen (2004), wrote on "Many Faces of Gender Inequality", where he notes that the afflicted world in which we live in is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men and that it can take very many different forms. Gender inequality or disparity occurs in education, in the workplace where there is income disparities linked to job stratification and at home where there are gender roles in parenting and marriage. In the latter, it can be said that gender roles develop through internalization and identification during childhood. It also manifests in politics and other facets of life due largely or embedded in the over-bearing patriarchal system of existence.

Literature Review

Media Influence on Gender Inequality

In the Golden Age of technology, people come in contact with media constantly throughout their daily lives. Being perpetually bombarded with messages, the media has a powerful influence on their thoughts as individuals and as a global society. The messages sent out are in the interest of the large conglomerates that control them.

"Sexism is the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of another sex" (Kendall, 2004, p. 76). This oppression is usually shown as marginalizing and objectifying women so men can retain social power, privilege, and opportunity. Looking at the society, there is no doubt that oppression is present, predominantly committed by the cist-gendered white male. These men, who hold power, subsequently control the largest means of

communication i.e. the media. A perceptive look at television shows, children's toys, and advertisements reveals an underlying theme portrayed by those in power: women are believed to be less competent, preoccupied with trivialities, deceitful, and promiscuous (Grrls, 2013). The media also dictates how the ideal woman is supposed to look. Through digitally enhanced women in adverts, and the use of exceedingly thin actors, an unattainable mold of the ideal woman is manufactured, and for average women who do not fit into this mold, pressure is created for them to adjust their appearance accordingly (Holtzman, 1987).

This blatant control of women by the media is internalized by society thus perpetuated into further generations. Especially now when the average kid is plugged in for half their waking hours, what is relayed by the media must be analyzed by a precise critical eye. Sociology offers several theoretical levels of analysis to discuss potential causes and solutions to social problems such as this. According to Orbach, (2011) by cross-sectioning issues on gender inequality and issues in the media with these perspectives, the media's influence on sexism becomes tangible.

Conflict theory maintains that people are in a constant battle for power and resources. Looking at media's influence on gender inequality through this lens, the prevalence of continued gender bias is explained. Conflict theorists argue that a leading problem in the media is the convergence of ownership (Kendall, 2004). When a small group of people have control over publishing and broadcasting companies, the products of which will have partiality in favor of those groups. He further argued that gender inequality is a result from male control of production means and deliberate oppression of women through social institutions. They contend that men, as opposed to women, often hold positions of elite power (Kendall, 2004). Therefore, it is in the interest of elite men to portray women in the media in a marginalized manner in order to sustain societal control.

In mainstream media, stereotyping is a standard way of characterizing people. Leading women characters are often seen as overwhelmed by their responsibilities compared to their male counterparts. When female characters are in positions of power, they frequently engage in deceitful, irresponsible behavior (Kendall, 2004). In the recent show, "Breaking Bad", the leading female character involves herself in an adulterous affair. Even though her husband is a clandestine drug lord, he is doing it in the name of his family and his actions are glorified. Public reception of the wife is that she is cruel and immoral and the husband is a hero.

Children's toys also perpetuate gender stereotyping. When walking through a toy store, superhero action figures, chemistry sets, engineering sets, firefighting and police costumes are found in the boys' section. These toys are educational tools to enforce the mental

and physical capabilities children possess. Toys that target girls are focused on physical appearance and keeping domestic proclivities, not necessarily mind challenging activities (Starr, 2012). This is seen through the myriad make-over kits, disproportionate Barbies, kitchen sets, and dolls that mock infancy.

When a product comes out with two versions, one for boys and one for girls, often the girl version is made less complicated and painted pink. This teaches children that boys are intellectually resourceful and society encourages them to further develop their thinking skills; whereas for girls, vanity is the main focus and not expected or encouraged to think critically. The patriarchal fight for control is instilled in society at a young age.

Symbolic Interactionists view society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups and tend to focus on social constructs (Kendall, 2004). The most recent theory for explaining the relationship between people and the media is called the *audience reactions approach*, which argues that people use their own cultural understandings to interpret the media (Kendall, 2004).

