BENIN RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON ADVERTISING AND GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE NIGERIAN MEDIA

Christiana Shade Ade-Johnson
Department of Mass Communication, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State
ORCID ID: *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5571-9878.* Email:
akinwumi2128@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper examined Benin residents' views on advertising and gender stereotypes in the Nigerian media. A survey design was adopted, and residents of Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, were sampled to provide their perspectives on the subject. A total of 400 residents participated in the study, with the questionnaire serving as the instrument for data collection. The results show that gender stereotypes are heavily used in advertisements, portraying women primarily as homemakers and objects of beauty, while men are depicted as leaders and decision-makers. Digital media were identified as the most prominent sources of these stereotypes. Moreover, the stereotypical portrayals were found to influence societal norms, limit the career ambitions of young women, and slow progress toward gender equality. The study recommended that advertising regulatory bodies enforce gender-sensitive standards to discourage stereotypical portrayals of both women and men and promote diverse, contemporary gender roles in Nigerian advertisements. Additionally, stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be applied across all media platforms, particularly digital media, to ensure ethical and inclusive gender representation in advertising content.

Keywords: Advertising, Digital Platforms, Gender Stereotypes, Nigerian Media, Public Perception,

Introduction
Advertising is important in guiding societal perceptions, values, as well as behaviours. Advertisement is a strong form of communication in most societies, and in Nigeria, it is being used to push the agenda, goods, and shape the culture. However, this is an argument that has been used against advertising, given that it has been known to heighten gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes can be defined as standardized opinions or pre-conceived notions concerning the things that women or men should or do possess, or their particular roles (UNESCO, 2019).

Advertising in the Nigerian media sphere has had the propensity to depict women, especially as house helpers, homemakers, and nurturers, whereas men

are presented as decision-makers, leaders, and breadwinners (Okunna, 2005; Uzochukwu, 2019). These depictions are not only keeping pace with the established norms in society, but they also support it by reiterating the same through various media, such as TV, billboards, radio, and the Internet. It has been established that constant exposure to gender-biased media and advertising has the effect of restricting the ambitions of both men and women, especially among the younger viewers, where such representations become embedded in the psyche (Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008; Huma, 2025). Given that Nigeria today is among the nations exhibiting notable media penetration and an expanding advertising sector, underscoring the country's growing significance within the global media and marketing landscape, it therefore becomes increasingly important to examine the role advertising plays in perpetuating the gender norms in Nigeria.

Advertising remains one of the most influential forms of mass communication, with the capacity to shape societal values, attitudes, and perceptions. In Nigeria, advertising content across various media platforms continues to portray men and women in stereotypical roles, often depicting women as homemakers, caregivers, or objects of beauty, while men are represented as leaders, professionals, and decision-makers. These portrayals persist despite significant social changes, including increased female participation in education, the workforce, and leadership positions.

Empirical studies have shown that prolonged exposure to gender-stereotyped media content can influence how individuals perceive appropriate roles for men and women, shape self-concepts, and affect career aspirations. With the rapid expansion of digital and social media in Nigeria, such stereotypical portrayals are now more pervasive, repetitive, and accessible, increasing their potential impact on public perception and reinforcing traditional gender norms.

Despite growing scholarly attention to gender representation in Nigerian media, there remains a gap in audience-centered studies that examine how residents interpret and respond to these portrayals at the community level. Specifically, there is limited empirical evidence on how residents of urban centers like Benin City perceive gender stereotypes in advertising across different media platforms and how these representations influence their views of men and women.

This gap necessitates an empirical investigation into Benin residents' views on gender stereotypes in Nigerian advertising, the variations in such portrayals across media platforms, and their perceived impact on societal attitudes and gender equality. Addressing this problem is essential for informing ethical

advertising practices, guiding regulatory frameworks, and promoting more inclusive and socially responsible media representations in Nigeria.

This study firstly attempted to ascertain Benin residents' views on the common gender stereotypes portrayed in Nigerian advertisements. Secondly, the study analyzed, the perspectives of Benin residents on how gender portrayals in Nigerian advertisements differ across media platforms such as television, radio, print, and digital media. Thirdly, the study assessed the impact of these stereotypical representations on public perception of every gender.