Female Models and Advertisement

Several researches carried out reveal the interesting facts about the portrayal of sex and gender. There are distortions and exaggerations in television advertisement particularly on women. In television advertisements, women are seen or portrayed as simple and nicer people, being more willing to share with others. The men and women are shown with different emphasis regarding their bodies. Men are more concerned with strength and success in performance while on the other hand women emphasize beauty, youth and romance (Aliede, 2005 and Anyacho, 2007)..

The depiction of female models in advertisement is a result of applying sex appeals to advertisement since they are often used to suggest sexual tendencies as well as adding a soft touch to the advertisement by posing as subordinates to men who reflect strength and successes. The basic human appeal of love and sex seems to be the most widely area explored to attract consumer's interest. Tim and Beverly (1976) corroborated that sex is used to advertise and sell almost everything. Merchants use the most powerful force in human nature to sell their products and today they have access to our minds in our homes via television.

Relatedly, Tim and Beverly (1976:53) also said that "advertising and entertainment industries seem to function under the philosophy that sex sells, they bombard us with it in advertising everything from tires to beer". Stapleton (1975) also agrees that in selling and advertising terms, the basic drive is to attract the opposite sex. Female models are viewed as the main vehicles used for depicting love, romance, and sex appeal. Stapleton (1975) further holds that advertisers portray women as sex objects, decorative

elements and eye-stoppers through the exploitation of their sexuality.

One then begins to wonder, what is the relationship between sex appeal and the advertised product? This therefore, brings the underlying fact that advertisements tend to stereotype women using their sexuality. As advertisements are used to capture the senses of the target audience, for it to be effective, it must capture attention and convey meaning. In order to enhance this, the message is tied to a topic that appeals to the audience. Therefore, the use of attractive female models, for example, sometime in the United States, in the 80s to be precise, "Black Velvet Whisky" was advertised where attractive slinky women were used to effectively capture the attention of viewers as well as convey meaning. It was reported that, sales increased from 150,000 cases to almost 2 million in a year.

Gender Inequality in Advertisements: A Call for Change

The portrayal of women in advertisements is a call for concern everywhere in the world. Studies conducted in this area shows that all point to the fact that women are often stereotypically depicted in advertisement despite their changing roles in the society today (Aliede, 2005, Anyacho, 2007 and Doghudje, 2010).

A typical advert portrays a woman in her domestic role as she is seen cooking for her family, tending to her children, washing and cleaning, using the right detergent for laundry, nursing a sick husband, in a romantic mood or atmosphere with her loved one, as a bride taking on advertised product (either a drink or tablet) to calm her nerves, the list is endless (Doghudje, 2010). This can be observed as the typical role-played by the woman. Television advertisements should not tend to reinforce traditional attitudes and roles as degrading, but should reflect the changing roles of the sexes because they bring about negative effects in imposing foreign cultures on different societies.

Advertisers should be more diverse in reflecting women's social and occupational roles than the ones portrayed. As this may not pose a bright future for a growing up girl who sees the woman in the traditional roles she plays in advertisements.

Since sexism is still prevalent in television advertisements, this poses a big threat to the society at large, as this results into wrong values, lack of respect for morals and human dignity. As entertainment, television adverts and Hollywood insist on breaking every moral code. It is simply becoming impossible to watch television in your home without having every moral value taught by parents/ guardians challenged. This is a sad story and society today sees it as normal or perhaps a new trend to modernity.

Advertisement practitioners should come up with better ideas to sell products. If a product is good, it would definitely sell, but not through the use of

scarcely dressed models or using nudity to attract the eye or more subtle suggestions. Africans are known to have respect for the body and this should be depicted in every aspect of life. Debased foreign trends which mar societal norms should be dropped and relegated to the background.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the perception theory

Perception Theory

This theory was propounded by Berelson and Steiner in 1964. The theory assumes that mass communication intends that the audience should pay attention to their messages, learn the content of the message and make appropriate changes in attitudes or beliefs, or produce the desired behavioural responses. The perception theory is of the view that the process of interpreting message tends to be complex and that these goals may be difficult to attain. Berelson and Steiner (1964) cited in Anaeto (2008:66) state that "perception is the complex process by which people select, organise and integrate sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world."

Bennett, Hoffman and Prakath (1989:3) state that "perception is notably active: it involves learning, updating perspective and interacting with the observed". Lahly (1991) cited in Anaeto et al (2008:67) defines perception "as the process by which we interpret sensory data which come to us through our five senses". Research has identified two types of influences on our perception: structural and functional. Structural influence on perception comes from the physical aspects of the stimuli to which we are being exposed. While functional influences are the psychological factors that influence perception, and therefore, introduces some subjectively into the process.

Selective perception is about the tendency for people's perception to be influenced by wants, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. Selective perception tends to play an important role in communication of any sort. In this situation, the theory holds that different people can react to the same messages in different ways. No one can claim that a message will have the same meaning for all receivers.

This goes to show that mass communication is not just a matter of hitting an intended target with an arrow and a communicator, thinking that he/she has accomplished its goal. The message sent out can reach the receiver, who is the target, and still fail to accomplish its purpose because it is subject to the interpretation of the receiver. Severin and Tankard (2000:73) are of the view that "the process of receiving and interpreting a message is referred to in communication models as decoding. The process involves perception or the taking in of stimuli through the senses and the subsequent processing of that information".

Comments have been made by Severin and Tankard (2000:80) that “three other processes which are similar to selective perception sometimes come into play in mass communication”. These are selective exposure, selective attention and selective retention.

Selective exposure is the tendency for individual members of the audience to expose themselves to those messages that are in consonance with their existing attitudes and to avoid those that are not. The notion of selective exposure stems from Festinger's (1959) theory of cognitive dissonance which tends to suggest that one way to reduce dissonance after having made a decision is to seek out information that is in consonance with the decision already taken.

Selective attention has to do with the tendency for individual members of the audience to pay attention to those areas of a message that are in agreement with strongly held attitudes, beliefs or behaviours and they try to avoid those sections of messages that go contrary to the strongly held attitudes, beliefs or behaviours.

Selective retention is the tendency for the recall of information to be influenced by want, needs, attitudes and other psychological factors. Thus, the selective processes can be thought of as four rings of denseness, with selective exposure as the outmost ring, followed by selective attention, and finally selective retention.

According to Anaeto (2008), undesired information can sometimes be headed off at the outmost ring. If a person expects a mix of information in a message, he or she can pay selective attention to only parts of the messages that are agreeable. If this fails, the person can then exercise selective perception in decoding the message. If this also fails, the person can then exercise selective retention by simply failing to retain the contrary information.

The manner in which the people perceive marketing communications messages such as advertising for the sale of goods and services may go a long way in influencing the gender inequality. This shows the relevance of this theory to the discourse.

Research Design

In carrying out this study, the researcher adopted the survey research method. Survey researchers study people's behaviours, attitudes, opinions and their feelings as well as social phenomenon. This research also examines and assesses the demographic and psychographic composition of the people.

Population of the Study

The population of this study in this research work comprised all the listeners of Radio Benue in Makurdi. Figuratively, the population of the Makurdi based on the 2006 National Population Census is 300,377 people (Federal Republic of Nigeria official Gazettee, 2009, p.24).

Sampling Techniques and Procedure

The mixed sampling techniques of stratified sampling technique, random sampling technique, systematic technique as well as the purposive sampling technique were adopted and used for this study.

The researcher first used the stratified sampling technique to divide Makurdi LGA according to council wards which include; Walomayo, Fiidi, Baa, Ankpa Wadata, Modern market, Central South Mission, Agan, North Bank 1, North Bank 2, Market Clerk Mission and Mbalagh. The use of stratified sampling technique was to enable the researcher segment the population for the sake of manageability and ease.

First, we use simple random sampling techniques to select four council wards in Makurdi. The manner in which the selection was done was the names of the council wards were written on separate pieces of paper, squeezed, dropped into a small basket, shuffled very thoroughly and a research assistant was asked to pick one squeezed piece of paper from the basket. The selection was done by a research assistant who was asked to pick from the squeezed pieces of papers and the ones he picked reflected the names of four council wards which are; Walomayo ward, Ankpa Wadata, North Bank 1 and North Bank 2.

The next stage was the selection of respondents from each of the four council wards selected above. Here purposive sampling technique was used to select 96 respondents from each of the selected council wards making 385 respondents. The purposive sampling technique was preferable in the selection of respondents because it did not require one to know the name or names of individual elements.

The respondents were further served with questionnaire using purposive sampling which is an improvement over the simple random sampling; it requires the complete information about the population especially on those on contact at the time of administration. Two hundred and forty questionnaires were administered at the end of the exercise. The purposive sampling was employed for the convenience and ease of accessibility of members or sub-group to use, the ease of administering questionnaire to persons literate enough to understand the topic under study and who also use the brands.