Literature Review

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes can be defined as the commonly accepted ideas or expectations about the personality, behaviour, and roles of people, largely determined by their gender. Gender stereotypes in advertising are usually expressed as the depiction of women and men in a specific role that fits the expectations put upon those genders by society in general. Studies have over the years demonstrated the harmful effects of stereotypes, their restraining capacity, and promotion of inequality, especially among the female folks (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Uzochukwu, 2019).

In Nigeria, as well as in most other regions of the world, there are continuing representations of women in advertisements as caregivers, homemakers, ornaments, or decorative objects (Okunna, 2005). In contrast, men are considered to hold many professional and authoritative positions (Ezeigbo, 2012). These representations do not just present these highly established cultural ideals, but they also serve to reinforce them as they reiterate these limited gender images in various media outlets.

The consequences of gender stereotyping in the media are far-reaching. Empirical studies indicate that prolonged exposure to stereotypical gender portrayals influences both women and men by shaping their self-perceptions, career aspirations, and social behaviour. Over time, these internalized perceptions contribute to the reproduction and normalization of gender inequality within society (Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008). Consequently, other people can internalize such roles, thereby reducing their chances to innovate both in their lives and careers (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

Media Representation

Media representation refers to how the media represent and define different social groups, be it gender, race, and class. Media representation, in terms of advertising, is the representation of men and women in commercials and other promotion materials. These gender representations in the media lead to important ramifications in the norms of society since the media tend to be a mirror of the values of the society, as well as of the enforcement of the values (Akpan, Umoren & Nwokeocha, 2024).

Advertising is one of the major ways of gender representation in Nigeria, and it determines the expectations of society significantly. Okunna (2005) argues that Nigerian advertisements practice traditional gender norms by propagating the belief that women ought to concentrate on domestic engagements, whereas men ought to pursue careers and hold leadership offices. Similarly, Ezeigbo (2012) also observes that in most advertisements, goods are being sold through the physical attractiveness of women, diminishing their status into objects of desire without active roles where they have personalities and abilities.

Besides, media representation is not confined to conventional sources in the media, e.g., television and radio. Nigerian advertising has also emphasized the promotion of similar types of gendered representations, most distinctly by the use of digital platforms (Uzochukwu, 2019). Although there has been a slight improvement in gender representation through digital media, most of the advertisements are still using the old and corny gender roles to attract their consumers.

Advertising and Gender Roles

Advertising not only serves to promote goods and services, but also serves to sustain cultural norms and values such as gender roles. It has the capability of shaping public opinions regarding how individuals perceive themselves and others in relation to gender. A number of studies have shown that, beyond the promotion of goods and services, advertising largely contributes to the realization of what is masculine and feminine in society. Huma (2025) states, men and women are usually characterized in advertising in a certain gendered manner. Men have been represented as being assertive, rational, and successful, and do depict activities that indicate power and control. Women, on the other hand, are the motherly type, females, vice-emotional and someone who depends on a man, whether or not. The tendency has been to follow these gendered images in Nigeria so far within the advertising sector, with many traditional roles and roles in social expectations being defined in the process (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025).

Moreover, gendered behaviour can be reinforced using advertising in the form of product endorsements. To illustrate, beauty products and cleaning products can be seen as a major marketing scheme that promotes the notion that the most important thing about women is their beauty and their competency in cleaning the house (Kolawole & Anike, 2019). Conversely, products such as technology, automobiles, and financial services are frequently marketed to men, reinforcing the notion that men are the primary income earners and decision-makers; although some campaigns have begun to challenge these traditional roles, such instances remain exceptions rather than the norm (Kantar, 2019; Langer & Niessen-Ruenzi, 2024).

The Impact of Advertising on Societal Norms

The influence of advertising on social norms cannot be understated, especially since advertising both uses and causes the values of society, beliefs, and actions. Advertisements are among the widely used media that reach masses and shape what individuals think about themselves and others (Lauzen et al., 2008). Gender stereotyping in advertising is thus important in strengthening social norms on gender definition of being a man or a woman. Research has also demonstrated that continued exposure to gender-biased material in advertisements has the potential to change the perceptions of people concerning gender roles, thus affecting everything, including their occupation and interpersonal relations (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In the Nigerian society, which harbors the traditional gender roles in all their elements, advertisements have proved to be perpetuating the role by constantly striving to present women in their roles as domestic and supporting mothers and wives, whereas men are cast as the bosses and career-oriented organizers (Okunna, 2005).

Besides, advertising not only influences an individual, but also collective social behaviour. Advertisements may also favor the idea that gender inequality is to be considered as a normal aspect, due to the unrealistic ideals portrayed by women and motivating the current unequal distribution of power (Ahmad, Jatoi, Abbasi & Maitlo, 2025). With the constant development of advertising to cope with the global tendency of moving towards gender egalitarianism, it is evident that subsequent representation of women and men in the Nigerian advertising industry has to become more inclusive and diverse.

Theoretical Framework

This paper utilizes two major theoretical frameworks, namely the Social Role Theory and the Cultivation Theory.

Social Role Theory

Alice Eagly (1987) formulated the Social Role Theory, which holds that the differences between genders in terms of behaviour and attitudes originate in the gender-related roles which people are socialized to play in the community. The cultural and societal norms impose certain things on these roles, which define expectations that each member of the society has, based on whether they are men or women. The theory suggests that behaviours typically associated with men and women arise primarily from the social roles they are expected to fulfill, rather than from inherent biological differences.

Social Role Theory is based on the assumption that gender roles are socially constructed and learned through socialization. It posits that media, including advertising, play a significant role in reinforcing societal norms and expectations regarding gender. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that gender roles are not biologically fixed but are shaped and influenced by cultural and societal contexts. Concerning advertising, this theory posits that advertising perpetuates traditional gender roles by consistently portraying men and women in socially constructed positions that align with societal expectations. Most of the time, women are presented as caregivers, housewives, and objects of beauty, and, at the same time, men are constructed as breadwinners, rulers, and skilled workers. All these depictions enhance gendered pretexts concerning how men and women are supposed to act.

Eagly's Social Role Theory is closely related to this research because it provides a framework for understanding how advertising in Nigeria continues to reinforce traditional gender roles, even as societal perceptions of gender have evolved. Advertisements containing images of women in the majority of cases in domestic or parental situations and men in roles of authority or professional environments fix these socially constructed roles, which can adhere to the prevailing gender stereotypes in Nigerian society. In addition, this theory aids in answering why such representations continue to exist since it ties across the cultural expectations and social norms in terms of gender.

These gender social roles exist only because they are learnt and internalized through the process of socialization, of which the consumption of the media satisfies this argument (Eagly, 1987). Thus, a person who encounters the messages in the ads that strengthen the gender stereotypes adopts these roles and might repeat them in their behaviour patterns, expanding the pattern of gender inequality.

Cultivation Theory

The Cultivation Theory is the one that was formulated by George Gerbner in the 1960s, and this theory reflects on the implications of extended media exposure on the thoughts of individuals pertaining to reality. This theory would also provide that the long-term exposure to the media content would help create a worldview of the viewers, which would be based on the media images and messages. The works of Gerbner underlined the fact that the media, with its repetitive patterns, influences the creation of the so-called cultivated worldview, which more often than not distorts social reality, such as gender roles.

Cultivation Theory is based on the assumption that prolonged exposure to media shapes and cultivates individuals' perceptions of reality (Gerbner, 1998). It posits that media content, including advertisements, can distort the public's understanding of gender roles and contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2015). Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that the cumulative effect of repetitive media messages has a long-term impact on societal attitudes and behaviours, gradually influencing how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002).

Regarding gender stereotypes in advertising, the theory suggests that repeated exposure to gender-biased content leads audiences to internalize these stereotypes, shaping their perceptions and expectations of men and women (Eagly, 1987). The theory holds that the viewers, especially those who get constant exposure to media content, may come to hold the notion that roles defined in the advertisements are a true reflection of society. Such perceptions get embedded in the long run, influencing the attitude as well as behaviour of individuals on gender.

For example, when women are consistently portrayed as responsible for housework and men as engaged in professional work, viewers may internalize these roles as appropriate or "natural" behaviours for each gender within society. This is especially important in Nigeria, where advertising predominates to influence the perception of people with regard to gender. According to the theory of Gerbner more often people watch the gendered portrayals in the media, the more they tend to take it as the norm.