Table 1: Media of Exposure to Advertisements

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Radio		
Television		
Newspapers		
Magazines		
Billboards/neon signs		
Car branding		
Posters/handbills		
All of the above	288	100
Others		-
Total	288	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 is concerned with data that reveal the media through which respondents are exposed to advertising messages. It is revealed in the table that all the 288 (100%) respondents that were sampled have unanimously agreed that they are exposed to

advertising messages on radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards/neon signs, car branding and posters/handbills. This implies that the public is greatly exposed to advertising messages from different media outlets.

Table 2: The Perceived Nature of Portrayal of Gender Inequality in Advertisements

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Portray women as subordinates to men	-	
Portray men as super beings	-	
Place women as being in charge of home chores	-	
Depict women as sex objects for men	-	
Show that men are stronger and women weaker	-	
All of the above	288	100
Total	288	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 has to do with data on the perceived nature of portrayal of gender inequality in advertisements. Data contained therein have revealed that all the 288 (100%) respondents that were sampled agreed on the following as the ways they perceive gender inequality to be portrayed in advertisements: Portray women as subordinates to men, Portray men as super beings, Place women as being in charge of home chores, Depict women as sex objects for men and Show that men are stronger and women weaker. This implies that the perceived nature of portrayal of gender inequality in advertisements shows clearly that men are placed above the women.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1, is concerned with data that reveal the media through which respondents are exposed to advertising messages. It is revealed in the table that all the respondents that were sampled unanimously agreed that they are exposed to advertising messages on radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards/neon signs, car branding and posters/handbills.

It is also discovered in this study that the public in Makurdi Metropolis perceive that there exists some form of demonstration of gender inequality in the advertisements they are exposed to. The table had to do with data that determined whether those advertisements respondents are exposed to depict any form of gender inequality. The data showed that all the respondents sampled in this study agreed that there is a depiction of gender inequality in the advertisements they are exposed to. This is supported by Myers (1999), who aver that advertising is only one of the many forces that influence sales. The other forces include price, distribution, the sale force, packaging, product features, competitive actions, changing buyer needs and taste.

Findings from this study revealed that the people in

Makurdi Metropolis are exposed to advertising messages through the following media on a regular basis: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards/neon signs, car branding and posters/handbills. This is based on data contained Table 2. Table 2 had to do with the frequency to which the sampled respondents are exposed to advertisements. The perception theory is of the view that the process of interpreting message tends to be complex and that these goals may be difficult to attain. Barelson and Steine (1964) cited in Anaeto (2008:66) state that perception is the complex process by which people select, organise and integrate sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.”

It is further indicated in this study that the people in Makurdi Metropolis perceived the following as the ways in which gender inequality manifests in the advertisements they are exposed to: Portray women as subordinates to men, portray men as super beings, place women as being in charge of home chores, depict women as sex objects for men and show that men are stronger and women weaker and that the extent to which they perceive gender inequality to exist in advertisements is average. Data contained therein revealed that all the respondents that were sampled agreed on the following as the ways they perceive gender inequality to be portrayed in advertisements: Portray women as subordinates to men, portray men as super beings, place women as being in charge of home chores, depict women as sex objects for men and show that men are stronger and women weaker. This is supported by the notion of selective exposure which stems from Festinger's (1959) theory of cognitive dissonance which tends to suggest that one way to reduce dissonance after having made a decision is to seek out information that is in consonance with the decision already taken.

Conclusion

Based on the data gathered and presented in this study, the researcher concluded that the public in Makurdi Metropolis are exposed to advertising messages through the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards/neon signs, car branding and posters/handbills. Again it is concluded that there exists some form of demonstration of gender inequality in the advertisements they are exposed to.

Recommendations

This study has the following recommendations:

- i. Advertisers should ensure that they package advertising messages that promote equality of all gender categories.
- ii. Regulatory agencies such as APCON and other related bodies should check the activities of advertisers and advertising agencies regularly to ensure that they deviate from the portrayal of gender inequality in the advertising messages they make available to the public.
- iii. The media, on their part, should make it as a policy to restrict the placement of advertising messages on their media outfits that are perceived to portray gender inequality.

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