The Social Role Theory and the Cultivation Theory are both helpful in explaining how advertising contributes to the propagation of gender stereotypes within the Nigerian media. This is made possible through Social Role Theory, which shows that advertising still uses men and women in traditional roles that would best

meet our expectations in society. Such descriptions not only reinforce the current gender standard but are also enforced by constant demonstration of women in the domestic and supportive positions and men in the authoritative and professional positions. With internalization of these roles, gender inequality is perpetuated, especially concerning careers, family demands, and aspirations, and in society.

Cultivation Theory can provide such contextualization of the long-term effects of gendered advertising in Nigeria. In the situation when people are continuously exposed to advertisements that stereotypically present gender roles, people in question may be subjected to the erroneous belief that the gender roles as presented reflect the actual structure of society. With time, due to these repeated exposures, traditional gender roles could even be reinforced and maintained, further supporting gender-based disparities within society in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises all residents of Benin City, the capital of Edo State, Nigeria. According to recent estimates, Benin City has a population of approximately 2,044,650 people (National Population Commission, 2023). This population includes people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds, making it suitable for studying the influence of media advertising on gender perceptions.

To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane formula was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Benin City Population (2,044,650)

e = Margin of error (0.05 for 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{2{,}044{,}650}{1+2{,}044{,}650(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}044{,}650}{1+2{,}044{,}650(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}044{,}650}{5{,}112.63}$$

n= **399.9**

The sample size is approximately 400 respondents. The study adopted a multistage sampling technique to select respondents from Benin City.

Stage 1: Selection of Local Government Areas (Stratified Sampling)
Benin City was first purposively identified as the study area due to its urban population and active exposure to various forms of advertising. Thereafter, the city was stratified using stratified sampling into its three constitutionally recognized Local Government Areas—Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha. These LGAs collectively constitute Benin City and were therefore all included in the study to ensure adequate geographical coverage.

Stage 2: Allocation of Respondents to LGAs (Proportionate Stratified Sampling)
At the second stage, proportionate stratified sampling was employed to allocate the number of respondents to each Local Government Area based on their estimated population size. This ensured that LGAs with larger populations had a higher number of respondents, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample. Based on population density and urban concentration across the three Local Government Areas that constitute Benin City, respondents were proportionately allocated as follows:

- Oredo Local Government Area (40%). Oredo LGA, being the most densely populated and commercial hub of Benin City, was allocated 160 respondents.
- Egor Local Government Area (30%). Egor LGA was allocated 120 respondents, reflecting its moderate population size.
- Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (30%). Ikpoba-Okha LGA was also allocated 120 respondents, corresponding to its population proportion.

This proportional allocation ensured that each Local Government Area was fairly represented in line with its population size, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the study findings.

Stage 3: Selection of Respondents (Simple Random Sampling)
Within each Local Government Area, simple random sampling was used to select respondents from various neighborhoods. Households and individuals were randomly chosen to ensure equal chances of selection and to capture diversity in terms of age, gender, occupation, and educational background. The multistage sampling procedure ensured that the sample was representative of Benin City residents across geographical locations and key demographic characteristics.

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The items in the questionnaire use a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Data were collected using physical distribution. Trained field assistants helped in distributing and retrieving copies of the questionnaire where necessary, especially in less digitally connected areas. The data collected were descriptively analyzed by using frequencies and percentages.

Results

Table 1: Common Gender Stereotypes in Nigerian Advertisements

Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Women in Nigerian adverts are usually portrayed as homemakers or caregivers.	100 (25%)	144 (36%)	12 (3%)	82 (20.5%)	62 (15.5%)
Men in Nigerian adverts are often portrayed as professionals or leaders.	103 (25.75%)	153 (38.25%)	10 (2.5%)	87 (21.75%)	47 (11.75%)
Beauty and physical appearance are emphasized more for women in adverts.	125 (31.25%)	167 (41.75%)	6 (1.5%)	51 (12.75%)	51 (12.75%)
Strength and intelligence are emphasized more for men in adverts.	143 (35.75%)	145 (36.25%)	8 (2%)	54 (13.5%)	50 (12.5%)
Gender roles in advertisements reflect societal expectations.	140 (35%)	145 (36.25%)	14 (3.5%)	51 (12.75)	50 (12.5%)

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 1 above show that the majority of respondents (61%) either strongly agreed or agreed that women in Nigerian adverts are usually portrayed as homemakers or caregivers. This perception underscores a persistent stereotype

where female characters are associated with domestic roles, often seen endorsing products like detergents, cooking oil, and childcare items. This portrayal reinforces traditional gender norms and may limit societal perception of women in more diverse roles.

About 64% of the respondents agreed that men are often portrayed as professionals or leaders in advertisements. Such portrayals typically depict men as decision-makers, breadwinners, or authority figures (e.g., bankers, CEOs, or political aspirants). These portrayals may contribute to reinforcing male dominance in public and professional spaces while sidelining women's leadership capabilities.

A notable 73% of respondents (SA + A) believed that beauty and physical appearance are emphasized more for women in adverts. This finding aligns with studies that show a heavy objectification of women in media content (e.g., slim, light-skinned models). Such imagery not only commodifies women but also promotes unrealistic beauty standards, particularly harmful to younger female audiences. About 72% of respondents agreed that strength and intelligence are more commonly attributed to men in advertisements. This suggests a bias that associates men with power, courage, and intellect, while implicitly assigning passivity and emotionality to women. Such reinforcement could impact how children and adolescents internalize gender roles.

Finally, 71.25% of respondents agreed that gender roles in advertisements mirror societal expectations. This points to a cyclical relationship: while society shapes media content, media also perpetuates societal norms. The mutual reinforcement may slow down progress toward gender equity unless deliberate reforms are made in advertising content and policy. The findings indicate a deep-rooted pattern of gender stereotyping across Nigerian advertisements. These portrayals do not exist in isolation but are reflections of broader cultural beliefs and structural inequalities. The high percentage of agreement among respondents suggests an awareness of these issues, which can be harnessed to advocate for gender-sensitive media representation.

Table 2: Media Platforms and Gender Portrayals

Option	Frequency	Percentage
In which of these media platforms do you most often see gender stereotypes in adverts?		
Newspaper/Magazine	40	10%
Television	62	15.4%
Radio	40	10%

Online News Websites	58	14.6%
Social Media	116	28.9%
Streaming Platforms	84	21.1%
Total	**400**	**100%**

In your opinion, which media platform portrays women more stereotypically?		
Television	65	16.3%
Radio	42	10.6%
Print (Newspaper and Magazine)	43	10.8%
Digital and Social Media	250	62.3%
Total	**400**	**100%**

In your opinion, which media platform portrays men more stereotypically?		
Television	20	10%
Radio	120	30%
Print (Newspaper and Magazine)	60	15%
Digital and Social Media	180	45%
Total	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field work, 2025

From the data, digital media (28.9%) is the most cited platform where respondents observe gender stereotypes in advertisements, followed by streaming platforms (21.1%) and television (15.4%). This result reflects the increasing penetration of digital media and its influence, particularly among youth who spend more time online. Traditional media such as newspapers/magazines and radio rank significantly lower (10% each), suggesting that gender portrayals in these platforms are either less frequent or less noticeable to contemporary audiences.

When asked which media portrays women more stereotypically, a significant 62.3% of respondents pointed to digital media. This finding may be due to the high volume of content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, where influencers, brands, and advertisers frequently showcase idealized and sometimes objectified images of women (e.g., beauty, domesticity, sexualization). Television came a distant second (16.3%), while print and radio received much lower recognition (10.8% and 10.6%, respectively), indicating that audio and static formats may play a lesser role in shaping gendered visuals for women.

A slightly different pattern emerges when it comes to men: 45% of respondents believe digital and social media portray men more stereotypically, often emphasizing aggression, financial dominance, or emotional detachment. Interestingly, radio (30%) is the second-highest medium where male stereotypes are perceived. This could be tied to the narrative styles used in radio jingles and dramas, where male characters are commonly cast as assertive figures or heads of households. Print media also holds some influence (15%), possibly due to the way men are positioned in newspaper ads (e.g., as political or corporate elites). Television, although powerful, is viewed by only 10% as the medium that most stereotypically portrays men - possibly because its portrayals are more balanced than digital platforms.

The findings indicate that digital media emerges as the most significant channel in reinforcing gender stereotypes for both women and men. This calls for greater content regulation, digital literacy, and responsibility among advertisers and influencers. Gender bias is not platform-specific but tends to vary in form and intensity across media. For example, women are often objectified in visual and interactive media, while men are typecast in narrative and audio platforms.

Table 3: Impact of Gender Stereotyping in Advertising
Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Gender-stereotyped adverts influence how society views the roles of men and women.	127 (31.8%)	126 (31.5%)	15 (3.8%)	71 (17.8%)	61 (15.3%)
These portrayals affect the career aspirations of young women.	78 (19.5%)	129 (32.3%)	35 (8.8%)	100 (25%)	59 (14.8%)
Gender stereotypes in advertising make it harder to achieve gender equality.	133 (33.3%)	157 (39.3%)	21 (5.3%)	50 (12.5%)	39 (9.8%)
Youth are more likely to be influenced by media portrayals of gender roles.	129 (32.3%)	167 (41.8%)	16 (4%)	58 (14.5%)	30 (7.5%)
I have personally felt limited or misrepresented by gender	97 (24.3%)	130 (32.5%)	27 (6.8%)	78 (19.5%)	68 (17%)

roles shown in advertisements.					
There is a need for more gender-sensitive advertising in Nigeria.	156 (39%)	167 (41.8%)	13 (3.3%)	40 (10%)	24 (6%)

Source: Field work, 2025

The results from this table show that a strong majority (63.3%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gender-stereotyped adverts influence how society views men's and women's roles. This confirms earlier studies suggesting that advertisements do not merely reflect culture - they actively shape societal norms, especially concerning family roles, careers, and personal identity. Roughly 51.8% of respondents agreed that stereotyped portrayals affect the career ambitions of young women. When women are repeatedly shown in domestic or secondary roles, it may limit the range of aspirations young girls develop. However, a notable 25% disagreed, possibly reflecting optimism about young women's resilience or shifting trends in contemporary media.

That gender stereotypes promoted through advertising are a poor idea to achieve gender equality was agreed upon by 72.6 % of the respondents in the current study. Such representations would tend to replicate archaic standards-alluding to the leadership dominance of the male gender and the passive roles of the female gender, and this will eventually erode the intended educational programs and policies to achieve equality and empowerment.

An additional 74.1% of the respondents either strongly or agreed that youths are especially vulnerable to gender depictions in the media. Since youth spend a significant portion of time on the Internet, particularly on the websites rich in advertising (e.g., YouTube, TikTok), this observation has grave consequences in the long-term development of identity and ensuing behavioural trends in society. Further, more than 56.8 % of the respondents accepted that they personally had been subjected to limitations or misrepresentation of gender roles in ads. This fact brings in a human component, showing that stereotypes promoted by the media are not just an abstract kind of talk but determine other people's real lives and self-esteem. Respondents in the majority of 80.8 % agreed that there is an urgent need for gender-sensitive advertising in Nigeria. According to this universal agreement, people support regulatory changes, industry ethics, and advocacy, which will shape inclusivity and proper representation of gender issues.

All the findings demonstrate a strong awareness of the community on gender bias issues in advertisements, hence laying a solid foundation of advocacy and policy action. Most likely to be affected by the negative impact of media stereotypes are the youth in general and females in particular, long-term effects of which might be the stereotyped self-concept, career goals, and anticipation of relationships. This implies that policy measures, such as in-depth guidelines on the responsible practice of advertising and effective media literacy programmes, are sorely needed. Advertisers and agencies ought to start trying things out by using non-stereotypical representation that shows various gender roles, especially in leadership, scientific, and caregiving scenarios.

Discussion of Findings

Common Gender Stereotypes in Nigerian Advertisements from Benin Residents' Views

Findings from the study reveal that Benin residents largely perceive Nigerian advertisements as reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes, particularly in the portrayal of women as homemakers, caregivers, and objects of beauty, while men are predominantly depicted as leaders, professionals, and decision-makers. A significant proportion of respondents agreed that women are more frequently associated with domestic responsibilities and physical attractiveness, whereas men are portrayed as intelligent, strong, and authoritative.

This finding is consistent with earlier empirical studies like Okunna (2005) and Uzochukwu (2019), who observed that Nigerian advertisements tend to present women in subordinate or domestic roles and men in dominant public roles. Such representations reflect deeply rooted cultural expectations about gender roles in Nigerian society. The persistence of these portrayals suggests that advertising continues to mirror patriarchal social structures while simultaneously reinforcing them.

From a theoretical perspective, Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) provides an explanatory framework for this pattern. The theory posits that gender stereotypes arise from the social roles historically assigned to men and women. Advertising, as a cultural product, reproduces these socially constructed roles by repeatedly portraying women in nurturing roles and men in leadership positions. As a result, audiences internalize these portrayals as normative, reinforcing gender-based expectations in everyday life.

Differences in Gender Portrayals across Media Platforms from the Views of Benin Residents

The findings further indicate that Benin residents perceive digital media platforms as the most prominent channels for gender-stereotypical portrayals, followed by television and streaming platforms. Traditional media such as radio

and print were perceived as less influential but still contributory. Notably, digital and social media were identified as portraying both women and men more stereotypically than other platforms.

Empirically, this aligns with studies by Omoniyi (2017) and Nielsen (2018), which found that digital advertising often relies heavily on visual appeal and influencer culture, leading to the objectification of women and exaggerated representations of masculinity. The interactive and repetitive nature of digital media also increases exposure, making stereotypical portrayals more pervasive and impactful, particularly among youth.

Theoretically, this finding strongly aligns with Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998). The theory explains that prolonged and repeated exposure to media content gradually shapes individuals' perceptions of social reality. In this context, continuous exposure to gender-stereotyped advertising across digital platforms cultivates the belief that such portrayals accurately represent real-life gender roles. As Benin residents are increasingly engaged with digital media, these platforms play a critical role in reinforcing stereotypical gender norms.

Impact of Stereotypical Representations on Public Perception of Men and Women

The study also reveals that gender-stereotyped advertising significantly influences public perception, particularly among men and women. A majority of respondents agreed that such portrayals shape societal views of appropriate gender roles, affect young women's career aspirations, and make the achievement of gender equality more difficult. Many respondents also reported feeling personally misrepresented or limited by gender roles portrayed in advertisements.

These findings corroborate previous empirical studies. Kolawole and Anike (2019) found that exposure to gender-biased media content influences young people's perceptions of career possibilities and social roles. Similarly, Ezeigbo (2012) reported that persistent media portrayals emphasizing beauty and domesticity negatively affect women's self-esteem and professional ambitions.
From a theoretical standpoint, both Social Role Theory and Cultivation Theory jointly explain these outcomes. Social Role Theory accounts for how repeated portrayals of women and men in limited roles reinforce traditional expectations that restrict individual aspirations. Cultivation Theory further explains how long-term exposure to such content leads audiences—especially youth—to internalize these stereotypes as social realities. Consequently, these internalized beliefs

influence behaviour, self-image, and societal attitudes, thereby perpetuating gender inequality.

Conclusion

This research establishes that content expressed through various forms of media through advertisement still perpetuates the gender stereotype that constitutes and reinforces the existing societal ideas of the roles of a man and a woman. The continued representation of women as homemakers and men as leaders shapes the internalization of gender roles by the people, especially the younger audiences. The empirical evidence points to the fact that these stereotypes reflect as well as reinforce the prevailing gender inequalities. The consequences of it are especially acute in adolescents and women, defining their self-perception, life expectations, and the opportunity to receive equal outcomes. In addition, digital and social media, being expansive and highly image-oriented, were found to comprise the largest concentration of gendered displays. Altogether, these data point out the importance of media practitioners, advertisers, and policymakers in restructuring narrative structures and bringing gender equity in media content.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, recommendations are made as follows:

1. Advertising regulatory bodies should enforce gender-sensitive standards that discourage stereotypical portrayals of women and men and promote diverse, contemporary gender roles in Nigerian advertisements.
2. Stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be applied across all media platforms, particularly digital media, to ensure ethical and inclusive gender representation in advertising content.
3. Media literacy and gender awareness programmes should be strengthened, especially among the youth, to reduce the influence of gender stereotypes on self-perception and societal attitudes.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to use this medium to appreciate her Research Assistants used during the period of this research paper and every other study.

Authors' Contributions (use someone's first name and last name only here below)

Christiana Shade Ade-Johnson initiated the idea of this paper and wrote the first draft; coordinated the data gathering; did the proofreading, and reworked the paper based on the comments from the reviewers.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest
There was no conflict of interest with any sources or persons from the beginning of this paper to the end of it.

Ethical clearance
The author kindly sought and duly got ethical clearance from the respondents who provided the data used for this paper.

External Funding Sources
The author did not receive any external funding from any organization, person, group of persons, or individuals to sponsor the cost of the field work and the publication of this paper.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, A., Jatoi, Z. A., Abbasi, I. A., & Maitlo, S. K. (2025). Critical discourse analysis of gender stereotypes in commercial advertisements. Journal of Media Horizons, 6(3), 2336–2342. https://jmhorizons.com/index.php/journal/article/view/558.

Akpan, U. A., Umoren, P., & Nwokeocha, I. M. (2024). Gender stereotypes in Nigerian advertising: A critical discourse. International Journal of Global Sustainable Research, 2(3), 150–172. https://doi.org/10.59890/ijgsr.v2i3.1724.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behaviour: A social-role interpretation.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ezeah, G., & Ifebunandu, A. C. (2025). Portrayal of women in Nigerian newspaper advertisements: A study of Vanguard and The Guardian (2023–2024). International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research, 3(1), 189–204. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15097261.

Ezeigbo, T. A. (2012). *Gender issues in Nigeria: A feminist perspective.* Lagos: Vista Books.

Gerbner, G. (1969). *Toward "cultural indicators": The analysis of mass media content. In G. Gerbner, L. Gross, W. Hofer, & M. Morgan (Eds.)*, Communication research (pp. 135–146). University of Pennsylvania Press

Gerbner, G. (1998). *Cultivation analysis: An overview*. *Mass Communication & Society,* 1(3–4), 175–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (2002). *Growing up with television: Cultivation processes*. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 43–68). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *American Psychologist,* 56(2), 109–118.

Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender advertisements.* New York: Harper & Row.

Huma, T. (2025). Representation of gender roles in television advertising: An analysis of how stereotypical portrayals shape social perceptions of men and women. *Pakistan Journal of Social Science Review,* 4(4), 604–633. Retrieved from https://pjssrjournal.com/index.php/Journal/article/view/136.

Kantar. (2019). *Advertisers may not be avoiding gender stereotypes.* Kantar AdReaction Report.

Kolawole, B. O., & Anike, H. O. (2019). Media representation of gender roles: An analysis of selected television advertisements. *Journal of Media and Communication Research,* 11(2), 45–58.

Langer, L., & Niessen-Ruenzi, A. (2024). *Gender stereotypes in financial advertisements*. University of Mannheim working paper.

Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media,* 52(2), 200–214.

Morgan, M., Shanahan, J., & Signorielli, N. (2015). *Yesterday's new cultivation, tomorrow*. *Mass Communication and Society,* 18(5), 674–699. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1072723.

National Population Commission. (2023). P*opulation projection for urban areas in Nigeria.* Abuja: NPC Press.

Nielsen. (2018). The power of women in advertising: A global study. Nielsen. https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2018/modern-day-women-the-powerhouse-that-invests-engages-and-influences/?.

Okunna, C. S. (2005). Gender and communication in Nigeria: Is this the twenty-first century? *International Journal of Communication*, 2(1), 83–92.

Omenugha, K. A., & Oji, M. (2008). News commercialization, ethics, and objectivity in journalism practice in Nigeria: Strange bedfellows? *Studia Politica Slovaca,* 1(1), 109–123. https://ec.ubi.pt/ec/03/pdf/omenugha-oji-news-commercialization.pdf.

Omoniyi, A. (2017). Representation of gender in Nigerian online advertisements: A study of social media advertising. *Journal of Digital Media*, 5(1), 27–40.

Ridgeway, C. L., & Correll, S. J. (2004). Unpacking the gender system: A theoretical perspective on gender beliefs and social relations. *Gender & Society,* 18(4), 510–531. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204265269.

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media.* Oxford University Press.

UNESCO. (2019). *Gender and media: Progress and challenges in achieving gender equality in the media.* Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

Uzochukwu, C. E. (2019). Gender stereotyping in Nigerian television commercials. *International Journal of Gender Studies in Developing Societies*, 3(1), 66–78.